



The Oral History of Gary Swihart

October 15, 2019

Interview conducted by Karen Mayne

Wicomico, Virginia

Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Gary Swihart

Date of Interview: 10/15/2019

Location of Interview: Wicomico, Virginia

Interviewer: Karen Mayne

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 33 years, from 1971 to 2004.

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: Office of Fisheries Assistance, Assistant Project Leader, Elkins, West Virginia; Office of Fisheries Assistance, Assistant Project Leader, Project Leader, Warren, Pennsylvania; Office of Fisheries Assistance, Project Leader, Gloucester, Virginia.

Most Important Projects: Catch and release study for the Gray Trout, water quality studies, aquatic resource management for military bases, fishery surveys, and field work at Aberdeen Proving Grounds.

Colleagues and Mentors: Dr. Ross Berkley, Iowa State University Extension Office. Albert Spells, Chris Clower, Phil Pattoli, George Heptner, Mike Odom, Louis Daniels, Lisa Moss, John Galvez, Peter Boyer, and his co-located affiliation with Karen Mayne at Ecological Services.

Brief Summary of Interview: Gary shares his enthusiasm for nature, fishing, and hunting emanating from his family roots in Iowa, and his Fisheries and Wildlife Biology curriculum from Iowa State University (B.S. 1971), where his interests were fostered by Dr. Ross Berkley, who encouraged him to join the ranks of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. His mechanical training for working on B-47 jet bombers garnered work experience through the Air Force, which differed significantly from his work for FWS. It exposed him to military bases in Texas, New York, and Maryland, where later on he would assist the military with aquatic resource management efforts. Initially, this work was done by the Fish and Wildlife Service at no cost to the military, until the user pay construct generated funding for the FWS for equipment and addressed time constraints more effectively. Gary was engaged in fishery management in the capacity of overseer for coal strip mining activities in West Virginia. Later his involvement was with oil and gas exploration in the Pennsylvania oil fields, where he conducted water quality research and sampling and testing for acidity levels in streams. Coal strip mining analysis was part of his duties in Elkins, West Virginia, to gather baseline information along with the State of West Virginia biologists, and others, including the Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the Corps of Engineers. His research on hook and line mortality of the Gray Trout in the lower Chesapeake Bay provided insight into the hardiness of this species, which had not been known prior to his work. His support from his wife, Mary Smith Swihart, made the journey with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service possible and worthwhile.

INTERVIEW

KAREN MAYNE: This is Karen Mayne. The date is October 15th, 2019. I'm interviewing Gary Swihart, at his house in Wicomico, Virginia. The address is 6804 Powhatan Drive, Wicomico, Virginia. I wanted to ask Gary first, what his start and retirement dates were from the Fish and Wildlife Service?

GARY SWIHART: My start date was June of 1971; I don't remember what the day was.

KAREN MAYNE: But you do remember it?

GARY SWIHART: I do remember my retirement date.

KAREN MAYNE: Ok.

GARY SWIHART: It was April 2nd, 2004.

KAREN MAYNE: Ok. So, let's start with some of the questions about your early life. When were you born and where?

GARY SWIHART: I was born September 30th, 1938, on my parents' farm, southeast of Seymour, Missouri, the youngest of seven boys.

KAREN MAYNE: What kind of farm was it?

GARY SWIHART: Hillbilly farm, down in the Ozarks. It was east of Springfield, Missouri, which is quite a ways down in Missouri.

KAREN MAYNE: And what did they grow?

GARY SWIHART: They tried to grow kids. There were seven of us boys, but it was just a farm of subsistence type of farming. They had grain, they had livestock, cows, pigs, mules, horses, whatever else that they had for farm work. It was very bare necessities is what it amounted to.

KAREN MAYNE: So, all the boys helped on the farm?

GARY SWIHART: I guess, because I was one-year old when we moved from that farm, and we moved to another farm up in the northwestern part of Minnesota. We left Missouri because a tornado came through and blew the farm away. The only thing that was left was the house. Several of my brothers, they were injured with flying glass, but nothing serious. And that was where I was born. That was about it. We left there when I was about a year old and moved to Minnesota.

KAREN MAYNE: So where in Minnesota was the new farm?

GARY SWIHART: It was, if you look at a map of Minnesota, you will see where on the western side of Minnesota, it juts out into North Dakota, South Dakota right there on the line. And that's where the farm was. My dad had, I think it was 320 acres that his dad had homesteaded back when, I'm just not sure. But at that point in time the railroad companies, they owned huge areas of public land, I guess you could call it. And then they went to the Homestead Act, and all of this stuff. And people could get a certain chunk of land and they had to build a farm which my grandpa did. And it was bare necessities

before they had a house and a barn, and that was about the size of it. The family homestead is now part of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Morris Wetland Management District.

KAREN MAYNE: And what period was, would that have been?

GARY SWIHART: This would have been in probably, oh my goodness. The farmstead was already there when my parents moved up to it, but the farm itself probably was back in the '20s.

KAREN MAYNE: Ok, that's when the railroads went through. Or they went through earlier?

GARY SWIHART: Yeah. The railroad, the railroad went right through the little town. We lived 7.5, the farm was 7.5 miles east of Clinton, Minnesota. That was our little town, probably, at that time, maybe 500 people at the most. It was a little town, but the railroad went right through the town, Great Northern Railroad. And my granddad, he was still living in Iowa, and where most of my family, all of my family, originated, back there in Iowa. But when he moved up there ahead of time, he would put his team of horses on the train down here in Iowa, somewhere around Baxter, Iowa, is where the home place was. And then he would take the horses and go up to Minnesota and do farming, planting whatever it was that he was doing. And then he would put the horses on the train again and bring them back to the farm up around Baxter.

KAREN MAYNE: And how far apart were those farms?

GARY SWIHART: Oh, I would say probably close to 400 hundred miles.

KAREN MAYNE: Wow!

GARY SWIHART: Yeah.

KAREN MAYNE: And so, on your parents' farm, did you stay there until through high school?

GARY SWIHART: No.

KAREN MAYNE: Until you went to college?

GARY SWIHART: No. My family moved up to the farm in 1939, I was about a year old. My memories don't really come together until I was probably about four years old. That would have made it 1942. And we lived there for 10 years. I was in the, I just had gotten out of the fourth grade when moved to Texas, but while we were living up there in Minnesota. Of course, we didn't have electricity, we didn't have running water, didn't have a telephone, we didn't have a fireplace because we didn't have trees. There were no trees up there in that part of the state. It was all prairie, tall grass prairie up there. The school was located 1.5 miles north of the farmstead.

KAREN MAYNE: Do you remember the name of it?

