

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Bill Stransky

INTERVIEWER: David Todd

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Google Voice [00:00:00] This call is now being recorded.

David Todd [00:00:03] This is David Todd.

Bill Stransky [00:00:06] It's Bill Stransky.

David Todd [00:00:08] Hello, Bill.

Bill Stransky [00:00:09] This is a recorded line.

David Todd [00:00:11] It is. You're right.

Bill Stransky [00:00:12] This will be, we will put some measure in what I say.

David Todd [00:00:18] Well, we, we think what you say is worth keeping for posterity.

Bill Stransky [00:00:25] OK. So we want to go through these lists of questions or issues and so forth. Yeah.

David Todd [00:00:32] I, I would and I, but like you said, this is recorded and just for proper protocol, let me, if you don't mind, just sort of map out. Well, what we plan on doing and make sure that you're on board with this, I have a little recitation here and it goes like this: with your approval, we are planning on recording this interview for research and educational work on behalf of the Conservation History Association of Texas, for a book and a Web site for Texas A&M University Press, and for an archive at the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas. You would have all equal rights to use the recording as well. And I want to make sure that that's okay with you.

Bill Stransky [00:01:21] Yes.

David Todd [00:01:22] It is. Great.

David Todd [00:01:25] OK, well, let me just map out what, what we're, where we are, when it is, and so on. And get started.

David Todd [00:01:36] It is July 30th, 2020. My name is David Todd. I am representing Conservation History Association of Texas today. I'm in Austin . And we are conducting an interview with Bill Stransky, who is executive director of the Texas RICE, short for Texas Rice Industry Coalition for the Environment. And he's been active for many years in habitat

restoration at the various National Wildlife Refuges, including the Aransas, Boggy, Brazoria, Anahuac, and so on, as well as private tracts. And I think our goal today is to try to talk about his career in this area and get his insights about the decline of snow geese and Canada geese and other waterfowl along the coastal plain in the state. So that's that's our hope.

David Todd [00:02:31] We usually start this with a question about your background and how you got interested in wildlife and natural resources.

Bill Stransky [00:02:39] I am the executive director of Texas RICE and I grew up huntin, since I was really young.

Bill Stransky [00:02:47] One of the first places, early places, that I waterfowl hunted was on the Eagle Lake prairie on what is now part of the Attwater's Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge. So I just learned from being around it and a lot of that time was spent in rice fields and then hunted a lot of areas like over south of Winnie and then lease hunted for many, many, many, 40-plus years, probably, down in Calhoun County. Much of that on what is now the Foester Whitmire National Wildlife Refuge.

Bill Stransky [00:03:19] So I also gained a lot of lot of time being around the prairies and marshes and rice fields and birds.

David Todd [00:03:31] Was there, was there anybody in particular who introduced you to hunting.

Bill Stransky [00:03:36] Yeah. And my father took me take me hunting. Yeah, really generated the first connection to it.

David Todd [00:03:49] And so that was really when you were very young, as a child. And if I remember, you were in the investment business for a while and then returned to doing this as more of a full-time.

Bill Stransky [00:04:03] Yes.

David Todd [00:04:05] Kind of career. How did that happen?

Bill Stransky [00:04:07] Well, I worked in the securities industry and felt like I'd done enough. You know, just, you know, just high pressure and stress and I just felt like I had enough and decided I wanted to do something else. You know, it wasn't nearly as fulfilling as working in conservation, probably paid a lot, certainly paid much better. But, but that, this is, you know, just doing something to have some belief in and a commitment to, it certainly, it means a lot.

David Todd [00:04:43] And did, did you help start this group, Texas RICE? How did the organization begin?

Bill Stransky [00:04:49] Yeah. Yeah, I was one of the early-on people that was involved in the, back in the, probably the early '90s, like '93, '94. The group didn't do much. And then when I was doing in 2000, they said, you know, if you want to be the executive director, have at it. So I had at it. So that's what, that's what it is.

David Todd [00:05:12] And tell us a little bit about Texas RICE. What's the organization's kind of mission and what are some of its accomplishments.

Bill Stransky [00:05:19] Well we try to help implement conservation issues in the Texas rice belt, which runs from the Texas/Louisiana border down, you know, inland two-three counties, down to, yes, three counties at some point, some places, down to Victoria, down to say, Seadrift. That would be the Texas rice belt, down to Guadalupe, you go down to the mouth of the Guadalupe River, I guess would be pretty good, and down then, you know, along the Gulf of Mexico, on the edge of the coast.

David Todd [00:06:01] Can, can you help people who aren't familiar with that part of the world know what that habitat's like, or was originally?

Bill Stransky [00:06:09] Well, originally, it was all a tallgrass prairie, down then it transitioned to fresh and intermediate marsh, and then the salt marsh. And of course, you had the bay systems and the prairie was filled, it was filled with potholes, some areas more than others, but a lot of these sandy prairies were just full of potholes, much like the prairie pothole region up in the Dakotas. Only we just don't have the, you know, the roll in the land like they do. But similar, similar. And you know then that was changed to become agriculture from, you know, a lot of the rice farming, a lot of row crop too but a lot of rice farming.

Bill Stransky [00:06:45] And that's, you know, that was the transition it made. It was just lucky that it remained highly productive for, wetland-dependent birds. I mean, it wasn't a plan. It could have just easy been developed as cotton or sugar cane or whatever. But rice grew well down here. And rice is a wetland plant and it grew great. And the depressions that were mostly still out there, they just farmed around them. And, you know, so that created just fantastic habitat for the birds that migrate down here.

David Todd [00:07:13] Well, tell us a little bit about the bird; have heard it's always been a pretty famous area for birds of many kinds, but especially waterfowl and geese.

Bill Stransky [00:07:22] Yeah, for most of my life, you know, we were just the center of the world for, for geese. I mean, we were. I mean, if you want to put a pin on a map of where you go find geese, in the winter, the Texas coast would certainly be one of those pins. And, you know, all through the '70s, and 80s and '90s, our numbers of white geese and specklebellies were going up.

Bill Stransky [00:07:49] But about that time and the '90s or, we started to see some declines in the Canada goose numbers, the big Canadas had largely quit coming already. I didn't see many big Canadas in my life, a few. But when you saw them, it was like, wow, that's some big Canadas. And, you know, on occasion, someone would shoot one, but they were, they were largely gone and they shifted somewhere else.

