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INTERVIEWEE: Glynn Riley

INTERVIEWER: Diana Dwyer

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Diana Dwyer [00:00:01] OK. Now.

Glynn Riley [00:00:02] Can you hear? Do you hear me?

Diana Dwyer [00:00:05] Perfect.

Glynn Riley [00:00:05] Anyway, we were talking about bears. One time when I was up in Minnesota, there was a young fellow there that worked for the National Park Service in Yellowstone. And they said they came upon some people that had a little girl about three or four years old and they'd rub jelly on that girl's place so the bear would lick it off. We were just talking about the stupid things that people do.

Diana Dwyer [00:00:33] I think those people should be taken out of the gene pool.

Glynn Riley [00:00:36] Yeah, I just can't imagine anybody being that dumb.

Diana Dwyer [00:00:39] One of the Park Service guys ... I went to a grizzly bear workshop up in Yellowstone about six years ago, and the Park Service guy said that he had one guy that had taken marshmallows and potato chips and was dumping it into his car. He was trying to get the bear to get behind the wheel of his car, so he could take a picture of it.

Glynn Riley [00:00:55] Gee.

Diana Dwyer [00:00:55] And other people have tried to put their kids up next to bears, and they put junk food out.

Glynn Riley [00:00:59] Down there in Brazoria County one time, I was coming down the road and there was a place where a little creek or slough or something. It had a bridge over it. And a guy had a shrimp boat pulled up in there and park, and there was a big old alligator in there. Sometimes he'd have some fish or something, and he'd feed that alligator. There was a bridge there, and I came along and there was a man standing on the bridge. And I looked down, and here's this little kid with a cottontail rabbit in its hand. And I said, "What are you doing?" He

said, "He's going to feed that to that alligator." And I said, "Man, get the kid up, back here. What are you doing?" I said, "The alligator might get his hands, you know?"

Diana Dwyer [00:01:41] Poor kid.

Glynn Riley [00:01:41] Sure. And people just don't think. I'm telling you. It was a big alligator about 12 and a half feet long. So little kid wouldn't have had a chance, if he'd grabbed a little more than a rabbit there.

Glynn Riley [00:01:56] But anyway, so where we were?

Diana Dwyer [00:02:00] Aerial hunting?

Glynn Riley [00:02:00] Aerial hunting. What did you want to know about aerial hunting?

Diana Dwyer [00:02:00] You said you did a lot of it?

Glynn Riley [00:02:04] We did lots of aerial hunting.

Diana Dwyer [00:02:05] Is it hard?

Glynn Riley [00:02:05] We have a helicopter stationed here and it's a good tool. It's a dangerous tool. Personally, I think people come to depend on it too much, and I don't think it's worth anybody's life. There's been some people lost their lives in doing that. I can sit down and make a pretty good list of people that's crashed: some that walked away and some that didn't.

Diana Dwyer [00:02:44] They call it "hard landings".

Glynn Riley [00:02:47] Mm-hmmm. I know some people who were present at some fatalities, and I pray to goodness I've never faced with that. Aerial hunting's a good tool, but the safety factor is, I'll go catch my coyotes. I'm kind of the old school. I see people call for an aircraft when they could catch the coyote. And so it's a good tool. It really is. But I think we got some folks who depend on it too much.

Diana Dwyer [00:03:30] How do you know you've got the right coyote, when you go out?

Glynn Riley [00:03:33] How do you know you've got the right coyote? Okee-dokey. That's one place where the aerial hunting thing comes in pretty handy.

Glynn Riley [00:03:44] Number one. The aircraft as a shooting platform, no more. And if you don't have, and you've got a pilot that flies, the pilot needs to have knowledge of coyotes. If he's been a crop duster, that doesn't mean he's going to make a good coyote hunter. They all ought to have to trap first.

Glynn Riley [00:04:05] And everybody that has sheep ought to have to trap first.

Glynn Riley [00:04:12] But here's the way we work it here, and it's very successful, I think. You don't just get in an aircraft and start randomly flying around looking for coyotes. If we've got a situation where there's a coyote killing your sheep, we will come over there and try to locate where that coyote is first. And we do that by, this time of year, we use a siren a lot or a

tape of coyotes howling, and those pups, this time of year, they'll answer that better than the adults. They'll give their location away.