GARY SWIHART: District 44. That's what they went by, it didn't go by a name, it just went by what school district you happened to be in. And we walked, we had to walk there, there was no, no bus service at the time. And at the time, my next two brothers, in age wise, they were going to school too. But they quit school in eighth grade and that's what most of them did at that time to help on the farm. But then after the fourth grade, fifth grade, after the third grade I went there for the three years; one room, actually a two-room schoolhouse. Then for the fourth grade I rode the school bus into Clinton. That was our hometown, a little town and that was seven miles from our farm. And we stayed down on

the farm until about 1948. My mother had asthma real bad, and the doctor recommended that they go to Arizona because Arizona was supposed to be, be good for health. Well, we moved, we sold, dad sold the place to my one brother. But at the same time, this was right around World War Two (WWII), when WWII was starting, my two oldest brothers, the oldest one went into the Army, enlisted into the Army. The next one enlisted into the Navy. The third of the older brothers, my dad had to go to the draft board and petition them to let him stay at the farm to help out with the farming, because the other boys were just a little bit too young to be doing that. So that my brother, most of my brothers, well only had one brother that went through high school. All the rest of them dropped out in eighth grade or before. But my parents, that was, that was eighth grade education, was all they had, they were farm people from day one.

KAREN MAYNE: And what were your parents' names?

GARY SWIHART: Morris and Metha.

KAREN MAYNE: What was your mother's maiden name?

GARY SWIHART: Griebel.

KAREN MAYNE: So, you stayed there until what age when you moved to Texas?

GARY SWIHART: I was about ten.

KAREN MAYNE: And where in Texas did you move to?

GARY SWIHART: Well, like I said, we were on our way to Arizona, but we stopped in a trailer house. Now mind you, now it was a 27-foot trailer house. My parents traded in a 1940 Ford Deluxe Coupe, or whatever they call it, for this Kaiser. And so, with that new Kaiser, 1948 Kaiser, in our 27-foot trailer, there was mom, dad, myself, and my two next oldest brothers was all that was in that little trailer house. We were on our way to Arizona, but we stopped in Fredericksburg, Texas. It was just a place that we pulled off for the night, I guess. But anyway, my parents met some other people that was staying there at the trailer park and the other people, his wife also suffered from asthma. But she said since they had been living there in Fredericksburg, she was fine. So, my parents decided that that's what they would do. They would, they would stay. My dad he was like I say he was unskilled, but he did carpenter work and he found enough work in the carpenter end of things. We could live there in Fredericksburg, and I started to school in the fifth grade in Fredericksburg. I didn't like school at all, but it was just part of it. We lived there for, I don't know, I just barely got a report card and we moved again because the job that my dad had it was over. So, he had to move someplace else, so we moved to San Antonio, Texas. And again, my dad was doing carpenter work and my brothers, I'm not sure what they were doing, but we lived there again for a very short time and from there we moved to Port Lavaca, Texas. And we lived there probably for about six months, and again my dad was just doing some carpenter work. He heard about a job in Victoria, Texas; they needed somebody to manage a dairy farm. Well, my dad had dairy cattle at his place, you know, milk cows, I think he had six milk cows maybe, you know. But he didn't really like carpenter work all that much, so he decided he'd give working on the dairy farm a try and so we moved to Victoria, Texas. And we were there, I don't know probably a total of four months and my mom started having trouble with asthma again, very bad. Come to find out it was from being around cattle. The dandruff off of livestock was what set off her asthma attacks. Had we known that when we lived in Minnesota, we would've probably gotten rid of the livestock and my dad would

have been just a grain farmer. At the time we didn't know about it and not much was known about asthma. But anyway, we moved from there back to Minnesota. We were gone for about a year, I guess, in Texas all total, and my parents moved back to Minnesota. Then we were living in a trailer again, still the same trailer in Clinton. Mom was working in a restaurant and dad was doing some carpentry kind of work. But then he heard his brother down here in Iowa, Newton, Iowa, that was their home area. His mother had fallen and broken her hip. She was out of the hospital, but she needed, needed somebody to care for her. So, they offered my dad the opportunity to move to Newton, take care of his mother and he wouldn't have to pay any rent or anything else. Then when grandma finally died, well then, the house was then given to dad. And that's where I lived then through high school, from there that's when I went into the military.

KAREN MAYNE: So, let's stop here, a minute. I think I forgot to ask you your birthday, you were born in Seymour.

GARY SWIHART: Yeah. September 30th, 1938.

KAREN MAYNE: And that was Seymour, Minnesota?

GARY SWIHART: Seymour, Missouri.

KAREN MAYNE: Missouri, that's right. I wrote it down wrong, I'm sorry. And so, then for high school, what high school did you go to?

GARY SWIHART: I went to the Newton Senior High School, Newton, Iowa.

KAREN MAYNE: Ok.

GARY SWIHART: Graduated there in 1959, May of, or maybe it was June - June of 1959. I did a few, few odd jobs, worked mainly at gas stations. I tried factory work one time at the wind power company, and I didn't like that at all. And so, then in 1959, I got married.

KAREN MAYNE: To?

GARY SWIHART: Mary.

KAREN MAYNE: What is Mary's maiden name?

GARY SWIHART: Smith. We lived with her parents; they lived on a farm. We lived with her parents, for oh, I guess maybe a year. But while living there, I got a job with the Iowa State Commerce Commission, and I stayed at that until, until about June, May, April, April of 1960. And that's when I enlisted in the Air Force because I figured if I was ever going to get some place where I could get a decent job, I had to get some kind of experience. So, I used the Air Force as kind of a steppingstone to try and get some education.

KAREN MAYNE: Where did you go to boot camp?

GARY SWIHART: Lackland Air Force Base in Texas.

KAREN MAYNE: And what was your training in?

GARY SWIHART: My training, of course, there at Lackland, it was just in pure basic training. I didn't specialize in anything, wasn't specializing in anything, just learning how to obey commands and

everything else. But then from there after taking aptitude tests and all this other stuff, I was considered, my aptitude was for mechanical stuff. And so, they said, Well, do you want to work on airplanes, and I said Well, that sounds good as anything to me. So, after we got out of basic training at Lackland, then I went to Wichita Falls, Texas to Sheppard Air Force Base for my technical training, which was in, working mechanical work on bombers, B-47 jet bombers. Loved it and it was interesting. After maybe six months, eight months, probably eight months of training, then we got assigned to our permanent duty station. Which for me, because my background was working on bombers, I was assigned to Plattsburgh Air Force Base in Plattsburgh, New York. And I was assigned as an assistant crew chief on B-47 bombers. That was extremely interesting, all the way through. But I only spent two years because I had an accident on the flight line, injured my back, and I was really not capable of doing the type of work that was required out on the flight line. So, the Air Force offered me the opportunity to go back to another tech school. And this time I went to tech school in Illinois, Rantoul in Illinois; it was Chanute Air Force Base. And basically, I had training then with my background already in mechanics, and I needed that background for this particular type of technical training. And it was, I can't quite remember the name of the, the career field that I went into then, but I went right back to Plattsburgh Air Force Base and continued on in my military service right there at Plattsburgh. A beautiful place.

KAREN MAYNE: And how many years were you in?