Bill Stransky [00:08:11] And but we still had tons of smaller Canadas, just tons of them. But then that started changing in the, you know, sometime in the '90s, maybe in the mid-'90s, latter part of the '90s. Yeah, mid-'90s. But we still had tons of specklebellies and tons of white geese, that was largely on the increase.

Bill Stransky [00:08:28] But then in 2003, something changed. I mean, that was just, that was a level of birds that we had not seen. It's like, man, this isn't good. And, you know, you wonder

if it's a blip. But after, you know, several years, you kind of think, no, that's not a blip. I mean, something's happening.

Bill Stransky [00:08:46] And, you know, I think we went from in the late '90s, mid, late 90s, we went from having over 1.1 million snow geese in the counts; in 2003, we just went way, way down to 363 thousand, if I remember correctly. That's just white geese from the aerial survey. There's more than that, but that's what they counted. And, you know, and then, you know, now I think last winter we counted 288 thousand. Hell, heck, there's been some years since, you know, the last ten, fifteen years, we've been down to like below 200, like 190, one, something like that.

Bill Stransky [00:09:22] And also with that, you know, we just don't see Canadas anymore. I mean, they're gone. The Canadas are gone, you know. You know, I mean, people see a few, but realist. I mean, really, if you were looking, you would have, I think, an equal chance of seeing a whooping crane in the Texas coastal plain, as you would a Canada goose. Probably better, for me, for where I travel, I'd have a better chance of seeing a whooping crane than a Canada goose. I'm not sure I saw or heard one all last year. I think I saw one the season before, I think. I'm just trying to say, you know, I mean, there are a few come down on, people shoot a few, but it's I mean, it's like it's just like crazy.

Bill Stransky [00:10:06] But now, what we're losing big time are the specklebellies, the white fronts. And we used to be the center of the world, for that bird in the late fall. It would just be the majority of the, specklebellies of the central Mississippi Flyway would be on the Texas coast at the very end of October, first of November, along with a good sprinkling of snow geese, and then the snow geese would come big on the next big major front after that. And we've just, I mean, we went from counting, you know, 140, 150 thousand specklebellies in those aerial surveys in there, you know, like third week of December. And by that time, they're diffused and it's harder to count them. You know, to like, 15 thousand, 16 thousand. We would, we'd have five, six hundred thousand of those birds here in very late October, 1st of November, and I doubt, you know, that you could find 50,000 now, 60,000. So it's probably down 90 percent.

David Todd [00:11:02] And when did the decline in specklebellies happen?

Bill Stransky [00:11:05] Yeah, it's started occurring about the same time. There's a real parallel there. But, boy, the last several years, this, that thing has really come off. And it's kind of, I would think that would be the last one to hold on in any kind of decent numbers, because that's an earlier migrating bird. That's the earliest migrating of the geese. So I would think that one would tend to hold on longer. But it hadn't and, you know, a friend of mine, a bunch of years ago, I hunt with a lot of, we goose hunted for many, many, many, many years with, you know, this problem was going on. He said, you know, everybody's worried that we're going to lose the snow geese. I'm telling you, the one we're gonna lose next is gonna be the specklebelly. You know, he's said, I hunt down there in southern Matagorda County. He said, we used to have at least have 50,000 of these in the fall, you know, at the start of goose season. There'd be a few thousand snows with them. Now he said we're lucky if we see 5000, he said, that would be a huge group. I think this year he said like a couple thousand.

Bill Stransky [00:11:56] So yeah, it has changed tremendously. It really has. Duck numbers have changed a lot, too. And we don't have near the pintails we used to. Some of that's due to what's happening here. A lot of that's due that there's not as many pintails in the world. Mottled ducks are way down - way, way, way down. And that's due to habitat loss. That's a

bird that stays on the Gulf Coast its entire life. And, you know, we just lost grasslands and we lost marsh. And just, you know, that bird is, that's totally that that that can't be blamed on anything but what's happening here? You know, we're doing everything we can to try to help that bird as much as possible, provide water in the spring so it can raise its broods.

Bill Stransky [00:12:36] Man, it's just hard to offset a lot of these factors. You know, just our duck counts are not what they used to be either. They're still OK. You know, it's good duck hunting, have a lot of ducks.

Bill Stransky [00:12:47] But it, too, is not what it was, you know, years ago. I mean, look back at old photographs. You can look at Robert Sawyer's book about waterfowl hunting on the Texas coast. He wrote a couple of them. And you just look at those pictures and it's just full of mallards, mallards, just tons and tons of mallards. And, you know, that's another bird that we just don't see much of anymore. Occasionally, you see groups here and there that are good numbers. But man, that was just the staple bird and canvasbacks, too. So yeah, there's been a lot of change, you know, since. Well, not particularly good either.

David Todd [00:13:28] No. Well, can you help us understand what one might be a factor, or I guess it's a whole mix of factors.

Bill Stransky [00:13:33] Yeah, well, our habitat base has declined. That's, that's a bet that, we've got sprawl. We lost rice farming. And, you know, when rice farming went bad, we lost a lot of acres and we've all lost to urbanization. You know, the Katy Prairie is all but gone. I mean, they are saving some of it north of 10. But, you know, that's, that's just, I mean just huge impacts. I mean, areas like East of Baytown: used to see lots of geese out there around Barbaras Hill High School, in that area, you know, going to Old Lost River is gone. It's just completely gone. And you know...

David Todd [00:14:08] And that's gone for residential development?

Bill Stransky [00:14:11] Yeah. Mhmm. Residential, industrial, whatever. Yeah. You know, our marshes are toast. I mean, you mean, you know, they didn't call it Goose Creek over there in the Baytown area for nothing. No geese there anymore. So, yeah, we've just lost a lot of habitat.

Bill Stransky [00:14:27] I still think the geese can make it down here and do fine. But, you know, like out in the West Coast, you'll see them, big numbers of snow geese in urbanized areas like in Richmond, British Columbia, I mean, thousands and thousands and thousands of soccer fields and ballfields and walking around in the parks and you see some of that down in California, too. So they could do fine just walking around eating grass. But that's not what those birds want. In our flyway, the Mississippi flyway, they can find a lot of grain and there's a lot of farming, you know, a lot of water and a lot of farming up north. A lot of no-till and it doesn't get harvested until the fall. And it's just laying everywhere. And I think the geese have just figured it out along with other species and, you know, the combination of habitat degradation here and, and, you know, figured it all out up there, the advent and the increase in no-till farming has been, you know, has been two of the biggest factors. And they farm like one to one and one-half million acres of rice in Arkansas, and they flood the world for duck hunting. So there's just, just a ton of water and a ton of food on that landscape. And Kansas has tons of no-till farming. And my gosh, it's just endless, you know. So yeah, it's all just a combination. Yes. A lot of birds in those areas. A lot of geese now. Tremendous numbers of geese.

