TRANSCRIPT
INTERVIEWEE: **Billy Platt, Sr.** (BP)
INTERVIEWER: David Todd (DT)
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REELS: 2428, 2429, and 2430

Please note that the recording includes roughly 60 seconds of color bars and sound tone for technical settings at the outset of the reels. Boldfaced numbers mark the time codes for the VHS tape copy of the interview. "Misc." refers to various off-camera conversation or background noise, unrelated to the interview.

(misc.)
DT: My name is David Todd. I'm here for the Conservation History Association of Texas. It's March 1st, 2008 and we're in Jasper, Texas. And we have the good fortune to be visiting with Billy Platt, Sr. who has been a traditional hunter, has been a—a game warden and has been a—a—a private game warden or pasture rider. And I—I just wanted to thank him for taking the time to talk about his life and career in—in those fields. And maybe we can start with a question about your early days and I think that—that you've lived in this country, grew—grew up in Livingston, is that right…
00:02:06 – 2428
BP: Correct.
DT: …in Polk County?
00:02:07 – 2428
BP: Polk County.
DT: And can you remember back before the stock laws were passed?
00:02:13 – 2428
BP: Yes, back, I guess you might say I started hunting in 19 probably 45, where if you had a buckshot, it was a rarity because World War II had all the ammunition. And you could hunt probably anywhere in the country without crossing a fence. Everybody let their stock run out and when the calving times came, the landowners would get together and they'd help each other herd their cattle in. They had dipping vats scattered over the county where they would dip their cattle. Everybody would get together and get the herds together and run them through the dipping vat to—for insects and different things. But it started, you know, changing in the 50's, you
00:03:16 – 2428
had a few landowners started fencing their land. You had all of this East Texas area, a—a whole lot of it was owned by timber companies. They didn't charge anything for the hunting or grazing rights. And after a few years, they started, maybe, leasing their land for, say, fifteen cents an acre for grazing rights. And people fussed about that but, you know, fifteen cents an acre wasn't much back then. And probably in the middle 60's, they started leasing land. We, you know, the wildlife people, the open country and the way the outlaw deer hunters, including myself, the way we hunted, we killed what we—we went deer hunting, shoot a deer, period. And the deer population had nearly been wiped out. It's—it was a real low population, real low. And the company started leasing their land for hunting

rights and grazing rights, say, they were charging twenty-five cents an acre, getting, they said, get
00:04:51 – 2428
some of our tax money back. And when they started closing the land up, you had more protection for your wildlife because the landowner paying money for his lease, he wanted to protect it. And we had traditionally dog hunting, was—which was legal in East Texas. And when they started fencing this country, the dogs would—they'd turn the dogs out somewhere and they'd go into a private land that was leased. And the dog hunters would either tear a gate down, cut the fence and go in, get their dogs anyway they could. So the battle started.
DT: Tell me more about the—the other wildlife that were around here before there were stock laws. You said that the deer populations were real low. What about turkey and…
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BP: None, there were none left.
DT: Well, why was that?
00:06:03 – 2428
BP: Well, back in—I guess during the depression, we had the old eastern turkey. And they were a—a good breed of turkey, they were tough, protected their young and I guess probably they were killed out during the depression. And we went—we had a state game reserve in the lower end of Jasper County in the Natchez River Bottom. And they brought in some—a strain they call the Florida turkey that came out of low areas like South Jasper County and stocked them. And they did pretty good for a year or two, you'd see thirty or forty in a—in a bunch. And they started—they just couldn't make it, they—they just died out, weren't killed out, they just died out. And then they started—they tried several strains of turkey and oh, West Texas
00:07:14 – 2428
turkey. They come in, boom for maybe a year and then they gone. Then they started importing the old native East Texas turkey from Iowa, up in that country. And at that time when they first started, we were trading white-tailed deer for turkey. They'd fly them in here and we'd go out and turn them loose. And when they got tired of trading deer for turkey, we started buying deer—the Turkey Federation, paying six hundred dollars for a d—for a turkey. They were expensive. But they did real well, did real well. We got a pretty good turkey population now. It's taken years to build up, but we got a—got a good deer p—turkey population.
DT: What can you tell me about other wildlife back then? I—I'm curious about black bear and—and maybe if you've ever heard of red wolves around here?
00:08:21 – 2428
BP: No, the nearest red wolf we had was down along the coastal boundaries, down around Lower Liberty County, down in that area. And as far as I know now, they are extinct. They came up here trapping coyotes, government trappers; they trapped all up in this country. And they would do a DNA on the coyotes and they found a few strains in there that had a little red wolf DNA, but as far as I know, now, that's been thirty years ago or longer. It's—they're gone in this country.
DT: Wha—what about the—the black bear or mountain lions, jaguar, did you ever see those?
00:09:11 – 2428

BP: We—we have some—we have a few cougars left around in here, there's one killed ever once in a while. I haven't seen one over my years. I've seen tracks, which I know were cougar tracks. We had bear, they were predominant in the Big Thicket, which is not far from here, back in the mid 1900's, which there were a lot of black bear in this country. And habitation closed in on them, still a few scattered around the Big Thicket. But Louisiana purchased black bear from, I believe, Ohio, up in that country and they stocked them along the Sabine River. And they—they started spreading out and we had one killed in Newton County, it was tagged. They tag them when they turn these animals loose, put a tag in their ear. We had one—they had released some and a year later, this black bear was killed six hundred miles
00:10:40 – 2428
from the release site, up in a southeastern—one southeastern state, I believe Tennessee. And this bear was what they call a homer. Wherever you released them, they try to get home to where they was raised. And this bear had traveled six hundred miles in a year, it had a tag, you know. So, you know, we—we had it here, we stock deer in this country and it was—didn't have many deer, we brought in West Texas deer and stocked them and with, you know, good law enforcement and landowner participation, we've raised a lot of deer.
DT: I'm curious about some of the other wildlife that you saw when you were growing up. Did—did you ever see ivory-billed woodpeckers?
00:11:34 – 2428
BP: No, no. I've toured a lot of people in what they call the forks of the river at Danby, the river's fork, Angelina, Sam Rayburn and Natchez River come up the—the forks of the river. Well, we got a scientific area made up there, Dan Lay, I don't know whether you've ever heard of Dan, Dan was the instigator. And I've toured a lot of people up in that country over the years. It—somebody said they had heard one and I've toured them all over that country and set and listened but we've never heard a ivory-billed woodpecker. I think they're extinct, possibly there might be one around, but I doubt it.
DT: Well, we've talked about some of the wildlife that you saw when you were growing up. And—and I was curious, when you were talking just a little bit earlier about the Stock Laws, why were those passed? What was the point of—of—of enacting those—those laws?
00:12:42 – 2428
BP: Well, people—other animals, other person's animals would come in on a person's property and destroy a food plot maybe or what they'd planted for their cows and destroyed. And a lot of accidents on the highways and blacktops, people getting killed hitting stock and it was everywhere and people just got tired of it and wanted people to take care of their own animals. Now that's the reason the Stock Law was passed. And the—the small—the small stock owners, it—it hurt more really than the big stock owner because they had to do something with the small herd, they had to fence it. And it cost a lot of money to fence, a lot of money to keep it up and that's pretty well the opposition to it. And of course your hunters hated it, you
00:13:51 – 2428
know, because it fenced them out and they hated the Stock Law. So it was a battle for a long time, you know, with the Stock Law and still is to a certain extent.
DT: Can you tell me about the—the reaction to these Stock Laws, like the—I think the Garlington situation?
00:14:15 – 2428

BP: Well, the Garlington's—I came over here in '62 and the Garlington's really had the only place in this large area here that was fenced. They had about six hundred acres fenced, they raised Bremer [Brahma] cattle and they—it's a wild breed and you have to be—handle them real easy, they spook real easy. And it was a—a old maid and her two brothers; they were bachelors, lived back in there. And when the deer dogs jumped a deer, they would go in through this area of the Garlington's and scatter the cattle everywhere. And they had a hard time trying to handle their Bremer cattle, so they started shooting dogs. It's a—erupted and they shot some dogs one day and from the county road in to their house was probably a—a long quarter. This group of
00:15:32 – 2428
dog hunters were in a pickup, they drove in towards the house and these brothers, excuse me, met them and the gunfight took place. And they shot one of them, put him down, didn't kill him. And they shot the other brother and they shot him in the back. He hit the ground, rolled over and this man that shot him walked up to him and—this is first hand knowledge, you know, the Garlingtons were—were good friends of mine, real close friends, walked up to him and point a thirty-thirty at him, he said, you'll never shoot another dog and pulled the trigger. And the bullet hit him right here, I guess the old boy was pretty nervous that shot him, but he hit him right here and went under his cap and came out, of course it knocked him unconscious.
00:16:36 – 2428
And they killed one of the dog hunters that was doing all the shooting and it—it was a—was a bad place. And they killed—the Garlingtons killed one of them and they tried them in San Augustine County for it and found them not guilty, self-defense. And it was bad, all the years that I was here, there's not any—there was not any law enforcement people that would go up there and help those people. And they were badly abused by, pretty well, your dog hunters, bad. And they couldn't get any help and when I came over here, I went up and met with them. And I helped them for years and it was—that—some bad situations around there that I ran into. They never did stop killing dogs and it—they did not go anywhere that they didn't have a gun with them. They had to live that way. If they went and fed cows, they carried a
00:17:48 – 2428
gun with them. And it was a bad way to have to live, they—all they were trying to do is live in peace and have peace but it wasn't that way for them. But they're all dead and gone now and I think their relatives inherited the place and no problem up there now.
DT: You told us how hunting with—with deer hounds worked. I—I was wondering if you could talk how traditional hunting for fox and coyote worked. Ho—how was that?
00:18:28 – 2428
BP: Well they—you fox at night and coyote hunt at night. That's when your—your animals are stirring the most. And they just go out and turn a pack of dogs loose and they go out and smell a fox and start running them old coyote. And they sit around drink coffee and eat sandwiches all night and listen to the dogs. It's good sport, a good sport. Deer hunting, you—deer have certain places that they cross. They use the same area, maybe ten feet, where they cross different roads. And when you jump a deer, you put your standards, that's your hunters, you space them out, either on the road or in the woods. You s—you put the man here and three hundred yards you put another man. And the man with the dogs is called the driver. He goes around maybe a mile from there or half a mile and he starts what