GARY SWIHART: I was in for four years. Four years is what I enlisted for. Got out in, I went in in April 1960 and I got out in April of 1964. That was a time period right in the middle of the Cold War. When I first went up there, I was assigned to an airplane. We had the crew chief, usually a tech sergeant or a master sergeant, and then I was assigned as the assistant crew chief. Which you had to know the airplane inside and outside because you had to be with the airplane when the flight crew came out to get onboard. You had through all your prechecks, make sure it was functioning. And then when the flight was over with, you had to be there to meet the airplane as it came back to the airbase. And then you debriefed the flight crew, to find out what went wrong, the radio didn't work right, the hydraulics were screwed up, whatever. And that was extremely interesting, exciting. It was great.

KAREN MAYNE: Do you think those experiences later had any effect on your career, as far as?

GARY SWIHART: No, not really. Not really.

KAREN MAYNE: No, it was totally different from what you did.

GARY SWIHART: Yeah.

KAREN MAYNE: So, you got out of the Air Force, then what?

GARY SWIHART: I went to work for, as a production scheduler, they call it, for Meredith Printing Company, in Des Moines, Iowa. Meredith, they published Better Homes and Gardens, Home and Garden, Successful Farming, and a whole bunch of smaller little publications that they would get and print up. As a production scheduler, you would schedule the work through the printing presses, then from the printing presses, then you'd go through the bindery, where they were bound up, then from the bindery then into the mailroom, everything. The mailroom was really the timing of everything, because everything had to be ready to be shipped out on particular dates. Some of the publications went to places right there in Iowa, they went out last. Places in New York, Los Angeles they would go out early because they had extra travel time involved in getting those out. And it was a very confusing job. You

never, at the end of the week, you never had the feeling that you had accomplished anything. Because throughout the whole process – the printing, the binding, the mailing – there were always glitches coming on. You'd set down, you'd work out these nice plans. Well, nothing ever goes according to plan anyways, and then you would have to start all over again. All over, all over again. And there was never that feeling of accomplishment that was what, what I needed. And I thought enough of this, I can't handle this anymore, and so that's when I quit. Didn't have anything else to fall back on. My boss, actually he was the boss of the department, not my immediate supervisor, he said to me at that time, which I admire him for doing, you know, he said it's easier to get another job if you're already working. So, he got me calmed down and I stuck it out for another year. And in the meantime, this is when I decided why don't I go to college. So, I started looking around at the different universities in Iowa, because that's where you could get in-state tuition, which is cheap and all this other stuff, and Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. They had a curriculum called Fisheries and Wildlife Biology. And so, I went up and talked to them, talked to some of the advisors and everybody else up there because I had a whole lot at stake because I owned a house in west Des Moines, Iowa. I had two kids already, my kids were born when I was in the Air Force, and so I couldn't just up and float around hoping that something would happen. I had to make sure that everything was going to happen, and we applied for student housing because that was cheaper than trying to get something off, off campus. I was deficient in some of the, see I was out of college, or out of high school for ten years, because I didn't start going to Ames until, let's see I was there from '69, I graduated from high school in '59, and I started college in '69. So, I'd been out of high school for ten years. And so anyway, Iowa State had this curriculum called Fisheries and Wildlife Biology. It looked pretty interesting to me, but I didn't know if I could handle it. Quite frankly, I was not all that good a student in high school. So, I found out what I needed, and I found out what I didn't have. So, I had to go to night school at Des Moines Tech High School to pick up algebra because I did not have algebra in high school. I took the commercial course because I did not think I was going to be going to college anyway. None of my brothers, well I had one brother that went to high school. He graduated from high school. My parents, like I said, they were farm folks, eighth grade educated. They were not, you know, super into schooling. My brothers all thought I was nuts for quitting a good job I had at Meredith Printing. I mean it was a good job, everybody you know, it was very highly thought of. If you worked at Meredith, you know you were on the right path. Well, it so happened it didn't work for me. But anyway, so I went to night school, I went to Duke University.

KAREN MAYNE: The Duke from NC?

GARY SWIHART: No, I'm sorry, Drake, Drake University. I went to Drake University in Des Moines to pick up some of the courses I knew would transfer up to Iowa State because I didn't want to spend a lot of time doing something I wasn't going to be getting any credit from, being a start late in life. Anyway, but anyway it so happened that I got admitted to Iowa State University. We moved, we rented our house out in west Des Moines, moved my family up to Ames, up there to the campus, and started, started school. My wife had already had two years of college when we got married back in '59. So, we saw our way clear for her to go ahead and continue her education while we were at Iowa State, and she did. She came out good, she came out, well, she was making A's and B's. And I was damn lucky if I was getting a C here and there you know. But anyway, we both made it through. The kids they were in school at the same time, so in the mornings we would all leave for school, depending. My wife, she majored in zoology and picked up a teaching certificate at the same time, too. And some of her courses matched up with some of the courses I was taking in my curriculum in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology. And so, a lot of times we would go to class together. We arranged so we could go to class together, especially on some

of the courses where they had labs attached to it, you know. So, we had labs together, we helped each other. She helped me more than I helped her, but we got through it, you know. And she graduated in the Spring of, no, she graduated in the Fall of '70. I graduated in the Spring of '71.

KAREN MAYNE: And is your degree a Bachelor of Science?

GARY SWIHART: Bachelor of Science.

KAREN MAYNE: In? In what field?

GARY SWIHART: Fisheries and Wildlife Biology. I mean it was a super curriculum as far I was concerned.

KAREN MAYNE: Were there any professors, or other instructors that you considered your mentors there?

GARY SWIHART: There was one. He wasn't a professor; he was in charge of the extension agency, and his name was Dr. Ross Berkley. I would go over on campus and talk to him, he was an easy guy to talk to, and he put me, he got me involved in a research project which not many undergraduate students were able to do. He got me involved and it was fisheries related. So, we were looking at the effects of growth hormones on fish, and what it might do to their livers and kidneys, and stuff like that, which involved a lot of cutting open and weighing, and measuring fish, and weighing kidneys and livers and everything else, and seeing if it was affecting them in any way. But it was probably Dr. Berkley, that even though he wasn't my professor or anything like that, that probably steered me in the right direction, as far as my college work went. Somehow or another he knew all that old stuff that pertained to everything that I was interested in. So, that was the one, the only one that really that I had any faith in. I had mentors, graduate students; it was worthless. I won't name names but anyways.

KAREN MAYNE: So, after you graduated, what came next?

GARY SWIHART: A job.

KAREN MAYNE: With?

GARY SWIHART: Fish and Wildlife Service.

KAREN MAYNE: And how did you get it?