David Todd [00:15:45] So these birds are shortstopping. They're, they're just not migrating down as far as they used to?

Bill Stransky [00:15:50] They can take the cold. If they can find water and you know, and their food isn't covered up, not just completely froze shut, or under two foot of snow, which rarely gets, they can take it. They can go to the rivers, they can go to deeper water.

Bill Stransky [00:16:04] Now the ducks are different. You know, they've got to have shallow water to feed in, for the most part. So if that freezes up, you know, they're forced to move. It's tougher for them. You know, some ducks do feed on land like mallards and pintails do it. But for the most part, ducks need to be in water to eat, so that they'll, really, really, really cold weather will push them out quicker. You know, they can take the cold, but they just can't, you know, they can't access the food. Same thing with shorebirds. You know, they just can't take freeze-up. They've got to have moist, or, you know, moist ground or, you know, ground with just a film of water on it to walk around to feed on. So, you know, they've got to continue to push down here.

David Todd [00:16:48] Well, I think you mentioned this in Arkansas some of the agriculture's no-till. How does that affect waterfowl?

Bill Stransky [00:16:56] Well, I don't think they get much no-till. I don't know about no-till in Arkansas, but I've seen a lot of it in Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska. I know there's a lot of no-till up in the panhandle of Texas. And that's just where they cut the crop and they don't plow it under, so all that grain, all that food is just laying on top of the ground. And then when the farmer plants again, they just drill their seed right into that, that stubble, that residue.

Bill Stransky [00:17:18] And here, farmers, for whatever reason, say they can't or won't do that down here. So our row-crop land just keeps getting plowed after they harvest. And absolutely just not the food out there for birds of any kind if it gets plowed under.

David Todd [00:17:35] So there's vegetation and seed and grain and so on for the ducks and geese to feed on.

Bill Stransky [00:17:42] Everywhere, everywhere. Yep.

David Todd [00:17:46] Well so you talked a little bit about how the rice cultivation has been pretty successful, I guess, and other kinds of grain further north in Arkansas, Missouri and Kansas. What is happening in Texas? Why, as I understand, the acreage has gone down a lot.

Bill Stransky [00:18:06] Well, it's a combination of reasons. The farm program changed. People could get paid not to plant. They could just take take the farm program payments and didn't have to have a crop. Farmers lost their leases because of that. The landowners just took the payments - that happened in '95. There was a huge, huge decline in acres then, and we never really came back from it. Economics of farming got bad. Loss of you know, loss of land to urbanization. You know, sprawl. So it's a combination of things. A.

Bill Stransky [00:18:36] Nd, you know, when prices get better, we just don't have the infrastructure and the people to come back and put that land back into production. And it's cheaper to farm it elsewhere, although we have advantages, we have two crops and we're closer to the ports, the major ports. So that helps. But. But still, yeah, that's all they can do with

the land in Arkansas, is just farm on it, especially rice. So that's what they do. Rice in Arkansas is the big one. But then you've got Missouri, Mississippi right next to it. Then northern Louisiana. And that is just a huge swath of rice farming. You get up into northeast Arkansas, that's just what it is. It's just endless. And, and so you've got, you know what, I don't know, 75, 80, probably 80 percent of the world, of the U.S.'s rice production right there. Probably three quarters. Some like that.

David Todd [00:19:30] And there just isn't the competition from development, industrial and residential up there?

Bill Stransky [00:19:33] Right. Water's easy to get at and they can drill wells and they're for each field and they're real shallow. But we do have advantages because we're close to ports, we have, grow a better quality rice and we get two crops. You know they can cut the rice and put water back on it, and that rice will regrow and grow. It will grow. Just like cutting grass, you know, and regrow. Cut it again in the fall about the time that the birds get here. So it's, it's real good. It makes for a pretty good system.

David Todd [00:20:07] So that's in Texas here, they have this ratoon crop, this second crop.

Bill Stransky [00:20:11] Yes. They don't do that in other states. Texas, Louisiana, the two states to do that. Coast to coast, coastal Louisiana suffered declines, too. I mean, they've lost a lot of their birds, too. Same thing, lots. Yeah. They still got, you know, they still got some, some, some strongholds for geese in southern Louisiana and the coastal counties where they farm a lot of rice and have habitat but they just don't have near the birds they used to, near the geese they used to. I mean, all those, a lot of those geese used to go to the marsh and then feed in those rice fields which were adjacent to it. But muc like here, I mean, that just don't exist. Those geese just aren't in, in the same big numbers down there anymore.

David Todd [00:20:56] I think you mentioned that, that further north, they're able to just drill to shallow aquifers and get irrigation water. My understanding is that, that particularly in the lower Colorado River basin it's, irrigation water has gotten increasingly costly and actually some of it's gotten cut off. Can you tell us a little bit about that issue?

Bill Stransky [00:21:20] Yeah. There's no doubt that's that's hurt 'em. I mean all our water authorities are, you know, the water is pretty expensive. It didn't used to be that way, but it is now. And farmers have to be very careful with their water use. That's one reason they have to level their fields so that they can better control their water and limit their water use. And so, yeah, that's been a, that's been a big factor. There's no doubt.

Bill Stransky [00:21:44] I think rice farming down here is doing OK right now. The prices are OK. They're not great, but they're OK. And the yields they make are just unbelievable. And they're cutting fantastic, these farmers I'm talking to, are cutting some hellacious yields this year. But, but, you know, it's just where we're at now in terms of acres and, you know, I mean, things got great, like, again, you know, prices were unbelievably great, we'd pick up some acres, but we're not going back to what we used to be. You know, that's, that's, that's just not, that is not, I believe an impossibility. You know, when things went bad, a lot of wells west of Houston, like in Jackson County, in Lavaca County, certain parts of Colorado County and so forth, Matagorda County, where they farm on the wells, those wells, failed, collapsed. And it's expensive to put in new wells or rework them. And without the economics, they're all that, all that declined. And so, yeah, it'd be a lot of money to bring it back yet to get that water system going again. Probably clean out the canal system. All that cost a bunch of money and you got to

be pretty confident that you're going to have sustained years of good prices and so forth to justify that - you know, that kind of money.