Glynn Riley [00:04:48] Once we locate where they are, then we will go out there in the morning, early, and have a couple of people, maybe more, and we'll get the coyotes to howl, and we'll get a bearing on them and call a aircraft in and say, "We want to give you a line." And there's a guy over here gives another line, that will tell him where to go. And actually, it's pretty successful.

Glynn Riley [00:05:18] However, since they've been hunted since 1972 that way, some of them are beginning to not move. They just get under a bush and be still, and you're through. And I've seen some where they would howl and you could look and you didn't find them. So then you take some dogs and you go in there and try to make them move. And sometimes they do. And sometimes, for instance, we had a situation where Caleb said he could see the trapper on the ground with the dog on one side of a cedar tree and the coyote was on the other side of the cedar tree, and they were just going around, and the trapper didn't know it was there. So they were talking on hand-helds. So, that's the way we use aerial hunting. We locate the coyotes and go try to take care of the problem animals.

Glynn Riley [00:06:15] You can do that by killing the adults. Sometimes you can do that by removing pups, and sometimes it's - you remove part of them, then you have to go catch part of them. But the aerial hunting's real good.

Glynn Riley [00:06:31] My main concern with aerial hunting is the safety factor. I don't gun much any more. I've got some fellow here, I've got more two really good gunners. They can kill more things with less lead than I can, you know. And I got where I can't hear when they try to talk to me. I have to hold it and Caleb will say, "It's turned up as loud as it'll go!".

Diana Dwyer [00:07:04] It's like my husband, he's deaf on one side, and I think he's just not listening to me sometimes. I've got to sit on the right side.

Glynn Riley [00:07:12] But yeah, aerial hunting's a good thing. It's an expensive thing. And sometimes you wonder about the cost of it. It is awfully expensive, but it's good, too.

Diana Dwyer [00:07:29] What about dogs? Do you use hounds? Or do you know someone who has dogs?

Glynn Riley [00:07:32] We've got some fellows that's got decoy dogs, and those, if you've got some good ones, work real good. I didn't tell you about old Gus, did I?

Diana Dwyer [00:07:33] Uh-huh.

Glynn Riley [00:07:33] Well, when I first started to work, Tom Holton, he went back and made a dynasty out of business in Denver, but anyway, there was a guy in Greenville, Texas, or Hunt County - Alvin Paine, a fine man. And he had some decoy dogs, that was in 1960. This was before most people ever heard of a decoy dog. And so Tom was telling me about Alvin and his dogs, and we used to get a catch report every 90 days, and we'd look at them and see, who was doing what. Old Alvin caught just as many coyote in summer as he did in the winter, and another fellow. So I always wondered about that. It was his dogs.

Glynn Riley [00:08:35] So he had decoy dogs. Are you familiar with decoy dogs?

Diana Dwyer [00:08:39] No, I'm not sure.

Glynn Riley [00:08:41] Well, if you go where coyotes have pups, and you take dogs up there, the coyotes will attack them, and the dogs will come back to you, and you shoot the coyote.

Glynn Riley [00:08:54] Works real good because those coyotes have got their mind on that dog, and they'll come closer than the wall over there. And we have some people that have decoy dogs, and that works real good. They helped find dens.

Glynn Riley [00:09:11] We used to have den-hunters back when I was in Lubbock. We had some really, really good guys. That's when you find out how much a man knows about coyotes - in the summertime. We had more problems in the summertime here with killing, because they've got to feed their pups, and they're really good parents. They're better players than a lot of people. They'll kill just as much to feed one as they will the whole crew.

Glynn Riley [00:09:43] The den hunting used to be a big thing. There's very little done anymore. I had the opportunity - I've been very fortunate in that I've had the opportunity to go with lots of good field people, really good field people, and see how they operated and what they did. And when I was at Lubbock, there was a fellow named Tom Sparks there. He was a fine a man as ever walked, I guess. Never heard him cuss, ever. "That old Jesse!" That was his saying.