GARY SWIHART: Well Ross told me, Ross Berkley told me about getting on the Federal Register of Jobs, which I did. I had applied, because when you apply through the Federal Register then you're considered for all the jobs that might pertain to you. Come graduation day, I had not heard beans from anybody. I had also applied to a lot of state agencies that I thought I might like to go to. Mainly way out west, which is really where I wanted to go, was out in the western part of the United States, you know. Every reply that I received from states, they all required a master's degree. Well, I did not have a master's degree. But I had signed up, because by this time, I was starting to get a little worried. Here I was getting ready to graduate, I'm living on campus housing. At least I got a house. And nothing, nothing showed up in the mail or anything else. Then one day, maybe into the next week, I got a phone call. They were offering me a job at Ecological Services in Fort Worth, Texas. I said Texas? I didn't want to go to Texas. So, anyways, I went back over, I talked to Ross again and I said what, by this time I had a variety of offers from refuges, fisheries assistance, fish hatchery manager jobs. So, I asked Ross at that time, I said, What are all of these positions, and what are they like, you know. At that time, refuge work, he said was like

farming. He said do you want to be a farmer? I said, not really. Hatchery management, I knew what hatchery management was because in the curriculum of the Fisheries and Wildlife Biology, I had to work six months in the field that I was going to graduate into. So that meant one summer, three months, one summer, I worked for the Strawberry Point Trout Hatchery, in Strawberry Point, Iowa. The next summer, I worked for the Fishery Research Station at Lake McBride, Iowa. So, I knew what some of the research facilities was like. I knew what hatchery work amounted to, which I did not really want to be in hatcheries either. So, I asked him, I said, Well, what about the Office of Fisheries Assistance? And he said that would be my choice. He said, you have a huge variety of activities that you get involved in. He said it's just a nice way to spend your career. So, that's why I, well, so then I had choice, I had to make a decision where I wanted to go, because I had job offers from the Elkins, West Virginia Office, the Nashua, New Hampshire, I had job offers from. There was another one, everything was out east, and so I got the map out and I started looking. Looking at where some of these places were located at. And Elkins, West Virginia looked like it was probably the most off the beaten path of any of that, that had job offers for me. And that's why I took Elkins, West Virginia as my first duty station. And I went there in June of 1971 as Assistant Project Leader.

KAREN MAYNE: Who was the Project Leader?

GARY SWIHART: George Hanson was the project leader, it was just a two-man station, which is what all my stations amounted to, that I went to. They were just two-man, you had a project leader and an assistant project leader. If you were lucky, you had a secretary. If not, the assistant project leader became the secretary. So, you know it was just one of them things. And that's what I learned to live with. I had no problem, no problem at all.

KAREN MAYNE: So, what did you do at the West Virginia office?

GARY SWIHART: The main involvement that the Fish and Wildlife Service had with the state of West Virginia was we were there primarily because of the strip mine, coal strip mining that was going on there. They wanted us to be there as overseer, making sure, I guess, that mine work was being done like it was supposed to be, with backfill being placed on, you know, the mining area after it was done, and all this stuff that went along with it. Most of it was always in cooperation with the state of West Virginia. Again, in West Virginia. We did a lot of work on reservoirs. West Virginia has a bunch of Army Corps of Engineers reservoirs, and this is when everything was geared up. I was hired during a time period when there was a lot of hiring within the Fish and Wildlife Service. There has never been one like that since, you know. And working on the Corps of Engineers reservoirs, it was fishery management, right in line with everything else I had been schooled on. I couldn't have asked for a better setup because everything that I was schooled on I got to put in practice, which is excellent. So that was one, West Virginia. We didn't have, the Office of Fisheries, it really didn't have its own little projects going on. It was usually in cooperation with either the Corps of Engineers, strip mine work, or with the state biologist for the state of West Virginia.

KAREN MAYNE: And were those projects that you worked on transfer funded from other agencies to the Service?

GARY SWIHART: No, there was no such thing as transferred funded back in that earlier time. This was the other thing, too, that when I started, of course we didn't that have many stations, military bases in West Virginia. I think there was a Navy base someplace up in the hills, I couldn't imagine why, but it was

a radio station up there. But whenever any military base, and this applied to all of them in Pennsylvania, down here when I first came. Whenever a military base wanted some assistance on their aquatic resources they had on base, all they would have to do was to get in touch with their congressman. And he would then get in touch with the Fish and Wildlife Service and say they need some help down here, can you, do it? Yeah sure. We would get the notice that we had to go here, had to go there, do whatever we could. A lot of times it was, you know, a one-day thing. Sometimes a two-day but nothing ever very long range, because we didn't have any money. They wasn't giving us any money to do this extra work, so it was just kind of a hit and miss project all the time. But that all changed. I wasn't ready for all this stuff.

KAREN MAYNE: Well, what I did want to ask was the Elkins Ecological Services offices there at the same time as the Fisheries offices?

GARY SWIHART: Yeah.

KAREN MAYNE: Were you co-located?

GARY SWIHART: No. In the beginning it wasn't there, then towards the end of my time, help me out, who was the first project leader?

KAREN MAYNE: Chris Clower?

GARY SWIHART: No.

KAREN MAYNE: Before him? Dave Harris?

GARY SWIHART: Dave Harris, yeah, he was the project leader for the Ecological Office, and they were located in a different area from us altogether. Our Fisheries Office, we would go with anybody that had room for us. When I got there, they had a trailer house setup down near the sewer plant for the office space, which meant you really didn't have any area for your equipment. But then finally, the Forest Service, we got office space with the Alleghany National Forest. They gave us some space out of there, I think they call it, the Northeast Research Station, there in Warren, Pennsylvania. Am I getting ahead of myself?

KAREN MAYNE: Well so, you were in Elkins, West Virginia.

GARY SWIHART: Yeah.

KAREN MAYNE: When did you leave there?

GARY SWIHART: I left Elkins in December of '74, 1974.

KAREN MAYNE: And why did you go to Warren, Pennsylvania?

GARY SWIHART: That's where I moved to, to get my GS-9.

KAREN MAYNE: So yeah, what grade were you in when you started at Elkins?

GARY SWIHART: GS-5.

KAREN MAYNE: And what was the pay then?

GARY SWIHART: Oh, my goodness, it was less than what I had been making, what I had been making. And it lasted a little bit longer because, you remember back in '71, Richard Nixon was president. He put a freeze on salaries, everything as it pertained to promotions, too. So, when one year was up, I was supposed to get my GS-7. That didn't happen that year, it had to wait another year before I got the GS-7 grade, thanks to Tricky Dick.

KAREN MAYNE: Do you remember who the Secretary of the Interior was then?

GARY SWIHART: Was it Watt, James Watt?

KAREN MAYNE: No, he was under Reagan.

GARY SWIHART: He was under Reagan. Ok, I don't remember. I don't remember who the Secretary of the Interior was.

KAREN MAYNE: So, did you apply for the job in Warren, or was that just a transfer?

GARY SWIHART: Through the formalities, yeah, I had to apply. But in a way, I don't think I had to. I think they already had it set up, that I would go to Warren because at that time Jerry Marancik was the assistant of the Warren with John Anderson. And Jerry was transferred up to Laconia, New Hampshire, and he was with Al Knight up in Laconia. So, the Warren station became available. They wanted to, and shortly after, I transferred out of Elkins. They closed that station anyway. So, they knew ahead of time, the Regional Office knew ahead of time what was taking place. Even if I hadn't applied, I probably still have ended up at Warren, Pennsylvania, which was good, it was a good station, I enjoyed it.

KAREN MAYNE: What were your major duties, projects there?

GARY SWIHART: Ok, there, a lot of our involvement dealt with oil and gas exploration. We were right in the Pennsylvania oil fields up there, and a lot of the brine water coming out of wells would end up in the streams. And that you know had fish kills, and what not. And that took up a considerable amount of time.