you call a
00:19:34 – 2428
drive. And you turn your dogs loose, they'll jump a deer. The deer takes off ahead of the dogs and they'll cross somebody's area and they're shot and killed. And I—it's a good way to—to kill a deer and it's a—it's a—a good sport as long as you don't hunt on these pri—private roads. It's a good sport but when you had all open land, you wasn't intruding on anybody. But when the people started fencing their land, it—the problems started because of the dog situation, they'd go in on private property and—which a dog can't help, you know. He don't know what—the fence he doesn't stop and that's when the really the bad dog problem started in this country, when the fencing started, Stock Law. And it progressively got worse and you would go patrolling and you'd go out to a county road and there'd be a—somebody
00:20:44 – 2428
standing in the middle of the road with a shotgun. This might be a school bus route. And your prosecution for game violations in East Texas was terrible back in the 60's. You couldn't get a case prosecuted. I don't care what they did, you—you could file a case; the prosecutor would probably dismiss it. So, you know, we did our job, we filed cases, even though it'd be dismissed, we were doing our job. And for years I've talked to your dog hunters. I had a lot of good friends that hunted with dogs and I explained to them, you know, if you don't get off of these public roads, if you don't quit cutting these fences and tearing gates down, you're going to lose your dogs, they going to vote them out. And that's what happened. That's the reason they lost their dogs hunting privilege, which was a good sport at one time. But I don't think we'll ever see it back again, not legal.
DT: Well, while we're talking about dog hunting, can yo—can you talk about the—the breeding and training of these dog hounds the—the deer hounds?
00:22:06 – 2428
BP: Well, about any dog that had any hound blood or a cur dog will run a deer. They just love their scent I guess, but they'll run a deer. Back in my outlaw days, we used a cur dog. They were pretty well stock dogs. They would—you could jump a deer and they wouldn't run them but about thirty minutes and they'd be back. A hound might run all day and all night. He might run one deer that long. But your cur dogs didn't bark a lot and didn't make a lot of noise and that's pretty well what we hunted with. Excuse me. When I came to this country, people used pretty well straight hounds. They'd run all day and all night, but quite a sport.
DT: How big a pack would you use?
00:23:04 – 2428
BP: Oh, you'd—y—you know, deer hunting, you'd probably have two or three dogs. You might tune one loose at a time and when he quit, you'd turn another one loose, maybe in another little small area. But it's quite a sport. I still love to hear a dog run.
DT: And say you're—you're hunting for—for fox, let's stop just a moment. I've understood that—that with dogs, especially when you're hunting fox and—that there's some dogs that are good at—at following a scent and then there are other dogs that like to do the treeing and—and is that true?
00:23:50 – 2428
BP: Yes, your coon dogs, which is a pretty big sport in this country and your squirrel dogs, they're treeing dogs, which your—your average hound, you've got a—a different breed

dogs, they're hounds, but you've got, say, a Bluetick—really it's pretty what you train them to do. A coon—coon hunter will whip his dogs for running a deer. They're breaking them and they—where they'll just run a coon. Just nearly any dog, if they come across a d—hot deer trail, they going to run that deer unless they're trained not to. Your coon hunters have coon dogs that they might sell for five thousand dollars, a good coon dog. A good squirrel dog is usually a small dog and they will hunt nothing but a squirrel. And they'll trail a squirrel up to a tree and stand up on the tree and bark, tell you where the squirrel is. If the squirrel runs
00:25:01 – 2428
through the tops of the trees, the dogs will follow him. A good squirrel dog is a hi—high priced item. But we don't have near as many squirrel hunters now that we used to have because of the change in the country. The t—pine trees, nearly all of our hardwood areas are gone and it's pretty well pine plantations and your squirrels don't survive there, so it's a lot of difference in the habitat.
DT: We—we've been talking about your traditional hunting with—with dogs and for—for animals and I was wondering if you could also tell us about traditional ways of fishing that—that might've been before some of the game laws came in?
00:25:55 – 2428
BP: Well, your fishing is pretty well like your hunting in East Texas. It's a—was a lot of outlaw fishing, which we call, say, telephoning fish, shocking fish, usually use the old three or five bar crank type telephones that they used to use back when you made a telephone call. You'd ring three rings and this puts out quite a current and it'll shock your fish and they'll come up on top of the water, they're knocked unconscious and they float up. And people net them, put them in their boat, go to another spot. And this was quite a sport and it used to be legal back in the, say, early 50's, you could use a telephone legally. But there's so many people got to doing it, it was taking—making quite an impact on your fish population. And netting,
00:27:01 – 2428
a lot of people were netting legally and illegally. They had—we had a three inch net that was legal, anything under three inch square was illegal. And you had a lot of people—the small mesh net would catch a lot of fish. And your large mesh net pretty well just caught rough fish, which was buffalo and carp. But they started using what we call a booger net; it would be about a six foot hook net. They'd hang them off of little tree stumps, bait them with, oh, commercial cheese and blood. And you might pick up a net that might have two hundred head of fish in it. They were making tons of money, your illegal commercial fishermen, using these booger nets. They ran them at night and they would never turn a light on in their boat. And we started using night scopes to pick them out on the lakes, on these lar—large lakes.
00:28:21 – 2428
And we, you know, we caught quite a few of them. They might have one—one running at night, four hours, they might have two thousand pounds of fish. Well, we confiscated the fish and that cost them a lot of money and the fines was pretty high. We'd file a lot of cases on their outlaw booger net fishermen, which has slowed down a lot. It's not a lot of it; still got some going on, but not a lot of it.
DT: Well, were these traditional hunters and fishermen, were they mostly hunting and fishing for their own families and friends or were they selling it to the market? What were

they doing…
00:29:05 – 2428
BP: You—you had—you had a few people, not many that killed deer to sell, yes. But it was not a lot of it in this country, pretty well the only thing that was taken illegally in this country to sell was usually fish. And crappie, you got different areas in Texas, like the Northeast Texas where here in this area, I didn't have that problem, people selling crappie. But I went up to Northeast Texas and it was a problem there, just, you know, different things with different areas, what people got used to doing. But the fines now, it's stopped a lot of your commercial activities.
DT: You told us about hunting and—and fishing. I—I was curious if you—if you were very familiar with traditional trapping? Was there much of that going on when you were growing up?
00:30:15 – 2428
BP: Used to be, used to be. The price for pelts back in the 70's, say, late 70's, a large coon hide would bring you seventy-five dollars. And a—a lot of people started trapping and that got to be a problem. They would stop on the highways and go up under a bridge and start trapping along a stream there. They'd get up on people's property, follow these streams up—trespass. And it got to be a problem but it took a while to, you know, slow that down. Every time you have something in la—in law enforcement that gets to be a problem, you work on it more intensely and that gets it slowed down. I've worked undercover on the trapping problem and I've gone in and—so, you've got to have a trapper's license to trap and sell. And I'd go in and take some pelts in to a fur buyer and they're supposed to check and see if you have
00:31:33 – 2428
a trapper's license. And they'd pay me, usually pay you a lot less than they would someone they knew and they wouldn't know me, but they would buy it from you. And a seventy-five dollar pelt, they would offer you forty dollars for it, where if it was a regular trapper that came by all the time, he'd give me seventy-five dollars. So they was stealing. But it slowed down. The price of pelts now is—is nearly zero. It's not worth the time and effort now to trap.
DT: Well, you've told us about traditional hunting and fishing and trapping. I guess a lot of this s—started to change when the game laws were passed and started to be implemented here in East Texas. Can you explain ho—how these game laws were passed, both statewide and—and in this particular county, (?)…
00:32:34 – 2428
BP: Well…
DT: …that you were responsible for?
00:32:37 – 2428
BP: You used to have—when I went to work, you had a general law and each county pretty well set their own rules and regulations. Like Jasper County would be different from Angelina County, would be different from Newton County, Sabine County or Tyler County. Your commissioner's court and county judge, you know, a group of hunters would come in and say we need to do this and we need to do that, politics got in—into it and it was deep. And then I don't remember the year, the Texas Game and Fish Commission at that time started passing regulatory laws, which the—the Game Department would come up with some different laws for different counties. The law maybe in Jasper County, the opening

seasons and the means and methods of taking wildlife might not be the same as your neighboring county. And they tried to get everything regulated where pretty well everything would be open and closed in means and methods of taking your animals the same. And like Angelina County, you did not have to go regulatory, but most of your
00:34:13 – 2428
counties did, where they wouldn't have that burden on their shoulders, your commissioner's court and county judge. It took the burden of them when the Game Department started doing all the regulating. So it took a lot of pressure off of them and you would have a—a general law county like Angelina County. The squirrel season there opened the first of October. Jasper County opened N—October fifteenth. So I neighbored Angelina County for miles along the river and the people did not know where the county lines were, a lot of people come in this country start hunting. And for two weeks, I'd have the river bottom full of people hunting squirrels in closed season because it was before the fifteenth of October. And, you know, you felt sorry for people that didn't knowingly violate the law but you've got
00:35:20 – 2428
people that live there, that wanted to go squirrel hunting and wan—would wait 'til the October fifteenth and people that probably didn't know, was killing all their squirrels before the season opened. So, you had to go in and enforce it.
DT: Now, why were these game laws passed?
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BP: Well, to protect wildlife. You had breeding seasons that you didn't normally take your game, like deer. Deer are usually through breeding by the first part of November. So you didn't want to take the deer before they were bred. And we—that's the reason we—it's really hard to explain. A lot of—I'm—I'm not a wildlife biologist, I mean, you know, I'm in the woods all the time and that's where I live pretty well. But our deer population in this area was, like I said before, we didn't have many and they started short—shortening the season some, that helps. But we've got a—we've got a, they say, an overpopulation of deer now and they increase the season, increase the bag limits. For years, it was illegal to kill a doe deer in this country because we did not have many deer. Now, they say you don't kill enough doe deer. So it's been a drastic change, what, in forty-five years in th—your deer population.
DT: Well, you told us how these—these game laws were passed and—and—and why they were passed, but I'm curious about the reaction to it here in Jasper County or Newton County. What did—what did local hunters and fishermen think of these new game laws that were being passed and enforced here?
00:37:34 – 2428
BP: Most of them didn't like it. It was a re—revolt, it's—they burned—when your timber companies started leasing land, you started taking land out from a hunter—away from a hunter, maybe that his daddy, his granddaddy, his great-granddaddy hunted all their lives because it was open country. When they fenced it, that stopped that and this was a common answer. When you'd catch somebody, say, well, you're trespassing, yeah, but my—my daddy and granddaddy hunted here all their lives and I'm going to hunt here, you know, regardless. So, you know, you got a battle on your hands right there and if you—if you've got good prosecution and good judges, you can enforce the law. But if you have bad prosecution, bad judges,