David Todd [00:23:05] You were around when the LCRA cut off deliveries in 2012 to '15? What sort of effect did you see?

Bill Stransky [00:23:15] Yeah, it did. Yeah, I heard a lot of people drilled wells like from the Eagle Lake prairie, and they were to get some of that, a lot of that production back, in other areas, too.

Bill Stransky [00:23:24] But, but no it definitely hurt. You couldn't put in a lot acreage. Some acres went back in east of Houston because they still have plenty of water and but, you know, if you look at our current, I mean, we didn't, like drop, we didn't, we didn't drop precipitously after that because we were already down and we haven't gone up since it came back. So I kept saying, well, we get the rice back, we'll get the birds back. But that didn't happen.

Bill Stransky [00:23:55] Geese are pretty diverse, I mean, and they can eat a lot of stuff, but it's just I think we're just going through a shift in, you know, just this to, say this is a you know, this is like a, you know, big thing. You know, it's like a, you know, watershed kind of thing. And it's just totally changing what a lot of these birds and this wildlife we grew up with in seeing and it's changing tremendously - has and is changing tremendously.

David Todd [00:24:25] Also, maybe we can talk about some of the other factors that I've heard mentioned, I think that you'd pointed out as well. At least in the rice cultivation business, I've heard that laser-leveling has, you know, been good because they can save some water, they can stay in business, they can still flood the fields, bu, you lose those prairie potholes. Is that a factor that you think is significant?

Bill Stransky [00:24:52] Not for the geese. For the ducks, but not for the geese.

David Todd [00:25:00] And what does it mean to the ducks?

Bill Stransky [00:25:03] Well, you just don't have those potholes out there anymore. So when they drain their fields, they don't, a lot of people hold water on their fields for hunting or something like that. Then those potholes are gone. There's no depression out there to pond water. Even, I mean, even though they were greatly diminished in size or what they used to be, there's still something there. And you get a rain and there's just potholes, you know, little pools of water, various sizes all over the place, on the landscape. And when they put in this precision level, largely all that water just comes off when the drains were opened.

David Todd [00:25:38] I guess another thing I've heard blamed for the waterfowl declines, is the new threshers that are just apparently much more efficient than the old ones. And they collect all the rice and they don't leave much behind, and so there's not as much food.

Bill Stransky [00:25:56] Yeah, well, but, you know, they got the same combines. I mean, most of the combines that we have, farmers down here, a lot of them come from Arkansas. They go up there to auctions and buy these one- or two-, three- or three-year old machines and bring them down here. So it's the same machine. But they just have so many more acres up there and other crops too. And so, so, yeah, that's, but yeah, yeah, they reduced, you know, the reduced amount of grain in the field, it's still there, there's still a lot of grain. You can walk through a cut rice field, there's a lot of grain out there. And plus like so we cut, a lot of farmers

cut twice. So that's good. You know, that provides food, right, when the birds get here. So, so, I don't know, that's part of it.

David Todd [00:26:47] Well, I've read that some folks are also pointing to the impact of hunters that, you know, they're just more people along the coastal prairie in Texas now.

Bill Stransky [00:27:03] More people, but there ain't nobody goose hunting anymore. No, I don't think that pushed the birds out. I don't think so. I mean, it did. We've been able to shoot one or two specklebellies for my entire life and one Canada for most of our life. And those birds went down the tubes with those limits. I mean, they just collapsed. So the pressure didn't push them out. And besides, we don't have anybody hunting geese anymore. So, you know, they just come back, but they don't.

David Todd [00:27:34] So there are actually fewer hunters out there.

Bill Stransky [00:27:35] Fewer people shooting geese. Oh, yeah. Geez. Absolutely. Yeah. No, I don't believe that. I don't. I don't. I mean, people say, well, the Conservation Season, well, we wouldn't have a Conservation Season on specklebellies, Canada geese, and they left too. Mallards left. Swans left. So, yeah, I think it's just a continuation of what was happening. It's just, it's moving from species to species. You know, if you can live on land, walk around and, and find what they want to eat, which is a lot of cases, is grain, you know, for some of these birds, and that's where they want to be. They want to be where there is, you know. I think that the hunting pressure has probably been a factor with the ducks, because ducks just a lot more sensitive to hunting pressure, and that has really redistributed them. A lot of ducks now go to the, to the Hill Country to all the stockpiles that people build, you know, they don't manage. They just naturalize with submerged aquatics. And, you know, so I'll get, you know, their various sizes and depths and everything. And some ponds have got 10 ducks on him. Some got five ducks on them. Some have got 100 ducks. Well, you add up, there's a million of the ponds and everyone one of them's got a duck. That's a lot of ducks.

David Todd [00:28:49] And not as much hunting pressure.

Bill Stransky [00:28:53] Yeah. Yeah, that's, that's a, that's south Texas, same way. And when we have wet years, a lot of ducks will go to South Texas and get in those stock ponds and those swales down there and things like that, they just don't get pounded as hard. So yeah.

Bill Stransky [00:29:08] But the geese just are not as sensitive to hunting pressure, in my opinion, as the ducks. And so I don't I don't think we moved the geese with our hunting, I think they just moved because they moved. A lot of people manage for these birds and try to give them, you know, try to manage them so that they can regulate the pressure on them and keep the birds there. And that didn't stop it.

David Todd [00:29:33] What about the hunting, sort of deregulation - the Conservation Order? Do you think that had much impact?

Bill Stransky [00:29:41] No, I don't think so, because the other birds left, too. And so, no, I don't think so. I think we shot some birds. I think we shot the geese down to some degree because that's when we were getting a lot of geese when that started. Man, when they opened up that electronic caller season, golly, that thing, those things are unbelievably effective, for a couple of years. I mean, God you turn that thing on, especially if you have a good time. Wow. You know, and they had, you know, took the limits off. But the limit was already 10 or so. Then

it went to 20? So, but, you know, the, the number of geese wound down. The birds got, you know, got to down to where they were able to figure out that the callers were out and what they were looking at, which is just the decoys rather than the sound. I think, I think in a lot of cases, you know, during the Conservation Season, so it's like, it's foggy or something I think you're better off, better off just going out there and turning the thing on and not having any decoys.

Bill Stransky [00:30:40] But, you know, we just lost our birds. We don't have any pressure on these birds anymore. I mean, not really. You know, it's just not that many people goose hunt anymore because you just don't have the birds to hunt. It's more like, hey, there's some geese there, I think, I think I'll go ahead and set up a spread tomorrow. But if you were coming down here to goose hunt from another state, you couldn't, you can't book a hunt with anybody and have any kind of confidence that there's going to be huntable numbers of geese where you're going to be going. Before, you know, you could book a hunt, you know, an outside could book a hunt any day of the year and have a pretty good promise that they had a chance to take people on a good hunt, see a lot of birds. You can't do that anymore.