KAREN MAYNE: And what kind of equipment and studies would you be doing?

GARY SWIHART: Oh, mainly water quality.

KAREN MAYNE: From boats?

GARY SWIHART: No.

KAREN MAYNE: From stream banks?

GARY SWIHART: Stream banks, yeah, because this was going, the wells were all draining out into streams basically, you know. And if you probably went far enough down, you come to one of the reservoirs. You could have picked up the adverse effects from the brine water that way, but we didn't, we didn't do any of the lakes, lake type work there on that particular project.

KAREN MAYNE: How would you collect your samples?

GARY SWIHART: Dip down and get your water sample.

KAREN MAYNE: With a bottle?

GARY SWIHART: With a bottle, yup.

KAREN MAYNE: Would you send them off, or test it right there?

GARY SWIHART: No, we could test right there. Right there on the shore, bank, on the stream bank, you know.

KAREN MAYNE: And what did you find as far as the acidity levels?

GARY SWIHART: Yeah, you had a lot of areas where, you know, you had pH of 4, pH of 4.4. Something you know, lower than what the trout, at that time, could tolerate. But in West Virginia, for example, on the acid mine drainage up on one area they called Red Run because of the acid that was up there, we had trout living in that stream there. So, I'm not sure whether those trout got acclimated over the years, eons of years from it, I don't know, but, anyways, yeah.

KAREN MAYNE: And where would your study results go, who would receive them?

GARY SWIHART: We would send them into the Regional Office. And then they'd, I don't know what they did with them.

KAREN MAYNE: So, you don't think you saw the results of your field studies?

GARY SWIHART: Not really, no.

KAREN MAYNE: And why do you think that was?

GARY SWIHART: I just don't know. I just don't know.

KAREN MAYNE: So, how long were you at Warren?

GARY SWIHART: I left Warren in '78, again in December of '78. That's when I transferred down here, and I transferred down here in January of '79. Been here ever since.

KAREN MAYNE: And you were the Assistant Project Leader at first.

GARY SWIHART: Yeah, when I first came down here, yeah.

KAREN MAYNE: Under?

GARY SWIHART: Jack Sheridan, who retired, and I don't remember when Jack retired.

KAREN MAYNE: It wasn't real long.

GARY SWIHART: I don't remember when I became project leader.

KAREN MAYNE: So, I will insert here, I was with the Ecological Services office that was co-located with Gary's Fisheries Assistance office.

GARY SWIHART: Right.

KAREN MAYNE: My memory is that Jack Sheridan retired within a couple of years of you getting there.

GARY SWIHART: It was about that time.

KAREN MAYNE: I came in 1978; you came shortly after.

GARY SWIHART: Right.

KAREN MAYNE: I was there, and then I think Jack retired within a year or so after that?

GARY SWIHART: Yeah.

KAREN MAYNE: Ok, so, you probably became project leader around 1980, maybe?

GARY SWIHART: I think that's close. That's close enough, government work, you know. I just couldn't find the paperwork.

KAREN MAYNE: And then you, you hired an assistant?

GARY SWIHART: No. I got an assistant.

KAREN MAYNE: Ok, how'd that happen?

GARY SWIHART: Jack Sheridan hired Albert.

KAREN MAYNE: Albert Spells?

GARY SWIHART: Yeah, Albert. I just started, I just took over because that's what I did with all my, at all the stations I worked at. We always had depended on summer students to help us out with our field work in the summer then and that always fell on me. The project leader [Unintelligible]. So, the assistant did the measuring work for all the summer work, summer help.

KAREN MAYNE: How many students do you think you had over the years?

GARY SWIHART: Oh God, I don't know. I do remember the ones that worked out good.

KAREN MAYNE: So, who were they, and are they still with the Service?

GARY SWIHART: Chris Clower, he was with me in Elkins, West Virginia, and he left. Chris left and went to Ecological Services up in D.C., I guess, it was. And I don't quite remember when he graduated from the university and took that job and went with ES.

KAREN MAYNE: And then at some point he came back to Elkins and became the project leader?

GARY SWIHART: Yeah, yes.

KAREN MAYNE: And that was after you left.

GARY SWIHART: Yes, that was after I left.

KAREN MAYNE: Any other students that you can recall that were impressive?

GARY SWIHART: Yes, yes, I had a whole bunch of them. In Warren, Pennsylvania, Phil Pattoli. Phil Pattoli. He was there for a time. He went on to, he got his Doctorate degree from Tennessee Tech. There's another individual there, George Heptner. He's a lawyer now, and we stayed, we still stay in communication with George. We've been up to their place in Maine, visiting. They've been down here, him and his wife. But you know, that's about it. Then down here, at Gloucester office, had a bunch, I've had a whole bunch of them. There was Albert Spells for one, Albert fit right in with being the Assistant Project Leader.

KAREN MAYNE: And Albert is now the?

GARY SWIHART: Hatchery.

KAREN MAYNE: Well, he's the?

GARY SWIHART: He's called the River Coordinator.

KAREN MAYNE: Fisheries River Coordinator for Virginia.

GARY SWIHART: Yeah.

KAREN MAYNE: Right.

GARY SWIHART: He's up there at Harrison Lake. Mike Odom, Mike was a state biologist, but he came onboard with me as the assistant after Albert left, so he was an assistant for a while.

KAREN MAYNE: And he's now the Hatchery Manager at Harrison Lake.

GARY SWIHART: He's now the Hatchery Manager at Harrison Lake. I had another guy that was neat, Joe Nack. There wasn't a task that was assigned to him that he couldn't do a good job on. Then there's Louis Daniel. Louis was out of VIMS (Virginia Institute of Marine Science). He got his Doctorate out of VIMS, and he worked with me for oh probably, six months, a year maybe, I just don't remember. But he is now head of Marine Fisheries, I guess it is, North Carolina or South Carolina.

KAREN MAYNE: North Carolina.

GARY SWIHART: North Carolina, yeah. Lisa Moss, she came and was an assistant with me. Lisa stayed for two years, maybe up to the point where I retired.

KAREN MAYNE: And she's at Harrison Lake now.

GARY SWIHART: And she's at Harrison Lake, I guess. I don't know, I haven't.

KAREN MAYNE: The last I knew she was, but I don't know whether she was working with Albert Spells or Mike Odom.

GARY SWIHART: Yeah. I don't.

KAREN MAYNE: So, tell me about some of the projects, well, were there other students?

GARY SWIHART: Yeah.

KAREN MAYNE: Ok.

GARY SWIHART: Yeah, John Galvez, you know.

KAREN MAYNE: And John is now a project leader down in Florida.

GARY SWIHART: Florida, he works the Everglades. Exactly what he all does, I don't know, maybe chasing snakes down there for all I know. But John is a good one. A couple other summer students I had, Peter Boyer, do you remember Peter? He worked two summers, I think it was, with me. Then there was another boy, a friend of his, Andy and I can't remember what Andy's last name was, good kids. I taught

Peter Boyer how to back a boat up. And it was always interesting, all these people you know. They were good people, all of them, and I enjoyed working with them.