00:38:45 – 2428
your outlaws know this and they will try you and they know that the case will be dismissed. So you've got to turn the prosecution around. You've got to turn your judges' attitudes around and you have to have the people living in an area to change their attitudes and call the judges and call the prosecutors, say we want these outlaws prosecuted. And then it starts changing. You start getting law enforcement and you start raising game because your violations s—go way down when they know there going to be prosecuted and have to pay a big fine. Only way to stop violations is you get in their hip pocket and get you some big fines. That's the only way you can do it. And education, you know. Your younger generation now, they're a different breed than what they were, you know, several years ago. They papa used to go kill deer but papa was wrong, you know, he's—he was taking game away and we're going to change that and it's done a lot of that, education.
DT: Well, when these game laws were—were passed, I guess this is in the—in the 1950's in this part of the state?
00:40:11 – 2428
BP: Well, there's been so many—it started way back, you know, in the middle 1900's when they started hiring a few game wardens. We've gone—at one time I was working four counties at one time by myself. I didn't get a lot done. I did more running around than I did trying to catch an outlaw because you had calls everywhere. And now it's—they've got a lot of game wardens. They've got—where I—when I went to work in Newton County, I—I was by myself. They've got four game wardens working Newton County now. And it's really one of the last of the Mohicans far as outlaw country, is Newton County. The storm—when Rita hit here, there was a lot of bad attitudes in Newton County especially, and those—talk
00:41:20 – 2428
about one bad county, bad county. And when Rita hit, it just—it was terrible in this country. People didn't have electricity. They didn't have anything to eat. They didn't have any gas. They sent game wardens in here twenty-five and thirty at a time and they took people gas. They took people ice. They took people food. Even the bad, bad outlaws that really despised the game warden, got to see where he was glad to see that green pickup drive up. And it changed a lot of attitudes in East Texas about game wardens, that they're not the real bad bully bears that people have, you know, everybody—you know, there comes that blankety blank game warden. Now it's a different attitude for most of them. They still got some died in the wool outlaws but it's changed the attitude a lot.
DT: Well, can you tell us about how you became a game warden, I think it was in 1962, what was the start…
00:42:34 – 2428
BP: Well, I had a seven year old son and my little Grant, my little gang of us, and there was a bun—bunch of gangs over in—in my country, we would kill—maybe four or five of us would kill a hundred deer a year. You know, we killed lots of deer. And I shot my last one and I—I looked at it and I said, you know, I—I've got to quit this. My son's seven years old and if we ke—keep killing deer like we're killing right now, my son's not going to have a deer to hunt because there's a lot of outlaws and everybody was doing what we were doing and you could see the deer population just going down. I said, I'm going to quit it, so I quit it. And—and it was about 1960 and in '62, there was a advertisement in the paper for—looking for game wardens. I
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said well, you know, I—I've always not—I ha—did not dislike a game warden, I didn't want to see one coming, but I did not dislike them. And all my friends pretty well were outlaw hunters and I said well, I'm going to apply, see what I can do to help this situation and I did. And my boss, which he got to be my boss after I was hired, came to Livingston, interviewed me and he said Billy, he said, I know of you real well. You're a well-known outlaw hunter. I said yes sir, I know that, got a bad reputation, but I said I quit two years ago and I want to do something to help. He said, well, you know all about it don't you? I said, yes sir, I know what I—how outlaw hunters work. He said you're just what we need. I had a high school education and they hired me. And my wife carried me to Tyler, had a regional office
00:44:53 – 2428
there and I went in and met my boss. He—he gave me a law book, a badge and a commission card and the—one of the first patrol cars issued was an old six cylinder Ford, '62 model, two door sedan with no air-condition. He said, do you know where Newton County is? I said, yes sir, he said well, go over there and go to work. I did not have one day of law enforcement experience. I really did not know what a warrant was. So they sent me to Newton County. I bought my own pistol, moved in over there and it was quite a learning e—experience. So my first deer hunter I caught illegal, I caught him, a shotgun out of season, with his old dogs was running deer. And I caught him, I said, what are you doing out here? He said, just running my dogs. I said, well, what are you doing with your shotgun? He said, I just like to carry it, East Texas tradition. I said, well, you're hunting deer out of season. I said,
00:46:14 – 2428
you know, for myself, what am I going to do with him. I said, you going to have to load up with me and I'm going to carry you to the sheriff's office and we going to see what you were hunting. So I loaded him up, my first arrest, and carried him into the sheriff, locked him up. And I got—got my first lesson of politics, you know, the local sheriff and the district attorney or county attorney wouldn't prosecute it, you know. It's—people did this, this is just a way of living. And then I caught this—a few days later, I caught two men with a skinned deer. They just had the meat in a igloo. Carried them in, file on them, and a county attorney s—said—I said, I've got to file this case in county court. He said, no, we file that in JP Court. And I said, no, the law reads I have to file it in county court. He said, I'm the law in Newton County, this was the county attorney, I'm the law in Newton County. I said, well, whatever.
00:47:32 – 2428
He said, how do you know that was a deer? I said, I know a deer carcass when I see it, seen them all my life. He said, that might've been a goat. You know, this has been—how many years ago, 1962, still remember it to this day real plain. He said, it might've been a goat. I said, no it was a deer. He said, well, you can't prove that, I'm dismissing the case. So that gets a person kind riled up, when you en—trying to enforce the law and your own people in law enforcement and the prosecution treat you this way because you are a game warden enforcing the game laws. Every other law, DWI, they'd handle it, not a game warden. So anyhow I spent my training
00:48:27 – 2428
period by myself in Newton County, went to game warden school, A & M and they assigned me back to Jasper County. So I went down to meet my judges, stopped at Buna to a judge and I said, judge, I'm going to be working down here a lot, a lot of outlaw hunting here. I

said, I'm going to be working a lot of days and a lot of nights. And I said, I'm going to be bringing you a bunch of cases. He said don't bring me a game case. I said, sir? He said don't bring me a game case. So you walk outside and sit down a minute and says, you know, this is bad. When you get down here and you work your butt off and bring them in here and they dismiss them, I'm no—I'm not going to do that. So I had judge in Jasper, he was a
00:49:27 – 2428
Humdinger. He would say, whatever you want, you'll get, as far as fines. So when I caught someone down the lower end of Jasper County, I had one, two, three JP's between there and Jasper. I bypassed them all and went to my judge up here. This might not have been right, you know, but I had to get something done. And people then, back then, really didn't know that I had—I could legally file a case up here. But if they said, no I want this case filed where I live, I had to file there, if they requested it. But they didn't know that they could do this. And I would bring them up to my hanging judge and he'd hang them. So, you know, the other judges started looking at the situation and the landowners like the Withers' down at Buna, they used to call that judge right quick, say judge, you need to do something
00:50:42 – 2428
about these outlaw hunters. Said, I live here and these outlaw hunters are eating me up and Bill comes by here and he catches these outlaw hunters, they take them in there and ya'll dismiss it. Says, that's not going to work anymore. We want to see something done with them, and it started changing. When your landowners and your local people started wanting laws enforced, things started changing and they've been changing for the better ever since. It's good—good situation now.
DT: Well, tell me how you—how you caught these outlaw hunters and fishermen. I—I think when the game warden first hired you, he was really pleased that you'd had experience. How did you put that experience…
00:51:27 – 2428
BP: Well, this—you can't really train a person to be a game warden. You can go to Game Warden Academy for seven months and you learn many, many different laws for many different things, but you can't teach the instinct of a outlaw hunter. And you've got a lot of real good young men that's g—n—now you have to have a college degree. When I went to work, you had to have a high school degree. You got a lot of game wardens now, they come out of college, they've really never—they went from high school to college. They haven't had a lot of e—experience in the woods. And back in my outlaw days on a, maybe a cold drizzly night, we'd say hey, boy, this is a good night to shoot a deer, let's go tonight. We'd go, we'd kill a deer. So when I got to be a game warden, I knew all this. I mean, I had been an outlaw
00:52:39 – 2428
hunter and I knew how they operated. If I went to bed at ten o'clock at night and eleven o'clock at night, I heard a drizzle dripping off my house, I'd say, they're stirring tonight. I'd get up and put my uniform on and I'd go out and I'd usually catch a night hunter because I knew how they operate. But it's changed a lot. It's—the regulations now are stiffer. The penalties are severe for getting out here and shooting a—an old deer at night off a public road or anywhere you can be arrested and put in jail for a year. It can be a—a felony, depending on what kind case you file. But everything has changed so much, but your experience in the woods and I have a lot of young wardens come by here and ask me a lot of questions about the