Bill Stransky [00:31:19] Will still have them in spots and have huntable numbers. But it's more of a, it's more like, it's more, you know, like you've got to, you've got to be ready for it when the birds are there. You just can't, like, say, well, I think on, you know, December 2nd, I booked a hunt. And, you know, you may, they may or, those guides can hunt. They may or may not have you know, geese, huntable numbers of geese.

David Todd [00:31:45] Well, it sounds like the geese are staying further north.

Bill Stransky [00:31:52] Yeah.

David Todd [00:31:52] Do you think some of it's because of climate change?

Bill Stransky [00:31:54] Probably. That's some of it. I think so. But, boy, they can sure take the cold. And if they can get to water and then the other, they can get at food, they can take it. And, you know, if those geese are up in Nebraska, you know, something, last year had some, you know, by their standards, strong numbers of geese during the counts. I mean, like, that just wasn't happening historically. And so, you know, if a goose is up there or Missouri, and it gets bitter cold and freezes. You know, they can just pop south a few hundred miles or find some warm-water reservoir or go to rivers and, you know, get out of it. So anyway.

David Todd [00:32:43] I think that one of the big parts of your work has been on habitat management and you think that that's, that's sort of the core of the problem that we've got a lot of invasives and encroaching brush, you know, habitat change.

Bill Stransky [00:33:02] Yeah. When our, when our rice farming goes out, it doesn't go into something generally that's particularly good for the birds. And so that that's hurt too. Yes.

David Todd [00:33:15] Well, maybe you can tell us a little bit about what these large-scale changes have been in the habitat down on the Gulf Coast. You know what sort of invasives you're seeing, and what the effect has been.

Bill Stransky [00:33:27] We see deep-rooted sedge, is Sege and see tallow trees, and baccharis bushes and, you know, generally it goes into grazing. Not always, sometimes it goes into a row crop, but, you know, or houses or ranchettes or trailer park, but none of that is

good for the birds, overall. At least not the kind of birdlife we're talking about. Maybe improved pasture. You know, overall it's just not as productive for the birds. So, that it's still provide habitat. Like if it goes into pasture, it's better for grassland birds. So, you know, that's got some value. But it just depends on the, on the, on the place and the, you know, the specific piece of land.

David Todd [00:34:13] I think I'd read that you were concerned at one point about this saline wedge that comes in along the coast?

Bill Stransky [00:34:21] Yeah. That's really. Yeah, that's hurt.

David Todd [00:34:24] How does that work? Somehow linked in with the Intracoastal Waterway?

Bill Stransky [00:34:29] Yeah. Cut right through fresh and intermediate marsh, and just added, you know, water from the Gulf of Mexico right into those marshes and you know when it blows hard out of the north, the marshes dewater, and tides go out. And, you know, as you go into summer, you know, you get highly saline water just pumping into those marshes, and we've got sea-level rise and subsidence and it's all bad. And those marshes get stressed out and sometimes the geese will get 'em real heavy when they're stressed out, and they just don't come back. You know, they get eat-outs and so they don't come back from. Healthy marshes will come back from it. But, yeah, that's just a lot of what's going on. Sea-level rise and subsidence combined, you know, it's really hurting a lot of marsh and then you've got the GIWW. I mean there's just so much alteration. I mean, it's just crazy.

David Todd [00:35:21] So with the GIWW, I take it, the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, if you lower the grade, then it, it somehow exposes the marsh along it to two more saltwater, is that right?

Bill Stransky [00:35:39] Yeah. Yeah. Water from the Gulf goes, you know, the bay system, it's salty and it's in the GIWW and that's all tied into the marshes, goes right through the marshes. So, yeah, and water in those marshes can be much, much, I mean, it can be as salty is a surf during the summer.

David Todd [00:35:59] So before the waterway was dredged, a lot of these marshes were pretty isolated from the bay?

Bill Stransky [00:36:06] Oh, yeah. They might get like storm surge or something like that. But largely, they were very poorly drained and you know, water filtered through them. It was high marsh, saltgrass marsh, only bulrush marsh. And, you know, they all transitioned into the bay system and there was lots of submerged aquatics. And that's why there was lots of canvasbacks like over it, like Lake Surprise and areas like that. It's just all different. I mean, just all this changed radically.

Bill Stransky [00:36:32] OK, I'm sorry. OK. Fire away. Well what were you going to tell me, ask me?

David Todd [00:36:37] Well, ask you. So you put in a lot of effort, raised a lot of money, done a lot of the on-the-ground work or try and restore some of these grasslands.

Bill Stransky [00:36:51] Yes.

David Todd [00:36:51] I was hoping that you could talk a little bit about that work, how you fundraise for it, actually done the work, and then monitored and tried to maintain it, I think at Aransas, Big Boggy, Brazoria, Anahuac, many other areas, private lands as well.

Bill Stransky [00:37:09] Yes. Done a lot of work there. Built a lot of wetland projects. Done prairie restoration, includes taking abandoned farm land and replanting native prairie on it. And also includes spraying where there is prairie that's been invaded by Chinese tallow and other, you know, bad stuff and trying to eliminate that. Turn it back into a nice, you know, high quality, functioning native prairie.

David Todd [00:37:41] So what do you see as the biggest threats to those grasslands, aside from development, cultivation, of just the kind of vegetation?

Bill Stransky [00:37:54] Well, I mean, overgrazing is bad and then. or they don't manage it. You know, they just let the tallow trees, you know, the sedge and everything take over. They overgraze it. They'll get a lot of that and if they don't graze it, it won't happen as fast, but, you know, you've got to manage it to do some sort of intelligent grazing program and maybe haying and burning and so forth. And now it just, it just varies at the location. It's what happened at Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge: they just essentially locked the gate, and walked and it turned into, some beautiful, many, many, many, many, many thousands of acres of native prairie turned into a Chinese tallow forest. I mean, like so thick, you couldn't see 50 feet in it.

David Todd [00:38:36] And for those of us who aren't familiar with Chinese tallow, do you know a little bit of history of where tallow came from and how it got established.