KAREN MAYNE: So, I wanted to ask you about some of the projects here in Virginia, that stand out. Some of the things that you worked on. And obviously, I should say, you worked more than just in Virginia.

GARY SWIHART: Oh yeah.

KAREN MAYNE: You had projects all over the southern part of Region 5.

GARY SWIHART: All of the military, all of the military bases, I had projects going on. They were good because I was getting money from the military, it was, the Fish and Wildlife Service. And I can't remember what year it was, they came up with this what they called a user pay concept. Used to be all this work that we provided on the military bases was all free, gratis. Consequently, none of it was super good work because you never had the time, you had no money to buy equipment, you didn't have anything. Under the user pay concept, I had lots of money coming in. But it kept me busy, it kept me busy all the time. But it was worthwhile because I could start a project and see it all the way through. On a fishery project, you know, by changing regulations, getting the military to change regulations, to protect certain size classes of different fish, you know, it improved fishing on these military bases. The same way with the Forest Service and the National Park Service. I was working all of them, all of those areas, Blue Ridge Parkway, Antietam National Battlefield outside of D.C., Colonial Parkway down here; I did a lot of fishery surveys. What the Park Service was looking for was baseline information on their aquatic resources because they were in the mode of trying to revert back some of the progress they made. I guess back to what it may have been like a hundred years ago. Which on Antietam Battlefield, now there's trees all over the place, but back during the war, civil war, there were no trees. And it had an effect on their aquatic resources, what fish species they had there. So, that was what I was doing a lot for the Park Service, was just baseline information for them. And basically, it was the same too for the National Forest, especially there in Elkins, West Virginia when I was there. I did what they called compartment analysis. Backpack shocker. None of those little areas back up in the foothills, they had water streams and all this. Because you couldn't drive to them, you had to walk to them and you use a backpack shocker to get your fish samples. That was fun, I enjoyed the daylight out of that. Down here in Virginia, most of that work area was on reservoirs and lakes. Fort A.P. Hill, for example, got, I don't know seven or eight lakes up there. And you had to have a boat, small shocker boat because most of these places never had boat ramps. You had to find a place along on the bank; some place that you could back your boat into because it had big generator for the electrical fishing equipment. But yet you had to be careful not to back into places where your boat sank out of sight, which it did once in a while. I'll never forget the time up at, can't recall what refuge it was in Maryland, they had to bring a bulldozer out to get, pull my boat out. That was all part of it. But anyway, a lot of the work was, with the military, was helping them do their aquatic resource management for, it all fell under the Morale Support Unit that the military had set up for all these military bases to try to give the military people something to do in their spare time. Not all of them were married and lived off housing. There were many people right there who lived in barracks and stuff like. And was just that to provide some kind of recreation for them that was cheap, and fishing was cheap.

KAREN MAYNE: So, after you completed your field work, then would you write reports?

GARY SWIHART: Oh yes, I was always behind on writing my reports until I got Louis Daniel in. He got me caught up a lot on a lot of my report writing. But that was always a real hassle, trying to get, and you did that in the wintertime when you couldn't be out doing field work. And that was what the wintertime was for.

KAREN MAYNE: I wanted to ask you because I recall you talking about this, you did some field work up at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland.

GARY SWIHART: Yes.

KAREN MAYNE: Was that dangerous?

GARY SWIHART: We, I suppose it could have been because we, I, people working with me, we found a lot of artillery shells dumped along the shoreline. We did not know they were there as we were electrofishing up and down the area there. Fortunately, none of them were electrically detonated, but if they had been I probably would not be sitting here discussing this with Karen Mayne right now. But it was interesting.

KAREN MAYNE: Did the Navy do anything to clean them up after you found them?

GARY SWIHART: Oh, the Navy had ongoing programs all the time to clean up problems that they had you know, so yeah, they worked at it. But as much stuff that was dumped in World War I, World War II, you know, that could have been their full-time job just clean stuff up, but they did the best they could.

KAREN MAYNE: Well, what do you consider to be your most frightening experience?

GARY SWIHART: My most frightening experience. I wouldn't call it frightening or not, I sank my boat one time when I was at...

KAREN MAYNE: That's frightening!

GARY SWIHART: ... a military base. Now that was, I was doing a project at Fort Dix, uh at Fort Detrick, Maryland, on their lake. They were in the process of putting in a new water control structure and the lake had a real good fishery in it. They had Large Mouth Bass, good Bluegill, Yellow Perch; it was a very good fishing lake. Well, they wanted to save as many of these fish as they possibly could. So, I said, Well, I could do that for you. So, we along with two of the people from Fort Detrick. One was name, I can't remember him. They were big, they were big guys, thank God for that. We were in the boat we had a live well in the boat. We were shocking fish, putting the fish in the LiveWell as we would shock them. We had a load of fish, ready to be taken over to the dam by the spillway where they had one of their trucks parked. And they had it all set up with water and generators that they could pump water and all this. Well, on the way over to this area, we had the motor down of course, and we hit on a submerged log, and we were running pretty close to full capacity. And when I hit the log, wasn't going very fast, but the nose of the boat just went under water and all this water coming back over. The two guys on front like I said, they were big guys to begin with. I told them we're going down. So, we bailed out the boat, couldn't do anything anyway. I shut the engine off, it was still sputtering. Shut the generator off. And I had hip boots on which was not deep enough, high enough for the deep water that I was in. So, these two big guys, they each grabbed one of my arms and pulled me to shore which was all mud. I mean it was nothing, but mud and they rescued me on that particular trip. That was, I don't know frightening or not. I knew I was only going to sink so far before I hit the bottom. But that happens when you're out,

and I would be out constantly all through the spring, summer, and fall. And I never left the office without my boat because without my boat I couldn't do any work.

KAREN MAYNE: So, who do you consider to be some of the mentors in the Fish and Wildlife Service for you, or people you admire? Let's skip that and go on to what do you consider to be some of the highlights of your career?

GARY SWIHART: The highlight for me was probably when I got involved with the catch and release program for the Gray Trout, this was in 1997 - '98 timeframe. That's when Louis Daniel, he was still with me at the time, he actually got it set up for the involvement with the Marine Fisheries stuff.

KAREN MAYNE: Would this be with the National Marine Fisheries Service, or the State?

GARY SWIHART: Yeah, the State; well both the State and the United States Marine Fisheries people, which I was on the committee, one of the committees, can't remember the name of the committee I was on. But anyway, they wanted, the marine fisheries people wanted to know what kind of mortality was happening with the Gray Trout. Because the population of the Gray Trout was way, way down and they did not have any information about hooking mortality on the Gray Trout. So, about this same time Louis Daniel got my office involved in doing some of the research work, which I didn't know anything about to begin with. But anyway, I learned very quickly.

KAREN MAYNE: And this Gray Trout is a marine species, correct?