00:53:53 – 2428
old days, which, you know, you enjoy telling war stories. But you've got—you've got a lot good young men that just, it takes them a long time to really learn the woods and how to really catch an outlaw hunter or fisherman.
DT: Well, it—you gave the example of when it—it might be drizzling, cold night and you would get the—that sort of sixth sense that it was time to go out and—and see what you could find. Can you give us some other examples of what a typical case for a outlaw hunter might be like?
00:54:35 – 2428
BP: Well, there's—there—there's many different chases and many different methods of chasing and means of chasing. I've had all kinds of experiences with that. I've run them forty miles, running over a hundred miles an hour at night before you can finally get one of them stopped. It's dangerous. You don't ever know what's going to happen, you know, when you get somebody stopped. A—a scared person, a young person, you've got to be careful with them because they don't think straight when they're up in a tight spot. But I've run them thirty-five, forty miles over a hundred miles an hour at night and it's dangerous. I've had them throw guns out the window. I've been nearly run over a few times when I'd try to stop one. And you catch a lot of them, you know, hunting in the river bottom, trespassing, a pretty
00:55:49 – 2428
dangerous situation. I've had—I've looked down the barrel of several guns. And I've been able to talk them out of it and I've had some people really I should have shot because it was that, you know, I'd have a gun down on them, they'd have one down on me. And it's a decision you have to make in a split second as what to do, should I shoot him? When you tell a man to put his gun down two or three times and he's still got it leveled down on you and you tell him two or three times to put it down and he still got it there. And you've got to make a decision before he squeezes the trigger or you squeeze the trigger. And I've never had to kill anybody. I've never been shot. I haven't been shot at. Been threatened quite a few times but I've never I gone off and left a man that I had under arrest in that kind of situation. You've got to think and think quick and hope you make the right decisions. I've had them—one instant, bad outlaw hunter here. He got shot and killed. He was a bad
00:57:11 – 2428
dude. And they caught him one time and night hunting and he ran from me, him and two more, I caught the two and he jumped out and ran. So I got him the next day, arrested him, made bond. And a few weeks later, I run into him and this fellow just was a bad dude. He had whipped several law enforcement officers. He'd whip people around here and put them in the hospital. He was a dangerous person. I run into him a couple weeks later and he said, you know, Billy, the other night when you was looking for me, he said, if you'd a taken one more step, you'd a been there where I was. I said, well, are you threatening me? He said, well, you just better be glad you didn't take that other step. I said, hey, let me tell you something, I'm not going to fight you because you can whip me but I got a wife and two kids at home and I said, I'm going to go home and visit with them that night. If it ever happens
00:58:27 – 2428
again, I'm going to go home. I said, you're not going to make it. I said, if you ever pull a gun on me or threaten me, I said, I'm going to kill you right there. And he got shot and killed right up the road here and—because he was going to whip a friend of his, you know, the old

boy pulled his pistol and killed him, but he died young. But you've got a lot of instances here where it's how you approach people when they're violating the law, your demeanor. You know, you don't walk around with a pistol in your hand, every time you arrest somebody and pointing a pistol at them, say you're under arrest, you handle it the best way you can and a—a good way, which comes with experience.
DT: Well, give us an example of how you—you'd diffuse a situation where the guy might—he's armed, he may be drunk, he may be young, he's scared, ho—how do you handle it so it wouldn't get out of—of…
00:59:35 – 2428
BP: Well, first thing you do, you say put your gun down. You know, this isn't worth somebody getting killed over, me or you. And you're not helping yourself and put your gun down and let's talk about this. And when you calm a person down, which it doesn't take long, you know, when you calm a person down, they start thinking a little bit about what they're doing. Some of them go ballistic and you've got to physically take a gun away from him them or get the cuffs on him and get him loaded up. You're don't have a lot of people that do this but you have a—you have—always have some people that do—that will do this. They're dangerous people. And most of them you get out here at night, most of them drinking, dope and they're—they're not thinking straight. And you just got to handle different situations as you come across it and they're all different.
[End of Reel 2428]
(misc.)
DT: While you were a game warden yo—you—you dealt a lot with your—I—I guess the violators. I was wondering if you could also talk about dealing with landowners. I—I think that you had cooperation from—from some families, like the Garlington's that you mentioned earlier, but also the—the Withers'. How could they help you do your job?
00:01:41 – 2429
BP: Well, the first thing you have to have is the cooperation of a landowner. This landowner and the people that live all out in the rural areas, you're one person. You've got seven hundred thousand acres that you patrol. And if people don't—if people don't call you when they know violations are going o—on, like they hear a shot at night, called you. If they heard a shot last night and they don't call. Call them, call the game warden the next day, say, we hear shots pretty regular down here at night. Okay, you know this is an area you better go to or need to go to and do a lot of—a lot of waiting, a lot of patience. Takes a lot of patience to catch an outlaw hunter, a lot of patience. And you have to—your younger game wardens, it takes a long time to learn this. You don't teach this in school.
DT: Well—well, say—say somebody calls and says I've been hearing shots at night and what would your next thing be to—to try and find who's shooting and—and catch them?
00:03:03 – 2429
BP: Well, I would go down and—when you do this so many years you—when you're riding down a dirt road, I don't look at this dirt road. I look at the sides of these roads. I look for a buckshot hull or a high powered caliber rifle hull. I look for a drag mark where they've drug something out through the ditch into the road, it'll always be a pile of blood where they lay this deer down to load it. I look things like this. I would mark areas that I thought I was having problems with or people was hearing problems. I would go maybe late this afternoon or after dark and these different lateral roads that run off of your main roads, I would mark these roads. I'd take a stick or limb or just tire tracks and I'd cross these lateral

roads where if a trap—track went in, you know it. If it's in and out, you know it. You check them the next morning. You check all these roads and see where the traffic's going
00:04:21 – 2429
in and out. It might be a landowner hunting a cow but you know at different—when you mark them at night, they're not going to be out there at night looking for a cow. So it's just things you just learn to pick up. It's what you call cutting sign. And it's—it comes with, you know, time and experience. But…
DT: Would you have to do some of this work undercover so that people didn't recognize that you were a game warden?
00:05:00 – 2429
BP: No, wh—usually when you're—I've worked undercover some, you know, for maybe a week or two at a time but it would be off maybe three hundred miles and I'd go work, say, illegal fishing or stuff like this and you go work undercover. Go to the beer joint and listen to them talk and different things like this. But that's not really enjoyable work. I know when I—before I retired, we had to go to a hundred and sixty-eight hours a month, work hours. And they called all the supervisors into Austin and explained all this to us. And I was a working captain. I didn't sit at a desk. I was out with my people all the time. And they started this hundred and sixty-eight hours a month and I said this is not good for us. I said I know it's—it's what—I know what we've got to do. We've got to—hundred and sixty-eight hours a
00:06:16 – 2429
month, we don't have overtime money. I said a game warden can't work that way. You can't work and do your job. A hundred and sixty-eight hours a month can't even start it. And I asked my commanding officer up there, I said, you mean I've got to go home and tell my number one game wardens that they can't work but a hundred and sixty-eight hours a month? He said that's what we're telling you. I said, I don't know, I said that's hard to do. And I had a few wardens, when they said a hundred and sixty-eight hours a month, they would have to go to work to—to work the hundred and sixty-eight hours a month because they didn't hardly do anything, you know. Some of them—you had—well you had some bad apples in the barrel. But I had some that, you know, they'd leave at seven o'clock tonight, they might not be home 'til the day after that or maybe two nights, they might be gone. I would take
00:07:25 – 2429
the first of season—when deer season opened, I had a grub box back of my car. I carried Vienna sausage, cheese, sardines and a one burner coffee maker and a pot, pour my coffee in the pot, boil me some water, make me some coffee. You know, I might not be home for two days. And sometimes I wouldn't see my children awake for two weeks at a time. I'd come in after dark, leave before daylight and, you know, she raised our children. My priority one was work. I wouldn't do it again. A game warden's wife and I've seen it so many times, they have to raise their family. The younger gen—the younger generation of game wardens—I've done a lot of interviews, before they went to work, I'd go meet with the family and maybe they been married six months, a year. I'd sit down, I'd say well, I want to tell you how it's going to be. I said, the holidays, you going to work. The weekends, you're going
00:08:52 – 2429
to work. Your wives is going to have to take care of the home. I said, young lady, can you do

that, are you jealous? No. I said, well, your husband's going to be gone a lot at night. I said, if you're jealous, you're going to wonder what he's doing all night. I said, that's going to cause a problem and I said, you will not make it if you're a real jealous type person. I said, you will be divorced probably in a year's time, I've seen it so many times. And it's changed quite a bit over the last few years. They—they pretty well give a game warden a weekend off during a month, even during deer season. You've got, you know, two, three, four game wardens to a county and you can take time off. And where, you know, back in my early years, you didn't—you didn't have a day off. You just—you worked seven days a week.
00:10:08 – 2429
And I had a radio that sat beside my bed, a mobile radio. My wife would answer the calls, call me on the radio, said go such and such a place. My wife didn't get paid for this. She would stay at home on the weekends to take calls and call me on the radio. And it's not fair the way families used to be treated. And, I mean, I was one of the worst, you know. I devoted my life to it and my wife raised our children and she did a good job with it. But it takes a special woman to be a game warden's wife. That's the way it is.
DT: Well, now, I understand that—that you worked a—alone most of the time as a game warden and of course relied a great deal on your wife to support you and—and to take care of your family and your home. I—I believe you also relied a lot and maybe didn't get the support that you needed from the sheriffs and I was wondering if you could talk about Sheriff Pace and…
00:11:26 – 2429
BP: Well, when I came here, Sheriff Pace was sheriff here, he was an old fellow, wearing old big western Stetson hat, and wore his pistol hanging off his hip like the old western cowboys. And he was a good old man but he was an outlaw hunter. And when I first came here, well, several people approached me, says, what are you going to do about Sheriff Pace. He bragged about it, about his hunting, you know, he started hunting deer when we used to, in July. So he would brag about people—about—bout it, so they told me, said, well he's hunting up here next to this old place out here. Nearly every Sunday morning, they're out there running dogs. So I made a point and I got up and I got out there before daylight, backed in there and hid my car. And a little after daylight, I heard the dogs start and when you—you start what you say, cutting off dogs, you hear them going a direction, you know they're going
00:12:37 – 2429
to cross somewhere down there, but everybody's that's hunting knows they're going to cross down there. So, the dogs, they'd start. I took off down there and stopped and the dogs weren't too far and I heard a pickup coming. I said, yeah, that's one of them and it was Sheriff Pace. So the deer crossed the road and I started—I said Sheriff, I got a job to do and I said, I'm going to do my job. I said we've got to get along, but I said, you have put me on a spot. And I said, I don't like to be put on a spot. I said, this is wrong. You—you—you're a sheriff, a law enforcement officer and you put another law officer on the spot. I said, that's wrong, and I want you to tell me and mean it that you going to quit this. Now put me out here like this again, because I said, I'm going to be here, I'm planning on staying. He said,
00:13:48 – 2429
Billy, I'm sorry, he said I've just done it so many years, he said, I'm sorry. I said, wait 'til deer season opens. He said, alright, I promise you. I didn't have anymore problems with him. And then had another sheriff in a few terms, no problems. And then a fellow ran for