Glynn Riley [00:10:19] And so we went to Matador one day, and I found some coyote dens and the like, but I just really didn't know what I was doing. We went down to Matador and got Louis McDonnel. He was a trapper in Matador. He was a little Scotsman, little short guy, and he bounced when he walked.

Glynn Riley [00:10:39] So we took off to go den hunting. They'd get out, and they was just like two little old dogs.

Glynn Riley [00:10:47] They'd find a track, and they'd say, "No, this is not it." So finally they'd find a track and they'd look at it and they'd look at one another and they'd talk, and they'd say, "There's a den on one end or the other of this." We killed 27 coyotes that day. We dug up three dens, and we called up some old ones and stuff. So I learned a lot from them about den hunting. In that kind of country, this is very successful. In the Hill Country down here, where a lot of brush and rocks, you've got to have a dog. It doesn't work as good.

Glynn Riley [00:11:23] But that was quite an experience to see some good people like that, knew what they were doing.

Diana Dwyer [00:11:34] You think that's dying out?

Glynn Riley [00:11:34] Oh, it's gone.

Diana Dwyer [00:11:34] The new guys that are coming in seem to be...

Glynn Riley [00:11:42] I took it upon myself at one time to tell the management we need to have den-hunting schools. They tried it. We went and I got very frustrated because they had to have an airplane involved. You couldn't get the thing done for people watching the airplane, instead of watching the tracks that would tell you something.

Glynn Riley [00:12:15] I had a fellow named Randy Ferry. He's down here to Austin now. They live with the urban coyote. And Randy was up there and I told him, finally, I said, "Randy, just come and go with me. Forget the group, the airplane, the whole thing. Come, go with me, and I'll try to show you what I'm talking about." So, we found a den. I said, "There it is." He said, "That was an accident." About the third one we found, he says, "That's not an accident."

Glynn Riley [00:12:45] And so I think - I don't remember how many people was there that day or that week, or however long they stayed, but we found 11, 12, whatever dens. And I found over half of them, myself, without the airplane.

Glynn Riley [00:13:04] So I just quit going. Forget the airplane, if you want to learn about coyotes. You can fly around and see a hole, but the coyotes will tell you where to go.

Glynn Riley [00:13:12] I was going to tell you, too, what I would tell a trapper, a beginning trapper? To learn your animal. He will teach you where to catch him. The coyote will tell you where to catch him. You've just to pay attention to what he's telling you. Digging a hole in the ground and burying the trap is 10 per cent of it. Where you put it is the other 80 percent of it, and once you put it there, drawing them there is the other 10 per cent.

Glynn Riley [00:13:58] So you've got to know your animal. They'll, they'll tell you what to do. A lot of people think they want to be a trapper, and maybe one out of 100 or more might make it. There's a lot of them think it's all fun, and yes, it is. It is, it is. But it takes a special person with a special interest and personality to do it and be real good at it. You've got to be a keen, keen observer. And if you're not, you'll just be so-so at best. So that's what I would tell young person if they were going to trap: is to learn your animal and he will tell you where to catch him.

Diana Dwyer [00:15:03] Get in on the ground floor.

Glynn Riley [00:15:03] Every time.

Diana Dwyer [00:15:03] That was all the questions I had, unless you want to talk about something else that might be helpful to John, on anything.

Glynn Riley [00:15:12] Gee, I've had a lot of people tell me I ought to write a book.

Diana Dwyer [00:15:12] You should.

Glynn Riley [00:15:12] But I'm not a writer. But you can get somebody to help you with it.

Diana Dwyer [00:15:12] I think so, yeah, or even start recording yourself.

Glynn Riley [00:15:12] Yeah, I should do that.

Diana Dwyer [00:15:12] As you think of things, start putting it on tape.

Glynn Riley [00:15:41] I've got a lot of notes. I've got everything written for the last, going on 46 years. And one little blank place in there when I was mad at the government and I decided a man ought not to have to write down everything he does. So, I didn't for about six weeks, and I should have. I regret that. But anyway.

Diana Dwyer [00:16:02] What about your experiences as a supervisor?