GARY SWIHART: Yes, yes, you hear a lot about the Spotted Trout, that's cousin to the Gray Trout, or the Weakfish as most of them call them. And they're not so weak after all, as they found out. But anyway, my involvement was to do some kind of a study on this mortality, and we had to build some live cages. My thought on the whole thing was that we would go out and catch these fish, catch the Gray Trout, hook and line, and after we got 30 of them, we'd go put them in live cages. Well, they needed a big sample. I didn't, I wasn't sure how big of a sample that they even needed. Well, they needed something like 300 fish to be able to evaluate what the hooking mortality was going to be like. So, between myself and my son, who was volunteering with me at this time.

KAREN MAYNE: And your son's name?

GARY SWIHART: Mark. We started building these live cages, and we couldn't find any designs from anybody that had anything to do with live cages. Even VIMS, they had live cages, but they were not what I considered good live cages, they were square. Fish don't take right hand turns whenever they come to meet some. So, we designed some round live cages that were like four foot high with a netting, plastic netting, half inch plastic netting all the way around them and the bottom. The top of them we had made out of three-quarter inch plywood, which acted as a float. We had a hole cut in the top for access to put fish in or take fish out, whatever the case might be. And around the whole thing, top and bottom, we used rebar to attach our netting to and the top plywood to. We made, I don't recall, ten of them, that would give us the 300. And I thought well we'll put 300, or 30 fish in each cage, then it can't be said that we were crowding the fish, and this added to mortality and all this other stuff. We found a place over on the Eastern Shore that could accommodate our operation. We had housing at the Eastern Shore of Virginia Wildlife Refuge. They had a vacant house that they let me kind of run out of, the operation out of the house. They had a lot of storage area for different things that I needed, which was for my boats. I had a couple of boats over there; I had all my cages. And when we started, after we got everything in

place, we used the old ferry wharf over at Kiptopeake State Park to run our operation because it was relatively easy to deploy our live cages, and they were protected quite a bit from any wind or hurricanes, which we did experience. But it was an ideal place for us to run this whole operation. It was close to the refuge where we were staying. And it turned out to be a great success, as I learned from other groups that was doing it. So, I guess if you really think about it, that might have been one of my highlights. I don't know if a lot of the information we collected for them, if it was ever applied in their marine fisheries commission reports or anything like that, but it was there for them. Hopefully it was, they used some of it to help regulate. And you come to find out that there really wasn't much mortality at all from hook and line fishing on Gray Trout. That in itself was something that nobody knew before. They're not really as weak in the mouth as a lot of people thought they would be. They turned out to be quite hardy and that all added to having a pretty good project out of the whole thing.

KAREN MAYNE: What do you think the public's perception of the Fish and Wildlife Service was over the course of your career? Did it change?

GARY SWIHART: Local, the local community, this was in, oh I can't remember what year it was. The first time they wanted to move my office out to Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery, the school, school board, they came to my rescue, they wrote letters to the congressman.

KAREN MAYNE: The school board?

GARY SWIHART: Yeah.

KAREN MAYNE: Here in Gloucester?

GARY SWIHART: Yeah. Mary notified them they were making a move. I would go up to the high school several times and put on a program for the biology class, mainly in Mary's biology class. They accepted that, I guess, as something good coming from the federal government. They didn't want to see me leave because once I left, I wouldn't be available next door to them to continue doing any of that. So, they prevented me, prevented the office from being moved at that time, which I thought was pretty good of them.

KAREN MAYNE: And about what year was that?

GARY SWIHART: Oh. I don't know.

KAREN MAYNE: So, when do you think that was?

GARY SWIHART: That was probably in the mid '90s, '95, '96 timeframe.

KAREN MAYNE: And why did the Regional Office want to move your office?

GARY SWIHART: Good question. I'm not sure, part of it was that at that time they were trying to consolidate, cut back on expenses of maintaining these small offices throughout the country. And the Office of Fisheries Assistance has always been a very small, little organization, and so it was it was slated to be moved out to Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery and combined with the hatchery out there.

KAREN MAYNE: Well in 1997, your office and my office, which were co-located, moved to a new office that was built just for us in White Marsh, Virginia.

GARY SWIHART: Right.

KAREN MAYNE: So, we had the nicest facility there that we ever had had, we were very happy with it. So, if that was in 1997 and you retired in 2004, fill me in on what transpired with the Regional Office trying to move you during that period?

GARY SWIHART: Ok, instead of what I just said in '95, '96, move that maybe three or four years; move it back '97, '98 timeframe.

KAREN MAYNE: So, right about the time our office was moving because we moved in 1997?

GARY SWIHART: Yeah, it was after that.

KAREN MAYNE: Ok.

GARY SWIHART: After '97.

KAREN MAYNE: So, who were your supervisors at that point when they were trying to move the office?

GARY SWIHART: Well, I guess the Fisheries.

KAREN MAYNE: Was it Jamie Geiger?

GARY SWIHART: Jamie Geiger at the time. I'm not sure who the other ones, under him were, at the time.

KAREN MAYNE: Do you remember?

GARY SWIHART: Maybe Tom Bennett. Was it Tom Bennett?

KAREN MAYNE: Rick Bennett.

GARY SWIHART: Rick Bennett, it might have been Rick Bennett.

KAREN MAYNE: And was Ron Lambertson the Regional Director, do you remember?

GARY SWIHART: No. I don't think so.

KAREN MAYNE: Ok.

GARY SWIHART: No, Ron was not the Regional Director.

KAREN MAYNE: Ok.

GARY SWIHART: I don't remember who the regional director was.

KAREN MAYNE: Ok, but anyway they started the process of discussing moving your office.

GARY SWIHART: Yeah, yup.

KAREN MAYNE: And so, the school board tried to support you, but then what happened from there?

GARY SWIHART: The Regional Office, I never heard anything more from them, so I guess they got the message.

KAREN MAYNE: And you think it was budget saving eventually when they did decide to move the office?

GARY SWIHART: It could be, it could be, I don't know.

KAREN MAYNE: Because at that point, in addition to you, Albert Spells was still in our office and Cindy Black was our joint secretary. She worked half for Ecological Services and half for Fisheries. So, fill me in on what transpired when they decided, the Regional Office decided, to move your office to Harrison Lake? Gary and I are having a little hard time remembering, since we've both been retired over 10 years, exactly what transpired. But my recollection is that as a cost saving measure the Fish and Wildlife Service was looking at moving a lot of offices that were in GSA (General Services Administration) rental space onto Fish and Wildlife Service properties. And so, at some point in their early 2000s, they were looking at moving my station, Ecological Services, and Gary's station, Fisheries, over to the Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery. Which would have been about what, an hour and a half away from where we were located, and it would have required permanent change of station moves for everybody. As well as building new facilities at Harrison Lake because they didn't have the kind and size of offices we would have needed. So, I was successful in convincing the Regional Office that Ecological Services, it would be too expensive for them to move our people. Because I think at the time, we had close to 20 people in my office. Now Gary you can talk a little bit about what transpired with Fisheries because you weren't successful.

GARY SWIHART: Yeah. No.

KAREN MAYNE: In convincing them.

GARY SWIHART: No, they thought it would be a good move to move the Fisheries Office out to Harrison Lake, too.