sheriff. He was the first man I ever caught with an illegal deer. He was an iron worker. And he ran for sheriff and he beat my incumbent sheriff. And the night of the election, I walked up there and I'd had some pretty bad problems with him, his daddy and all of his sons, I mean, nose to nose problems, you know, get—get down and dirty. I walked up there and I said, Aubrey, I said, we've had a lot of differences, pretty bad ones and I said, you got a—you going to be
00:14:55 – 2429
wearing a badge and a gun. I said, you're life is going to change. I said, you're going to be enforcing the law and I said, I want to let you know right now, bygones be bygones, and if you need any help, you pick up the radio and call me or the telephone, I'll be there as quick as I can drive there. He said, well, thank you Billy Boy, that's what he called me, Billy Boy. So two weeks later, we had two county operated radios, one for me and one for the warden at the south end of the county. Two weeks later, his chief deputy called me and he said, Billy, I want those radios out of your car and I said, what are you talking about. He said, I need those two radios. I said, you're kidding me. He said, no, Aubrey wants them, sheriff wants
00:15:56 – 2429
them. And I said—I said this is terrible and I said, it ain't supposed to be this way. I said, I get my calls—my wife works, I get my calls through the sheriff's department, that's who calls—they call the sheriff department. They call me and I go on—on the call. I said, taking my radios? So I called the commissioner down at Buna. He was a good friend of mine, and I told him what happened, he said forget it. He said, I bought those radios for ya'll. He said, they belong to the county but they're assigned to ya'll. He said, forget it. So, it rocked along there and if I caught a night hunter, put him in jail, they would give him a—a blank bond form. He'd walk down there, beat me down the steps and never close that door on him and bring a bond form
00:16:57 – 2429
back the next day. That's not good, that's not justice. And I put up with it for two—two or three years. And I'd meet one of my folks out here in a rural area and says, well, did you catch those hunters the other day? I said, what you talking about? Well, I called in, had some dog runners out here. I said, they wouldn't give me my calls. They'd call in there and they wouldn't call me and tell me there's a violation going on. Well, this was setting me back because I had worked hard to get a good reputation and answering your calls and take care of your business. I wasn't doing it because I wasn't getting the calls. So I got a job offer, a promotion up at Mount Pleasant and I took it to get away from this, a bad situation. Had the warden down,
00:18:02 – 2429
just retired, Kirbyville. Sheriff Cole was from Buna. His running buddies were—you want names, were the Carroll boys, group bad bunch of folks. They would sell deer, they're one of the groups that did this. And Raymond was working down there one night and he was two miles back in the woods, wasn't nobody miles of him. His car started out and he was in a posted hunting club and he stopped him at (?) Carroll's and they had a deer loaded in the pickup, and killed a doe deer. He stopped them and one of them, it was three of them, one of them grabbed the deer and took off with it, trying to take off. And Raymond started after him and got [IA] deer and they run up there and got Raymond's pistol out of his holster. I mean, he was by himself back in the boondocks. And they kicked him around there a little

bit and stuck that
00:19:17 – 2429
gun at his head, says kill the SOB. And one of them had enough sense, said, no, we ain't going to do that. So they threw his pistol away, cut his radio wires, threw his car keys away and left. Wasn't nothing he could do. And he walked out and called and got some help. They arrested them the next morning. Tears me up to even think about this. They arrested them the next morning and they did not do one thing with them, put them on probation for six months. And Raymond caught them again and he called me that night it happened. I was in Huntsville and I trained this boy. He said, Billy, I'm a—I'm ashamed that this happened to me. I said, Raymond, don't be ashamed. I said, you know, be glad that you're alive. But I said, you just learned a lesson tonight, how to handle situations. I said, you should've come out
00:20:28 – 2429
of there with that sawed off shotgun and you should've handled that situation right there, dared one of them to move. And I said, this toughened you up and it did. But this is some more of the judicial system that he—we had when I lived here. The district attorney was a good friend of mine. I had known him since high school and he was a hunter, was a good hunter, wasn't an outlaw, but him and Cole were pretty thick. And, you know, a prosecutor will do whatever the—pretty well whatever the sheriff's department wants to do. If the sheriff's got a case, he goes—talks to the district attorney about it and district attorney says, well, what do you think about it? Says, ah, it ain't nothing to it, let's just kick this one out. That's what happens.
00:21:29 – 2429
That's the judicial system. So it wa—nothing ever happened about it and said, I got to get out of here. Well, I was already gone then. But your judicial system has changed a lot. People got a lot of money in your hunting clubs, some of them paying twelve hundred dollars a gun to hunt here in a hunting club now, you know. It's high dollar hunting here now. And people are more interested in what's happening to a game violator, so they call these politicians, tell them, you know, we want this thing handled. You know, the trespassers and outlaw hunting, we want it taken care of and they do the people's wishes.
DT: I'd like to return to that in just a moment, but I thought that while we're talking about, you know, times several years back, you—you might be able to tell about some of the other game wardens that you worked with who, you know, had—had tough run-ins and—and some of whom were actually shot, killed. I think you mentioned Mr. Murphy and Mr. (?).
00:22:48 – 2429
BP: Well, J.D. Murfrees lived at Mauriceville, which is just south of the Jasper County line in Orange County. And he got a call late one afternoon, it was in December of '60, 3—I—I believe '63, maybe '64. And (?) ducks. It was just the old end of my county and w—I was fifty miles from there. He always just worked lower end of the county, Newton County, Jasper county. If you got a (?), he lived right there. We didn't pay any attention to county lines; we just went where it was going on. And he went up there and walked in on it and these two boys was shooting ducks, it's an old slough that ran through here, wa—waist deep—deepest part then it come out shallow. And one of them shot a duck. Of course, it was after hours and the duck fell right in front of J.D. He had slipped up there and was hiding behind
00:23:56 – 2429

a tree. And this boy walked up, started to pick the duck up and J.D. just stepped out and said you're under arrest. And he turned and ran and he got—went through a little shallow place and then hit this water about waist deep and he stumbled. And J.D. was—well he was—we figured from the pattern that was in where he was shot in the stomach, we figured he was nine feet from the end of that shotgun. And he turned around and he shot—tried to shoot him in the head and the pellets hit the straw part of that hat, didn't hit him in the face and it turned that hat around on his head. This happened in a matter of seconds, and he shot J.D. in the stomach. You know, when J.D. bent over, he shot him right there, a full load of shot, the wadding
00:25:02 – 2429
was in his mouth. Of course, it killed him instantly. There was another old boy with him and there was three more of the older group just a little piece down this slough. So they drug him out in this slough and covered him up with sticks and everything they could find. They covered him up and was going to leave him. And they went up there and told the older bunch about what happened and they said, you know, they discussed whether to leave him or what to do and they said, well, we better call the law, so they called me. And we all got down there, it was, oh, ice everywhere that night. We spent the night down there, built a fire. And went through all the deals the next day about what happened and he wasn't lawyered up at that time. So they tried him, found him guilty, sentenced him to two years in the penitentiary, that
00:26:12 – 2429
was a victory for them, for the attorney and—and sev—that was in '63 or '64. '75, when Ronnie Germany was assigned St. Augustine County, I had interviewed Ronnie the year before for game warden applicant, I interviewed him, me and two more people. And he made it. Ag teacher, had three children and young, he was a super person, super game warden. He ran into the—a doctor in St. Augustine that had a little place out in what they call Old Ice Bayou. It's a bayou that runs up in—behind his—his place he owned. He had a little shotgun house on it and had it—the ole boy, single and he was oh sixty years old, sixty-one, or two. And he let him stay there and the doctor called Ronnie, said there's been some illegal squirrel hunting behind my house out there where this old man was living. And Ron said, well, I'll check it out. And he had a—had a recruit with him, a brand new game warden and he later
00:27:40 – 2429
drowned up there, him and another boy one night. And Ronnie drove up to the house and the old man, he made whisky, he was an old whisky maker. And he jumped up—he went o—he went to the house on a little old tractor and got off the tractor and Ronnie drove up there and he came out on the front porch and had a rifle with him. And Ronnie got out of the car and the rookie stayed in the passenger side. Ronnie got out to talk to him, didn't accuse him of anything. He said, I run into the doc—to the doctor and he said there's been some illegal squirrel hunting out here. And he said, well, I don't know what you're talking about. He said, get your blankety-blank ass out of here, he said, don't want you around here. And he just had this gun up like this and Ron said, hey, okay, he says, I just want to talk. And Ronnie turned
00:28:43 – 2429
and started walking to his car and he shot him right under the shoulder blade in the back, twenty-two, which it—that wasn't fatal right there. So up in that area, we didn't have really