David Todd [00:38:44] No, I think they're from Asia. And I believe they're brought over here to be like, well, heard they were brought over and try to, you know, use the tallow to make certain products. And then I think they also brought over here to be, you know, because they're pretty and, you know, you use them in landscaping because they turn yellow and orange and you know in the fall.

David Todd [00:39:09] But what happens is that, when the tallow comes in and the other brush you're talking about is that these grass and forb dominated fields become just a lot of woodies? is that what happens?

Bill Stransky [00:39:26] Yes. Yeah. They'll just become you know, nothing really controls the tallow trees. And, yeah, they'll just take over and they get pretty large. Yeah. I mean, they get like, you know, in control. They can go like, look like a reinforced.

David Todd [00:39:41] And so how do you, how do you respond when you see something like that? I think you mentioned fire, but I guess herbicides as well. What sort of tools do you have to respond?

Bill Stransky [00:39:57] Well, yeah, I mean, fire obviously is a real good. That's what was one, the primary mechanism for prairies down here historically and you know, and you can put fire back on the landscape which is just real helpful but if the trees are too big and thick, you can't burn them out. It is just too resilient to it, even if you top-kill them, they'll basal sprout or root sprout. So you're going to have to do some sort of chemical treatment on them. And, you

know, when you're doing many, many, many thousands of acres, you know, it starts to cost money. Got to hire, you got to, got to raise lots of money.

David Todd [00:40:40] And so what is, what's your pitch and who are your funders and how do you pull together the money? It's, you know, big scale to treat so many thousands of acres.

Bill Stransky [00:40:54] You know, some of the grant programs at foundations, and occasionally the federal government has programs and sometimes the state has programs like CEAP, and that comes along every five or six or eight years or something. And you can apply. And if you're lucky and that CEAP program funded a lot of the work we're doing on the refuges. We got a real nice grant and we, by our standards anyway, and we're able to implement a lot of work on the state wildlife management areas of the Parks and Wildlife Department, as well as National Wildlife Refuge.

David Todd [00:41:31] And it's a this is usually an aerial application of Brazon, Garlon? What are you using?

Bill Stransky [00:41:42] What's that? Oh, yeah. Grazon Next has been a real effective chemical. It's almost selective for tallow trees. So that's been real helpful and it's not expensive. And so, you know, that, that was, we had some real good results with that.

David Todd [00:42:02] And so when, when these piles of trees and other brush die back, do you have to come in with bulldozers or burn them?

Bill Stransky [00:42:12] No they fall to the ground. They don't. They decompose very rapidly. Three years largely all will be on the ground. Run a fire through there, and you never know that the tree was there.

David Todd [00:42:25] So you told us a little bit about the woodies. What can you tell us about deep-rooted sedge, and KR bluestem and other grasses that may be coming in on these prairies?

Bill Stransky [00:42:39] And it's, you know, it does real well down here, especially where it's kind of moist. Doesn't like, from what I can tell them, it doesn't really like being flooded. But anyway, it's on that transition, flooded areas or however it's moist. I could I mean, it could just grow. I mean, it can take over. And if you got a lot of grazing, cows don't, don't prefer it. They'll eat it, but they don't like it. And so it does real well in grazed environments because the cows are focusing on something else. Yeah. It's very susceptible to being sprayed, which is good. But that's been a big problem.

David Todd [00:43:20] And then what about K.R. Bluestem and some of these Old World grass?

Bill Stransky [00:43:23] Yes, they're a problem, too. They're hard to get rid of. And we got a, you know, man, you know, again, they do, they do better than the natives, if there's intense grazing and God knows we've got lots of intense grazing. So that's a problem.

David Todd [00:43:43] What do we got here? So, after you've done some of this, these treatments, what do you see? What's is like? What's the result?

Bill Stransky [00:43:58] Well, you know, it's well-managed, it can turn into a really nice, diverse prairie again. A gentlemen I know harvested a few tons of, two tons, about 10 tons, 20,000 pounds of native prairie seed off the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge last year to be used primarily for, a lot of it, to be used for prairie restoration efforts on the Anahuac Refuge.

David Todd [00:44:28] So you've been involved in some of these native prairie harvests. Can you explain how that's done? And, you know, seed is cleaned and dried and so on, all these different steps to it.

Bill Stransky [00:44:46] What's that?

David Todd [00:44:48] So I was curious when, you know, like when you've worked on the Pierce Ranch, for instance, and have helped harvest some of its native prairies, to try to get a little bluestem seed. So how does that work? How do you do it?

Bill Stransky [00:45:07] Well, how so?

David Todd [00:45:10] Well, I mean, my understanding is that, you know, you've got some pretty specialized equipment come in and then you've got to clean it and you know.

Bill Stransky [00:45:19] Yeah, yeah. The combines. Yeah. Yeah. You have to get a combine and put a stripper header on it, which is different than what you're used to seeing. It's really good at removing that native prairie seed from the plants and doesn't pull in all that litter and everything. Doesn't actually cut the plant, just pulls the heads off, strips the heads off. And you had to do some internal modifications to the combine, but none of that just too, too extreme. And then, you know, you harvest it, dry it, and bag it up. And you know, you're harvesting the diverse mix. So whatever is in there is, is in there.

David Todd [00:45:58] And you found there's a market for some of this native prairie seed?

Bill Stransky [00:46:03] Yeah, yeah. Prairie restoration has been, you know, has grown. So, you know, it's good.

David Todd [00:46:18] Well let's start to wrap things up.

Bill Stransky [00:46:21] OK.

David Todd [00:46:21] We started by talking about waterfowl and their decline, and I think you pointed out that a lot of it's related to habitat changes. And you talked about, you know, trying to restore habitat and see what the possibilities are to restore and protect virgin prairie. When you look back at all this work done in Texas RICE.

Bill Stransky [00:46:47] What's that?

David Todd [00:46:50] What pops out at you when you look back at all this work you've done for waterfowl and habitat.

Bill Stransky [00:46:59] Well it's real mixed. Some has been well taken care of and still highly productive. Other areas, it's very disappointing. Just, you know, areas like the Foester Whitmire National Wildlife Refuge is extremely, extremely demoralizing. Heartbreaking to see what's happened there with the bird numbers were just insane and just phenomenal. And just,

you know, just, just, just incredible what the work did and the wildlife, and to see it decline like that afterwards because of, you know, no management, neglect, just really tough to take, you know, and watch the bird numbers just completely fall off a cliff. You know, the Nature Conservancy down there at Mad Island, same thing. Just did great work. Lots of birds, and to see the bird, you know, the waterfowl numbers in their accounts declined by, you know, 93, 95 percent. And just like, you know, just, just, just really hurts you. You know, you take all that money and do all that work. And like, this is what you get.