KAREN MAYNE: And at that point wasn't it you, John Galvez, Cindy Black? And I think Albert Spells was still in our office, but he was the Virginia Rivers Coordinator by that point.

GARY SWIHART: Right, yeah. And I could see where, as Karen pointed out, that it would have been about an hour and a half more driving time for everybody, including myself, with no compensation whatsoever. And really it just seemed kind of like one big nonsense idea coming from somebody. And about that time, it was in, I was getting close to retirement age. Matter of fact, I think I probably went past retirement age a little bit. So, I decided that rather than trying to fight them, I would just retire. And that's what I did in April of 2004.

KAREN MAYNE: And Cindy Black also retired.

GARY SWIHART: Cindy Black retired shortly after I did, I think.

KAREN MAYNE: I think you're right. And then Albert Spells moved over to Harrison Lake.

GARY SWIHART: Right.

KAREN MAYNE: And John Galvez went up to the Maryland Fisheries Office. Well, he left actually before that.

GARY SWIHART: No, he went to Florida.

KAREN MAYNE: He was up in Maryland before he was in Florida. He was in Annapolis for a couple of years and then he went down to Florida.

GARY SWIHART: I don't remember that. It's hell when you get old!

KAREN MAYNE: And I think Lisa Moss was there and she went over to Harrison Lake.

GARY SWIHART: She went to Harrison Lake, yes, she did.

KAREN MAYNE: So, well, where do you see the Fish and Wildlife Service going over the next decade or so?

GARY SWIHART: I don't know, it depends on so many things, I don't even want to make a guess. The current administration is not very kind to the environment, period. Everything that's in place they want to erase it. Mainly Clean Air, Clean Water Act, stuff like that, which was put in place by Republicans to begin with, back in the '70s.

KAREN MAYNE: It was under the Nixon Administration when many of these environmental laws were passed.

GARY SWIHART: Exactly, yes it was. But anyway, who knows? I would hate to be a young biologist now, starting out thinking I was going to work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

KAREN MAYNE: Do you have any advice for those people?

GARY SWIHART: Get a master's degree and apply to the State. Their programs are pretty much in line with what the Fish and Wildlife Service does. So, it's a good education, a good college education. You can still make for a good work environment for yourself. But I don't know if anything in the government is going to be good, period.

KAREN MAYNE: Are there any other areas of your career that I didn't ask you about that you'd like to get on the record?

GARY SWIHART: Oh, I could probably go on and on and on, rambling about what it was like living in Minnesota as a kid, pretty much as an only child because my next older brother was five years older than me. When I wanted to play with trucks and cars, why, he was busy doing other things. So yeah, I had a good childhood by myself. You know I probably got, probably got my, my enthusiasm for nature, fishing, hunting definitely, probably originated as a child. My mom and dad, they enjoyed hunting and fishing. My brothers, they all enjoyed a little bit of fishing. None of them, none of them was ever as much about it as I was. Even my own kids now, my oldest boy who just retired.

KAREN MAYNE: And his name is.

GARY SWIHART: Craig. He retired from Virginia Dominion Power Company. And Mark, my youngest son. Even though Mark worked a lot with me over the years as a volunteer, he could have been a darn good employee for the Fish and Wildlife Service. He had the passion, the compassion for the animals, for the critters. So, but anyway that didn't happen. I thought I could set an example for him, but I didn't evidently. My grandkids, I have six grandchildren, five grandsons and one granddaughter. Three great grandkids; one little great granddaughter, two great grandsons, now 12 and 13. The little granddaughter is five. I don't think they can put down their iPods, or whatever it is that they play with nowadays, long enough to take in too much of nature. Which is a shame because I think a great deal of what of what we do in the future depends on how the kids nowadays are trained. And it's not by sitting indoors playing electronic games. It's outdoors doing something worthwhile.

KAREN MAYNE: So, are there any other folks within the Fish and Wildlife Service you think we should interview, retired or active.

GARY SWIHART: I don't even know if some of them are alive anymore. As you get older you lose all your friends. There's bound to be some young ones out there yet that might be good to interview. Name wise, I really don't know. Albert might be a good one.

KAREN MAYNE: Albert Spells, yeah, he's on my list.

GARY SWIHART: Yeah, Albert Spells, he could give you a perspective of the nonwhite race, you know, how they were treated in the Service, don't know, but.

KAREN MAYNE: Well, if you come up with any other names you can let me know.

GARY SWIHART: I will let you know, Karen. Yes.

KAREN MAYNE: Well Gary, this has been fun, I will give you one last chance to say anything else for the record that you might like to say.

GARY SWIHART: One thing, there was a question about you know, how the family affected your employment. Well, in my case, my wife had her own career when we were in West Virginia. She was Director of the Mental Health for the Appalachian Mental Health Center. When we moved to Warren, Pennsylvania, again, she was involved with the mental health organization up there. She had a good career. She had, you know, she was doing well in hers. But when it came time for me to move, you know, she was all for it. She didn't put her career ahead of mine. And you know, we never really sat down, I don't think in the beginning to say, Ok who's going to control where we live, or anything like that. It was mutually understood that she would give up whatever she had, just to follow my career. So, I would give, I would say, young employees, because nowadays you see more and more these days, you see two members have two careers. You got to make a decision as to what you want to do. The Fish and Wildlife Service, most of the time you had to move to get promoted. I don't know what it's like anymore. I've been out of touch with most everybody that I knew before. But it used to be that way, and I don't know if it's changed now or not. What do you say about that Karen?

KAREN MAYNE: Well, I, from what I've heard, because I do stay in touch with people, I don't think people are moving as much. And I don't know it's because the Service management has changed, or the fact that it costs so much to move people and I think people are less inclined to move because their spouses have job.

GARY SWIHART: Right.

KAREN MAYNE: Because they want their children to have a stable place, so it may be some of those.

GARY SWIHART: Yup.

KAREN MAYNE: But I wanted to go back to Mary, because since we were co-located together, I know that Mary worked on her master's degree when you all moved to Gloucester, she became a biology teacher and she ended her career up in upper management in the Biology Department, correct?

GARY SWIHART: Yeah, she retired in 2006, two years after I did. Yeah, she got her masters, she was teaching at RCC College.

KAREN MAYNE: That's Rappahannock Community College.

GARY SWIHART: Rappahannock Community College, she taught there for a while. She left the Gloucester School System and finished up her 30 years with Middlesex County, which is just the next county north of us. And she had a good, good career. Proud of her.

KAREN MAYNE: Yes, I know she's been an important part of your life.

GARY SWIHART: She put up with me. We just celebrated on 9/11. Can't forget my wedding date anymore, our 60th wedding anniversary.

KAREN MAYNE: Wonderful.

GARY SWIHART: Wonderful, wonderful.

KAREN MAYNE: Well, thank you so much, I enjoyed it.

GARY SWIHART: You're very welcome.

KAREN MAYNE: And this will go on the record.

GARY SWIHART: Very good, I appreciate you taking the time to walk me through some of these other questions that we had, and I had trouble trying to remember anyway.

KAREN MAYNE: It's been fun, thank you.

GARY SWIHART: Thank you.

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