good radio communications, so Ronnie started to call in to get some help and the radio wouldn't—it wouldn't reach that far. So Ronnie made a fatal mistake, the rookie made a fatal mistake. Ronnie got out of the car, grabbed his shotgun. H he said, I ain't leaving; I'm going to get him. And he said, go out where you can get radio communications and get some help in here. So Ronnie didn't know how bad he was hit, but he was lung shot. And the old man went out the back door, took off running and Ronnie behind him and the old man got behind a tree and Ronnie had buckshot in his right gun. And Ronnie got behind a tree and
00:29:59 – 2429
they started shooting and Ronnie hit the tree a bunch of times with buckshot, you could see the tree where it hit. So Ronnie passed out on the—this happened, you know, twenty or thirty minutes, maybe a little longer. And Ronnie was bleeding but if—if he'd a got—went straight out, went to the hospital, he'd still be alive. But anyhow, that old man walked up there and shot him right there with a twenty-two to finish him off. And he took off, so we had a huge manhunt all day and all night. That old man hid down there and I went to his brother's house. He didn't live too far over there, which was a nice fellow. We figured he might come over there to his brother's house. His brother said, I ain't seen him in five or six years. He said, we don't talk, he said he makes whisky. And I said, why would he kill a—a man that
00:31:01 – 2429
wasn't even fixing to harm. He said, because he had a badge on. He's made whisky all these years and he hates a man that carries a badge. I said, well, bad. So that night, we had three game wardens in his house and he had a screen door. And about two or three o'clock that morning, it was a bright moonlight night, it wasn't anybody going to go over to that house, nobody was to go anywhere close to that house. They saw this figure walk up. He got to that screen door and they all opened fire, you know, he was—a—he was done with and he wasn't going to kill anybody else. And they all emptied everything they had and they ain't touched him, they wasn't ten feet from him. And he took off running and the ranger there, which was a good friend of Ronnie's, Dub Clark, had a young highway patrol with him and they heard all the shooting and they took off down the road and they topped the little hill
00:32:21 – 2429
and there he was with his arms up like this. Well, I wished he had been one of us. He wouldn't have got three years in the penitentiary. They would've buried him right then. But—and I got on Dub about it, I said Dub, you know, I'm a law abiding citizen but I said, that outfit right there just killed one of the best, shot him down cold-blooded murder, said, he don't deserve to live. He said, Billy, I wanted to but I couldn't. He said, I had that young man with me. You don't ever know who you got with you, he said it was just couldn't do it. Said, if I'd been by myself, we'd a had justice in a hurry, which, you know, I guess I shouldn't say this but, you know, there's times and places that you get justice, you do it yourself. He got three years in the penitentiary. And how can you—how can you figure that? What's justice? But, you know, back then that was the kind of the feelings about a game warden in
00:33:42 – 2429
this country. It's a—you're a lot of people's enemies. And you got a jury up there and this is something as you work every day and do your job and do it right, file good cases, you've got to change the people's attitudes towards a game warden, that they're not a old bear out here—you're filing and arresting everybody they see out here in the woods. You treat people like they need to be treated and ought to be treated and do your job, do it right and

you get people that respect you. And Ronnie was a—a respected person. But these counties, you—you s—you get a twelve man jury there, you're going to have some—probably some outlaws setting on it that does not like game wardens. They going to hang you up and that's what happened. But…
DT: Let's see, in 1985, you retired from being a game warden and became a—a deputy…
00:35:07 – 2429
BP: Investigator for…
DT: …investigator for some of these private lands…
00:35:14 – 2429
BP: Yeah, Louisiana Pacific Corporation.
DT: …timber lands. Ca—can you tell about that new job you took on and how it differed from being a public game warden (?) state?
00:35:23 – 2429
BP: Yeah, we had about five hundred hunting clubs on a million acres of land that we owned. And I was pretty well the—I might—you might say the ambassador for the company to these hunting clubs. I knew a lot of the people, you know, been here for years, knew a lot of them. And I visited the hunting clubs and discussed different rules and regulations and things that we expected from them. And my final years was trying to fight timber arson. And they had—was closing the dogs, voted the dogs out, the game department. And these people in this country was hostile, bad. And they blamed the timber companies for everything that—that happened around here, they would blame the timber companies. And they started burning these plantations and we might have a—oh, I know or I remember one day when it
00:36:38 – 2429
got to be the worst, we were just spread out everywhere at daylight and we had seventy-five different fires start in one day. And what they'd do, ninety percent of them, they'll take a piece of rope, quarter inch rope, they either want it a foot long or six inches long or whatever. They wrap six or seven matches around that rope, tie with tape, tape it around there. They light this rope and it burns real slow. They'll ride along there and just pitch it and it goes out, you know, in a ditch and it—it depends on how long the rope is. It might be an hour before this rope barely burns down and strikes the matches and the fire is gone. It's a—I worked what eighteen, seven, eighteen years, never made a fire case. None of the Forest Service investigators never made an arson case. It was the most frustrating work that I've
00:38:00 – 2429
ever done in my life. I always—I was always pretty good about investigating a case and making a case, game cases. But arson cases, if you drive around a turn in a road and you see somebody, its—fire might be big as a washtub but man, standing there, you run up there, uh huh, said, I just, man, I come around that curve and that fire was burning, somebody just set it. You've got an impossible case to make. You can't make a case, can't prove it. So that went on for, oh, a long time and it just was getting worse. We had fires over there in Newton County and it'd, oh, it would top these trees. It was like you see in the mountains but these young—these plantations—they had planted these plantations and it's nearly a solid plantation.
00:39:06 – 2429
And these fires get to going and it's—it's even age forest and they'd get up top of these trees

with your wind and it—it sounds like a tornado. I've been right in the middle of them, jumping highways and burned thousands and thousands of acres, burned homes up. This was all these dog hunters setting these fires, retaliation. And it—it got where it—some of your timber companies said hey, we're going to have to pull these hunting leases and let them have it. I said, hey, you don't do that. You don't give in to violators and thugs that violate this law and burn your land. I said, you cannot give into them. I said, you've got to fight them. I said, you just replant it. And, you know, everybody wanted to give into them, but you can't give in to thugs and people like that. You got to do what you got to do. But the—the
00:40:15 – 2429
companies, you know, they—they started—they didn't back down. They just went in and harvested what they could and replanted, cost them millions of dollars. But—and we pretty well knew who was doing it, you know. We could probably pick ten people and it would probably be four or five of them that was setting these things, but that's part of it. It's changed a lot.
DT: Well, did—did you ever find people spiking trees as well…
00:40:52 – 2429
BP: Doing what?
DT: Spiking trees so that if they went through the saws, they might hurt somebody who was running the mill?
00:40:59 – 2429
BP: A—a little bit, not much of it, very little of it. We've had a—I had one new grader burn one night. I got them. They burned—completely burned this grader up. They—had a full tank of diesel. That night, they went in and took the fuel filter off and set it on fire and—but we got them. One of them got a year in jail and cost us, oh, I—a hundred thousand dollars to re—they rebuilt it, cost about a hundred thousand dollars to rebuild it. You can't make them pay for it because they didn't have any money. You can't demand restitution if the person hadn't got money. So they got a slap on the wrist. That was during the Cole days when the sheriff—he was still here when I retired and came to work for Louisiana Pacific, but he didn't—things like that, he wouldn't fool with. Anything that had to do with hunting or violations like that, he wouldn't touch it.
DT: Wa—was there much timber theft or…
00:42:15 – 2429
BP: Yeah.
DT: …or fence cutting that was going on?
00:42:17 – 2429
BP: Yeah, yeah, we had a lot of fence cutting, a lot of fence cutting, not a lot of timber theft, some but not—usually it might be five or six acres around somebody back in the woods, their granddaddy used to own, maybe the timber companies has—has had it but these nesters, you know, their granddaddy used to own it or their daddy and they s—say, well, it's ours. And you—you could forget about doing anything about that. They won't touch it.
DT: I understood that some of your work for the Louisiana Pacific with these—some five hundred hunting clubs was trying settle differences among the hunting clubs.
00:43:06 – 2429
BP: Yeah.
DT: Can you give some examples of that?

00:43:09 – 2429
BP: Well, you had a—you might have a ten thousand acre hunting club here that's trying to raise trophy deer. You had another small hu—small hunting club over here that they would shoot anything. And you'd always have problems with them squabbling about this and that, your members of this ten thousand acres, the members of the club, they would get to squabbling about this and that and they don't like the president of the club and the board of directors. And it—it was just—it was a battle to try and to keep these hunting clubs satisfied. And, you know, I'd go in, meet with them, say hey, you need to do this, you need to do that. Some of them did it, some of them didn't. But kind of trying to be the peacemaker and have a good hunting club that raised game and take care of game. That's what raises
00:44:14 – 2429
game, is to—we had hunting clubs, we had very little game. But when your land was leased and you had your hunting clubs with people paying money for it. And there's hunting clubs in Jasper County right now that the ones that run the hunting club back in my days was some of my worst deer hunters, outlaw deer hunters and they got into a club. I had an instant one time, I heard some dogs running and this was one of these pretty bad deals and I run around try to cut the dogs off and I saw two men run through the woods. And I pretty well figured who it was and I kept trying to find their pickup. I knew they had a pickup hid somewhere. So I went around an old road, went into a dead-end road and this old black gentleman lived in there, a little old shotgun house, had a little old icebox, this—had ice, it wasn't electric. And I went in there and I—I said Unc, he was just an old black man that was old, I said Unc, you seen this fellow, I named his name, lately around here this morning? He said, no sir. And I knew what this outlaw did. He would carry this old ma—man a hindquarter off a deer pretty regular. So this old boy that I was after was in on
00:45:59 – 2429
this shooting at the Garlington's. He's the one that put that thirty-thirty right there. He—he was pretty bad, had to watch him. This was a little—real small house, probably five hundred square feet, little ole shack and I said, you got any meat in that refrigerator, in that icebox? And he said, no sir, and I said, do you mind if I look? And he said, no sir, and I reached and I got that handle and I had this sensation that you get sometimes. And I knew somebody was at my back and I turned around and there this fellow was, that far from me and he was blood red in the face, he was hiding in that house. And I automatically just slapped my pistol and I come out and I said, Charlie, don't you touch me. And he started cussing me. I said, get outside. I said, you ain't going to get a hold of me. And I put him outside and we sat down there for an hour. I said, Charlie, you know, you're going to have to
00:47:15 – 2429
stop this. I said, all this land is leasing up. I said, you're going to have to change your way of hunting or you're not going to have a place to hunt. I said, it's just that way, and I said, this business in that house, I said, that could've been a bad situation. And he said, well, you know, you get somebody hemmed up, and I said, yeah, I know what you're talking about. I said, you're hemmed up and you want a way out of there. And tears was running down his eyes, he was bloodshot, I mean, he was out of control nearly. So sit down there and we talked for an hour. I said, you're going to have to lease you some land and start you a hunting club. He said, I would die and go to hell before I pay twenty-five dollars to deer hunt. And I said, well, you're going to have a lot of problems because I said, I'm going to be