Bill Stransky [00:48:04] Other places like Brazoria Refuge, we're real happy with that. Takes a place that was largely in neglect and really, really in disrepair and, you know, built a lot of projects there. And at least so far, especially like last year, they had fantastic numbers of waterfowl there and other birds to wading birds, shorebirds. Just, you know, we've seen a whooping crane there in the past. I think on year you take a picture of one, a year or two later, a couple more and just, yeah, there's just tons of birds. It's really good that restored prairie and all those projects. That's, that's really good. Anahuac refuge has been good from the start and just got better with the work that we've done. State does a good job. Private landowners - very, very unpredictable. Very unpredictable - private landowners. So, yeah, just, just but yeah, it's just a real, just it's real uneven, is what I'm trying to say, in the outcomes.

David Todd [00:49:14] And from what I'm telling, hearing you say, these, these habitats just can't be ignored and expected to do well.

Bill Stransky [00:49:24] You can. Yeah. That's the problem we've had with the refuge system on the coast west of Houston. They just think you can lock the gate and let nature take over. I mean, that's just the mentality we have of the biologists and some of the staffing that come up. And, you know, it's just, you can't do that. I mean, the things that kept this a prairie and made a productive summer's wildlife has completely changed. I mean, you know, you've got exotic species. You got, you know, all this land was farmed and it's just and the prairie isn't there. You know, you don't have fire on the landscape like you used to. You don't have bison. And the marshes are all changed because of the GIWW. It's just, you know, it's just been a lot of radical change. And so, yeah, you've got to implement you've got to implement things on that landscape, you know, grazing in an intelligent manner and use it as a tool and fire and haying and whatever, you know, to keep it, you know, some spraying now and then to control the woody species, the exotics. So it just varies from tract to tract.

Bill Stransky [00:50:28] But, yeah, if we don't do it, then, you know, if you want to know what it's going to look like, you know, if you don't do anything, just go look at Barker and Addicks Reservoir. That was all highly productive prairie, filled with potholes, still is. I mean, that was never leveled and it is fantastic wetland, prairie complex back there with all the mounds and everything. And then it turned into a rice farm, a lot of it, but it still never got leveled out. And then, you know, and the Corps built it. And over time, the farming stopped. That's what, that's what the whole coast will turn into. If it's, if it's not urbanized or managed, that's what will happen. All going to turn into trees. A lot of exotics, some natives. It's not going to be what it was, you know, I guess we believe is the best for it.

Bill Stransky [00:51:16] So, yep, when we got to the Brazoria refuge and started working, if you take a picture of Barker reservoir and you took a picture of Brazoria refuge, you would know which one was which. You would have no idea. I mean, just they look the same. So now Brazoria refuge is great and we hope it stays that way. We have some fantastic prairie, zillions of miles of it, you know, going to do prairie restoration on a large scale. We can get, you know,

many, many thousands, I bet we get a 100,000 pounds of seed off that place a year if the land was there and, you know, conditions permitted.

Bill Stransky [00:51:56] So that's a real that's a real you know, that's a great, that's a great asset there. You know, that's, I mean, that's the biggest stretch of prairie anywhere around here, by far. And so, and so some of it was never farmed, and it's incredibly versal. But it came back and when it came back in but it's still nice prairie. It's just not as diverse maybe as the stuff that wasn't farmed, but it's still plenty good.

Bill Stransky [00:52:17] And so, you know, that's a real treasure to have to further prairie restoration efforts, which it is doing right now. And hopefully we'll keep doing that and keep money, you know, from the harvester, he'll maybe put some money into it to keep it sprayed and just manage, shred it, or whatever deal, whatever we feel like would be, they feel like would be best as a management technique out there that year.

David Todd [00:52:45] So, so, when you see a prairie, you see something that's pretty diverse. A lot of people may look at it and just see something that looks like a tall lawn. Can you give people who aren't really versed in what a prairie is, and what inspires you about them?

Bill Stransky [00:53:08] Well, I guess I'll draw a parallel. Watch a video of the Great Barrier Reef. And you see all the different corals in there and all the different fish and all the different shrimps and just the unbelievable amount of colors and diversity and, you know, species that have these real, you know, incredibly adapted development, you know, evolution and blend into that coral or feed on it or or, you know, or whatever, that that's what a prairie is.

Bill Stransky [00:53:38] I mean, it's the terrestrial equivalent of the coral reef. It's incredibly diverse, incredible number of flowers. There's a lot of some stuff. There's a few of some things. You've got insects that are specifically evolved to pollinate certain flowers. Just, you know, and it's just, you know, it's, it's very similar. Wildlife's very specific and it's very colorful and very diverse. So I would say that if you could picture a coral reef on land, that's what a prairie is.

David Todd [00:54:11] That helps. Well, you've been a big help. Thank you so much for taking time out today to talk about your work. Is there anything you would like to add about your work at Texas RICE along the coast and putting back some of these habitats?

Bill Stransky [00:54:28] Yeah, I mean, we're doing the best we can. I mean, we've done a lot, but I just think that, it's that conservation is going to have to go a different direction around here. So I'm trying to implement, spearhead, but I'm not having much luck. It's just, you know, it's just the machine of conservation we have here now and the way it's funded and what we do, it's just what it is.

Bill Stransky [00:54:51] And it's very hard to make this part, very hard to make those changes that we need to change conservation maybe the way Amazon is change retailing, or Tesla's trying to change, change the car industry, or computers changed our lives. That's, that's what I've, that's how big it is. That's how big a change we need. We need to go a different direction, different strategy, not just essentially trying to fine-tune what we're doing. We need to change a lot of what we're doing. Integrate some of those things into a new strategy, rather than integrate what I want to do into that, because it's just to me, it's not, to me we're not being successful. at least, not as much as we, we should be.

Bill Stransky [00:55:34] So we need to focus, look at what has been working and then, you know, implement more of that and, and direct more money into the things that are working that have demonstrated the ability to work because we have had enough time doing this now to have perspective and start phasing out or cut off the stuff that didn't work. That's the way it works in the private sector. Money doesn't flow to investments that are failing. Money flows to. It may for awhile, but it's going to cut off eventually. But conservation, I think we keep flowing money into things that I don't think are producing the kind of results that we need to see. So, you know, I think that that's a real disconnect.

Bill Stransky [00:56:14] See, but I'll put it this way. If you're the CEO of a publicly traded company and you go to your shareholder meeting, you know, your stock was, 80 or a hundred dollars a share, and now it's eight. You can't stand up before the audience, the shareholders and say what a great job you're doing. They don't care. They don't care what you say. In fact, you just going to make them mad because they know it's bad because the eight dollars says it's bad. You know, that's just reflecting your current and probably future prospects as a company. And that's saying we don't think the market, the public is saying, we don't think much about your business and how it's being managed.

Bill Stransky [00:57:00] But if you're a CEO of a stock, it was eight and that was one hundred. I mean, you could say we're not doing as well as we could. They're not going to care because the stock is 100. It is doing great. And that brings optimism and excitement about the company.

Bill Stransky [00:57:15] And so that's what I think we need to look at conservation is, you know, as crazy as the markets are, and, you know, as you know, the financial system is, the stock market is a pretty brutal judge of how a company is doing. And so that's what I would suggest to people that provide money for conservation, is look at who's doing the good work and where they're doing it and give them all the money and start cutting off everybody else and force them to do better work, just like in a marketplace. You know, people buy cars that are good and they like them or they're new or whatever. And the things that they don't like as much, they don't buy as much of anymore. And so has a way to sort itself out. And I don't think we've done that at conservation, least not like we should. And so that's, that's what I've tried to advocate. But so far, not having the kind of success I would like to have.

David Todd [00:58:08] So if I'm following you, you're thinking that the sort of invisible-hand market of conservation ideas and investments would direct responses to where you have success and instead of this sort of tip-down, committee-driven process?

Bill Stransky [00:58:29] Well, I think if you're applying to a grant program or a foundation, like you've got to have people that know what's going on that review this stuff. I mean, they're plugged in and they know. OK? It's like the FDA, the people that review drug applications, understand science, understand drugs, understand clinical trials. It's not just anybody. So, you know, people that, like if you know, if I could be a reviewer, if they just put all the grant programs and foundations, you know, that fund conservation-related work and said, you know, we we're going to have you make the decisions or the recommendations to us. You know, I've got a pretty good feel for what's going on and what's good and what's not. And so you, we would weed out all of that stuff that's not doing so well and just say, look, you know, we're just so sorry, we're not going to fund you because, you know, we just, we haven't seen the results of what you're doing or we don't think it's good enough. But, you know, go back and work on what you're doing. Make it better and submit again. And you know that, that will

help, that will help them. It will help improve the product that we're getting for conservation and you know, help.

Bill Stransky [00:59:34] And I just see this money that we get from, that we apply for, that we receive, the conservation committee, it's like an investment in conservation. And we need to see results of that investment, which is, you know, mottled ducks doing better, or lots of ducks. So what I can, you go to the Brazoria refuge and you see driving down the county road. And you know when I got an email last weekend of duck season, guy who hunts nearby, and he said he drove down the county road, he estimates and he says he estimates there are 50,000 ducks on these projects on the road and thousands of geese. I mean, that's a good return on the investment for the funders. That's a good thing. That's what they want to see. And that's what we're doing this for. Or they see miles of pretty prairie and it's being harvested now for more restoration efforts at Anahuac refuge. That's good. That's, that's a good thing. But if you see projects on private lands that are being managed well anymore, or abandoned, that's not a good investment. And we need to look at that as a strategy and say, you know, maybe we don't need to be doing that so much anymore or putting a lot less per acre into it or, you know, making some changes.

Bill Stransky [01:00:36] So that, that is my, that's, that's where I'm coming from. And, you know, a friend of mine, and we're also been helping to try to spearhead this. But so far, we're, we're not getting where we need to go. So, you know, I just. That's what I think. I mean..

David Todd [01:01:01] Well thank you for telling us.

Bill Stransky [01:01:01] Well, like, for instance, you look at the bird counts, like, the Foester Whitmire. That's like a stock price. Right? It's a graph, a graph with the bird numbers, the duck numbers. I mean, it goes vertical down. That's, that, that's bad. That's a bad stock. So, but what do we do? We keep funding more of that stuff. Like we keeping giving them money. And my thought is, look, you cut them off. Cut them way down or put, or have some things, you know, implement something where somebody is taking some better control of the place and that, you know, that, that money that's invested, we see we see meaningful improvement and results in maintaining high quality.

Bill Stransky [01:01:42] And you can't, you can't, it's, it's impossible to say that the bird number are always going to stay at highs. Okay. Yes. Just I mean, they're not going to go from 100,000 down to 2000 if it's still good. But you can have ebbs and flows, ups and downs within a range. But it'll still be good habitat that you can look at the habitat. You can go out there and see it and say, well, I don't know if I can, I understand if your numbers aren't as good as they were last year. But it's not because you're, you know, that's just the way the migrations go and rainfall and everything. There's a lot of things that affect that. But I can look at the habitat and say, you know, hey, you know, you all are doing a good job of managing this place. And so, you know, if they're doing that. But if you look at it and it's just, you know, it's just, you know, it's in disrepair, you know, it's been in neglect. I don't, I don't think, I just don't see that that's something that is easily defensible.

David Todd [01:02:38] So this is really interesting and I like the way you've, you've taken some of your interests and expertise from the securities industry and looking at the market and looking firms that are successful and those that aren't and thinking about how, you know, conservation could be restructured in this latter part of your career. Well, good, good to hear.

Bill Stransky [01:03:00] I've written reports of it or reported about this and so on but, it's just, you know, you're trying to change, you know, you're trying to change the you know, the system and the way things are done and, you know, a lot of times when you're trying to make that change, you know that it's just, it's sometimes, sometimes change is not welcomed because people like it the way it is. I don't think people fear change. They just fear change they don't like, you know. I don't think it's a change itself. It's just like, how does it affect me and is it good or not?

David Todd [01:03:47] Well and the status quo is something we all understand a lot better, and maybe don't fear as much as something new that could be harmful in some way. Well, thank you, Bill. You've been very kind to talk to us at length, explain what you're doing and I applaud everything you're working on and I wish you all the best.

Bill Stransky [01:04:08] Well, I appreciate that. You know, let me know if I can help you with anything else.

David Todd [01:04:13] Well, this has already been a big help. Thank you so much for doing the interview. Appreciate it.

Bill Stransky [01:04:18] Well, good luck. Thank you.

David Todd [01:04:21] All right. Let's talk to you later.

Bill Stransky [01:04:22] Bye bye.

David Todd [01:04:22] Take care, Bill.