here. I said, now don't you be scared of me, but I said, I'm going to do my job and you ain't
00:48:21 – 2429
going to like trespassing and going through this all the time. I said, you ain't going to like it. And it wasn't a year. He leased him some land up there. He's one of the best cooperators we got in this country, don't violate the law around him or he'll get you. Just a change in attitudes, but it's—I didn't file on him and I thought I got through to him and time our conversation was over I—I could see that he was doing some changing and he did. So, example of talking to people and trying to get them to change their attitudes and he did. And it's great when you see things like that, you know, things that you—how you change people and got them going the right direction. And when you get an old outlaw hunter that does this turnaround like I did, when I turned around, I turned around all the way. And a big percentage of these hunting leases now are—that's running it are some—were some of the worst
00:49:35 – 2429
outlaw hunters that I had. And it makes you feel good to see them in their position doing that and they change a lot of people that run with them. You know, some of their old outlaw buddies, I've got some over there at home that, you know, they're some of the worst. And when this game warden that's here now, Phillip Wood, his daddy went to work over there in Polk County. So my boss called me, he said Billy, need to go over there and get with Jimmy. He was new. He said, he can't make a case and he said, go over there and work with him some. So Phillip was just a little ole boy then and I went over there and got with Jimmy one night and we drove out on a hotspot, some of my old hunting territory. I backed in there and got in the sleeping bag and he got in his over there and we set there about ten o'clock. He
00:50:43 – 2429
said, you know, I been getting some reports of some hunting over here twenty miles from there. And I said, no, I said Jimmy, we're not going to leave here. I said, we're going to sit here 'til daylight. About an hour or two later, he'd—well, he'd been getting some calls. I said Jimmy, don't even mention it. I said, we're not leaving here, we're sitting here 'till we catch a night hunter and we will get one before daylight. And about three o'clock that morning, pow, up, down the road, I knew every inch of that country, so I said, there it is. So we bailed off of the hood and jumped in the car and took off. I knew one hadn't come from our left or right and I went about a mile and I saw a taillight and I said, that's going be them. They've turned around and going back, probably shot a deer there and just turn—come on down and turn around, going to go pick it up. So I running with my lights off and I
00:51:48 – 2429
got up right to them and I pulled my lights on, the race was on. And we hit a hundred miles an hour down that old black top and there's a fork in the road up there and one of them went to the left and one went straight to the right. Jimmy was about to have a fit. He'd just gone to work. And I said they going to get to that forks that road, if they take a left, we going to get them right there because they going to have to slow her down a bunch. And I wasn't sitting on their bumper but I was, oh, a hundred yards behind them and when they got to that—there was a little ole church out there, when they got to it, I saw that break light hit and I said, they're fixing to do something. And I saw those headlights start this. They made about two complete circles. And I went by them and I don't know how I missed them, they just—good Lord was with me and I was trying to keep my car from—

00:52:47 – 2429
under control and I got it turned around, got back in front of them and it was some of my buddies that I'd hunted with. I said, fellows—the game warden over there—they—they was putting it on him. He was a rookie, you know, and I said, I've told ya'll I had a game warden shot over there and they sent me over there and I told my friends he didn't—wasn't—get killed. Some night hunter that shot him, he got over it. And they sent me over there to work with all my friends and I said—told them, I said, ya'll get out here and violate the law and I catch you, you going to go to jail. I said, if you're my friends, you won't do it. I said, that I'm o—I'm over here working. And this one that was driving the car, he said, man, I'm sorry Billy. And I said well, you should've stopped when that red light hit you. He said, what are you going to do? I said, you going to go to jailhouse tonight, that's where ya'll going to
00:53:54 – 2429
spend the night, jailhouse. And old Jimmy made an outstanding warden when he found out patience. You get there and you sit. You not going to make a case riding around on the roads up and down the highways, you got to sit. And he made a dandy and he died here a few years ago, had a brain tumor. And his son, well, he went to work about two years ago. He got his degree in criminal justice and—well, Jimmy had moved to Nacogdoches and had a brain tumor, killed him. But his—his son is so much like his daddy, he's [IA]. But so that's good experiences.
DT: You've—you've talked about how things have changed, you know, the—the laws have changed, s—some of the people have changed, the culture's changed…
00:54:54 – 2429
BP: Yes, oh, yeah.
DT: …and—and you—you've—I think, off camera we talked a little about how some of the—the changes have been in land use too that—that timber p—practice has changed over the years and that pine plantations have gotten planted and prescribed burns are used and clear-cutting's used. How's that changed the land around here?
00:55:16 – 2429
BP: Well, if—you know they've—all your timber companies now have gone to even age forest management. They plant this plantation and, say, twelve years, they'll cut it for pulp wood. And we've got these different age plantations everywhere. But before they started clear-cutting, this was all natural hardwood and pine and we didn't have real good deer population. And they started this clear-cutting way back yonder, Kirby Lumber Company, which Louisiana Pacific bought Kirby. And they started clearing all this land and you had this lush green foliage that's coming up and it's ice cream to deer. And the deer population, because of the—the plantations, started booming. It brought on more deer because of their habitat is—was lush. But when your plantations get four or five years old, it shades out everything
00:56:34 – 2429
underneath it. Nothing grows under these pine plantations, nothing but pine straw. So you lose your squirrels, which depended on the hardwood. You lose your deer, they depended on the hardwood. But at the same time, if you have more plantations, more clear-cuts, they'll have a place to go. But everything now is—it's—there's clear-cuts but the—the age of the clear-cuts has so much to do with deer habitat and squirrel habitat, that it's—it's just nearly a solid pine plantation in East Texas. That's all you see. You see a hardwood tree, you

say, how did they leave that tree? They go in, when they cut these clear-cuts, they'll be—be a little stream coming through there. It might not be that wide, but it'll have a little hardwood on each side. They call it a SMZ, stream management zone. And they leave this little
00:57:41 – 2429
strip of hardwood. This is political. It has nothing to do with deer habitat or any other type of habitat. There's not enough of it. But your timber companies leave a little bit of stuff like this and these big firms like Lowe, Parker's, that sell lumber, your environmental groups come in and look at the way timber companies are handling their land. And I don't remember what, but the timber companies pay these people, they're outside people, but it might cost LP, Louisiana Pacific a million dollars to sponsor this stuff over their lands. These people come in and see are you leaving enough F—SMZ zones? Are you doing your roads where they won't wash everywhere? And you get this stamp—they will give you a stamp or approve or disapprove the way you're doing your business, environmental-wise. If they don't
00:59:06 – 2429
have—when they sell their—their timber products in their—at their mill, the lumber and the plywood and so forth, if they don't have this stamp, Lowe's won't buy it. Your big lumber firms that—the retailers will not buy your lumber. And it's a—a—a deal that they kind of force it on you. It—it's—it's really not—it hasn't—I don't think it's helped because the timber companies—and you know, I work for one, and if I don't—if I hadn't a been working for them, I would probably have me a—a card walking in front of their building saying, don't do this to us. I mean, I—it—it was this—this bad with me, is the way the timber companies have handled their lands. They've—when Hancock bought Louisiana Pacific, I went with—I went down and met them and I said, I'm not here to try to go to work for ya'll like I'm working for Louisiana Pacific. I said, I'm through but I said, I want to sit down and talk to
01:00:43 – 2429
you about your land usage. I said, I understand ya'll going to go up on your leases, hunting leases. I said, don't do it. I said, ya'll don't know these people in this East Texas area here. I said, you don't know them. I said, I know them. I said, your local people take care of your land, you know, they do. Your local people take care of the timber companies' lands. And I said, when you price these people out, they all know how to strike a match. And I said, you are going to pay for it and you're going to pay dearly when you force these people out and lease these hunting leases to a millionaire down here that comes up here once a year and uses this for a tax write-off. I said, you know, they don't mind paying ten dollars an acre, but I said, these local people can't do it, they just can pay this. And I said, they're all ex-
01:01:54 – 2429
outlaws, most of them. I said, they've hunted this ole country all their lives. I said, you better take care of them. And they've started—that's been two or three years ago, they've started kicking these prices up, which, you know, your board of directors said we're not getting enough money, let's go up on these hunting leases. But I said, these board of directors are from New York and all over the country, I said, they don't have to live here with these people. I said, you know, one big fire out here can cost you a million dollars quick.
[End of reel 2429]

(misc.)
DT: When we were on the last tape, you were talking about how Louisiana Pacific had sold this land, I believe, was it Hancock, is that right?
00:01:21 – 2430
BP: Yeah, Mopus and Mopus sold to Hancock.
DT: And it sounds like a number of these companies, International Paper, Champion and—and…
00:01:31 – 2430
BP: All split up.
DT: …Louisiana Pacific and just recently Temple-Inland…
00:01:34 – 2430
BP: Temple, right.
DT: …have sold their lands. And I was curious what sort of impact that is having on the habitat and wildlife around here.
00:01:42 – 2430
BP: Well, it's going to take a few years to see the impact of it. You don't know right now because it hasn't been enough time. I know some of them have divided the land and are selling off particles of the big landownership. They're selling parts of it to different groups. And most of them that I hear about and some of the foresters that talk about it, sa—these people are not buying this for the long haul. They're going to buy it for maybe four or five years, cut the good timber off of it, get their investment back and make a lot of money off of it. And then what are they going to do with the land, a—are they going to sell it to sub-dividers and sell it off by five acre blocks or whatever and make a ton of money and sell this land just like that, you
00:02:53 – 2430
know, four or five acres at a time. Is this what—it's happened in other places, but i—if this is what's going to happen to you—your large landowners like Temple, I know they just split off ten thousand acres of this Hancock land that they purchased from Mopus and they've just sold ten thousand acres of it. But they had, you know, they—they been going in and cutting the best and you can get returns back quick selling this timber. And probably timber prices now has gone down some, but as long as your mills have got plenty timber, the prices of timber g—goes down, is when your demand, you know, that's like everything else, the meran—the demand raises the price of your timber if your mills start running short. LP shut their Silsbee mill down and Bon Weir, they shut Bon Weir down, which you looking at both mills,
00:04:13 – 2430
seven or eight hundred people. And your logging contractors, they all had to go somewhere else. And they're—they're over logging, a lot of the mills, there's so many loggers that went out of work, they're all pretty well going to what mills are left and they're blocking them out and they're not getting to work much. So it's affecting the whole economy in East Texas because timber business is the economy of East Texas, you know, that's it. Shut the timber industry down, you're shutting East Texas down, except for maybe Jasper County, which Sam Rayburn tourist industry here is a big, big thing. It keeps Jasper going is your tourist industry, fisherman, tournament after tournament which has no, you know, it's not anything to do with the timber companies, but everything works together. It's—it just remains to be seen how it's going to affect our wildlife and our hunting clubs. It's just going

to be in the future, probably pretty near future, the effect of breaking up these big timber companies.
DT: I—I guess and another land use change that—that i—is in process now is that there's a lot of discussion of some reservoirs on the Natchez River and—and elsewhere. Wh—what do you hear about that?
00:05:56 – 2430
BP: Well, you've got you—your companies fighting it. I—it takes your prime habitat, game habitat, out like Sam Rayburn. Sam Rayburn—I was here when they were clearing it and I watched, you know, thousands and thousands of acres of hardwood, pure hardwood just cleared. And it—it's taken thousands and thousands of acres over there, prime wildlife habitat out, will no longer be here. They've kicked the Rockland Dam a—around now for several years. That's when they built Dam B; they built it and were—were going to build Dam A, which would be the Rockland Dam, above here, running north, northwest. That would be a huge reservoir like Sam Rayburn. And you've got a lot of environmentalists that are fighting this tooth and toenail, which that's great. I don't—I don't want to see any more huge lakes in
00:07:16 – 2430
our bottoms. That's the only thing you got left. And your environmentalists are fighting it. Your timber companies are fighting it and they're not—not getting along too well with developing the Rockland Dam. And I—I don't think I'll live long enough to see it. It will probably be built in the future. They'll have to have water, more water. But I don't think I'll ever see it because there's too many people fighting it.
DT: I guess the—the last change I wanted to ask you about that you've seen is the passage of Hurricane Rita through here in—in the fall of—of 2005. What—what kind of impact did you see from that storm?
00:08:06 – 2430
BP: A lot, a huge impact. Of course we had millions and millions of dollars worth of damage all over this country, the eye hit us. And I've got a deer lease about fifteen miles from here that borders the Big Thicket for about three miles. And I'm a squirrel hunter and about all I hunt and the Big Thicket—of course, I said join me and I always got a permit every year to hunt in it, it's free. But I could go out with a twenty-two and kill ten squirrels, my limit in an hour and a half or so, if I—if I want to kill that many. But it was huge hardwood and pine plantations. I mean, not plantations, natural hardwood and pine, huge. I want to say it's been three years ago, can't keep up with the years, anyhow, I been in there—I believe my road, it borders the Thicket and everything outside the Thicket and my club is a plantation
00:09:22 – 2430
(?). And the habitat in this Big Thicket was just, you know, hardwood trees everywhere, huge acorn crops and you cannot walk. It's about six thousand acres in that area, you can't walk fifty yards. I've been hunting three times. I killed one squirrel one time. I saw another squirrel fifty yards from me I could not get to. The huge hardwoods are just s—solid, all the tops, everything fell together. You don't see—and it's been this long, you don't see a squirrel nest on what hardwood that's left, you don't see a squirrel nest. I got one tree right here got ten nests in it. And you don't see—I don't know what's happened to the squirrels. I think it killed them, I don't know, but they've never reproduced and it's sad. But your—you know, they advertise a Big Thicket—come enjoy the Big Thicket, you cannot enjoy this Big
00:10:36 – 2430

Thicket if you can't get in it. They don't—it's a—a—an area, a wilderness area that they call it and the pine beetles have gotten in it and killed several thousand acres of your huge pine trees. It falls over and rots. And I don't believe in that, you know, I believe in taking care of the Big Thicket. If it wasn't for it, we wouldn't have anything to look at that me as a child used to look at, natural woods. It's a unique place but it's certainly a unique place now since that storm because it—it just destroyed—still got plenty pines growing. It didn't do a lot of damage to pine but it just nearly destroyed the hardwood. And it's sad, you know, I won't see it in my lifetime ever come back and a lot of people, young people now will never see it as it was, you know, before Rita. But there's nothing you can do about it, you know. I think they should have gone in after the storm and harvested this hardwood. There was millions and millions of feet of hardwood that could have been harvested and it
00:12:08 – 2430
would've cleaned up the area some, you know, taking this—all this stuff out of there. Where now it's going—it's rotten. It's got the rot and just takes this stuff years to—to be able where you can walk through it. But it's—that's—wilderness areas are fine but there's—there should be a—a—a grey line in here where in a disaster like this was, they could go in there and do something with it and help the Big Thicket but they didn't and they won't. So, you know, that's just the way it is.
DT: Well, this makes me think of a question we often ask as we start to wind down interviews and—and that's about favorite places that people have that they enjoy visiting, that—that gives them some solace and pleasure. And you've mentioned this hunting lease that you visit near the Big Thicket. I know that you like to go fishing over at Rayburn and I'm sure there are other places. Maybe you can tell us about some of the places you enjoy visiting.
00:13:22 – 2430
BP: Well, I really don't enjoy Sam Rayburn. I worked it for all these years and I had more problems on Sam Rayburn with recreational incident than I did with any of these old outlaw hunters. You—you know, I don't—Sam Rayburn's a big lake. I like the rivers and the small lakes, that's where I like to go or anywhere in the forest, you know, where you've got natural forest. I get tired of looking at pine plantations. But Sam Rayburn is a—it—it's a unique place and it keeps this country going as far as tourists. But, you know, I like to sit here and watch that pink tree right up there, you don't see a lot them anymore.
DT: Redbud?
00:14:26 – 2430
BP: Yeah, that's wild, in fact, I got it down there next to the Thicket and dug it up when it was a little ole thing, planted it up there, two of them. But I really don't—besides the woods, I don't have a—really a favorite place to go, not in this area, unless you want to look at pine trees.
DT: Well, one last question, you know, you've spent a lot of time trying to protect the game around here at—and no mean cost to yourself…
00:15:04 – 2430
BP: And what?
DT: At no mean cost to yourself, I mean, it's a—a frightening kind of job to have. I'm curious looking back on it, wh—why did you do this? Why was it important to you to do this work?
00:15:18 – 2430
BP: Well, I took it personal. You know, they say don't let your got—job get personal with

you, I'm right the opposite. I'm going to say a game warden, that's a good game warden, takes his job personal. And if you don't take it personal, you're not going to really care about this ole boy you hear that's killed fifteen deer. You know, if it's just, well, he's killed fifteen deer. But to me, it got personal. I—I'm going to catch him and I'm going to make him pay for all these—all these deer he's killed. But I was reading an article a week ago; it was in a game warden publication. The president of this publication had written an article, he had his priorities, one, two, three, four. The top priority was God, great. The second priority was family, great. His thirty—third priority was friends, great. His fourth priority was game
00:16:50 – 2430
warden work. That don't fit with me. I just—I really—when I looked at that article and I looked at that fourth priority, I said, that—that game warden not doing his job if that's his fourth priority. He's working forty hours a week and probably not working that much. He writes a good article and he's the president of the association, but I said, that man's not a game warden. And that's the way I felt. And to a degree he's right which I—maybe that should [IA]. My first was work, second family. If I had it to do over, my first would be family, second would be work. And I'm a Christian, but God would not be my first priority as far as my job goes or my life because my job was to catch outlaws and that's—that's the way it was. And I have enjoyed my work, good gracious alive, loved it. There's not—I had some bad days, some bad nights, sometime I didn't know whether I was going to get home or not but I enjoyed getting up and putting my uniform on and going out and
00:18:26 – 2430
go to work. And I guess, if I could afford it, I would've paid them to let me work. And I had—I was working with one of the young ones here last year, oh, he was gung-ho and we was sitting out here one night and he said, Billy, he said, I love this job. And I said, I know that, but I said, you know, you told me something here a few weeks ago, that you got your sleeping bag and you went down to Evadale and you was gone three days. And I said, you got a wife and a little baby setting out here. I said, you're going to lose them. He said, no. I said, yes you are. I said, I'm telling you right now, ya'll are from (?), your wife doesn't have any family up close. And I said, you're gone all the time and you talk about doing this. And he had told me, he said, I'd pay to work, I said, okay, you're a dedicated game warden and I admire you for that but you better take some of this time to go spend with your wife
00:19:48 – 2430
and kids. Six months later, she packed up and left him. And that's where priorities get reversed, which family should be first and you still got your priorities, the family first, you still got time to do your job. Maybe you going to, you know, going to spend a little time, too much time out, but don't give up your family. And I hated to see this worse than anything. I told him, but he was just exactly like me, he thought he had to be there twenty-four hours a day or somebody's going to mess up and he wouldn't catch them. But it's been interesting and it's a job that you got to love to stay with it if you do your job.
DT: Well, clearly you did and thank you very much…
00:20:54 – 2430
BP: I love it.
DT: …for telling us about it.
00:20:56 – 2430
BP: Well, I enjoyed your visit and—and it's good to be able to—to tell people about things that went on that they don't know about.

DT: Well now we know a little bit more, thank you so much for explaining.
00:21:06 – 2430
BP: Well I appreciate it. Ya'll doing a good job.
[End of Reel 2430]
[End of Interview with Billy Platt]