Glynn Riley [00:16:16] That experience, that's really something. That, that gets back to the problem we we're talking about - people, people problems. And you'd be so surprised at what some of them are. Employee problems. I never really wanted to be a supervisor. I wanted, my goal when I started working this thing would be the best trapper they had. But they don't pay trappers enough. And so, I finally figured if I was going to make a living, I had to do a little different. But I still trapped, all the time. I think I'm the only one that does.

Glynn Riley [00:17:03] And I couldn't, I'd quit. So, they are kind to me and don't fuss at me.

Glynn Riley [00:17:19] And sometimes they need me.

Glynn Riley [00:17:21] But anyway, dealing with personal problems is, that's what I dislike the most. It takes a, you have to be very understanding of other people. And you got rules and regulations and things that you go by. But you've got to have some latitude, because some people have personal problems. The worst thing is divorce. When you get a person going through a divorce, they're not themselves.

Diana Dwyer [00:17:59] It's devastating.

Glynn Riley [00:18:05] Yes. And so, you have to be very understanding of people that's going through hard times like that. And I try to be. And if they've got sickness or death or whatever, I do all I can for them.

Glynn Riley [00:18:19] Then you have people who just are no good and you got to get rid of them. And they've made it hard to get rid of them. If you if you could just say, "Hit the road, Jack," you know, it would be so nice.

Diana Dwyer [00:18:43] Don't let the door hit you on the way out.

Glynn Riley [00:18:43] That's right. And then you get some real bums sometimes. That's always disappointing. And I guess one of the greatest things I've learned is at one point in my life is I thought I was pretty fair judge of people, you know, and I found out I wasn't.

Glynn Riley [00:19:03] At one time I thought if you were involved in this kind of work, you were a good old boy and all of us aren't. I learned some hard lessons that way.

Glynn Riley [00:19:20] But yeah, the thing I dislike worst is personnel problems, and probably everyone says that. And some of the most rewarding things are personnel-related too. You know, sometimes you've got some really good people or you could help some people out of some situations that they appreciate, you're glad you can do it. So every now and then you get a thank you.

Diana Dwyer [00:19:54] The last thing you put on here that you like is flint napping and archery. Do you go out and try that? Hunt like an Indian?

Glynn Riley [00:20:04] No, no. I just, I make, I've always been interested in in Indians. And so, I always learned about how they made arrowheads and stuff and I figured it out and finally found some other people that got to doing that. Then I've always liked shooting a bow and

arrow. And I don't as much as I should. When I was younger, I did. At one point back when I was a young man, I quit shooting a gun. I'd just hunt stuff with a bow and arrow. But not, just rabbits and things. I never killed a deer or anything like that.

Glynn Riley [00:20:47] But I'm not a deer hunter. I. I know why. Well, I do know why, too. Down here you've got to pay to hunt, and I'm not going to pay anybody to hunt. I get paid to hunt.

Glynn Riley [00:21:03] I paid one time in my life, when I was a teenager still, and some guys wanted me to go hunting with them, and I went. I just went. They had a deer lease down here in the Hill Country. It was 50 dollars for the first week, but I didn't have 50 dollars. Now, it's several thousand. So, I went along with them. We just had a good time, but it was back in the 50s. It was a terrible drought, and I never saw as many of does and spike bucks, and we didn't kill a deer. And then we went back. Let's see, we went the next year. They wanted me to go, but they wanted the 50 dollars, and I didn't have it. I sold my 30-30 for \$50 and borrowed one just like it and killed one little three-point deer. I got home and I said, "Son, you may be dumb, but you ain't stupid. Don't do that again."

Glynn Riley [00:21:55] And I haven't. And I won't.

Diana Dwyer [00:21:55] It's expensive.

Glynn Riley [00:21:55] It's turned into, you go sit down in a box over a thing spreading corn out. And that's not hunting. The last deer I killed, on my fingers and toes, or maybe one foot and two hands, you could count all the deer, maybe two hands, that I've killed. But the last one I killed, I said, "I bet I could slip up on that one." And I did - a 12-point. Killed him and felled him. Happy about that. I ate him, just not the horns. I figured I could do it, and I did it.

Glynn Riley [00:21:55] The way people hunt here, you go climb up in a box and that's, but you know, there's so much money in it. And you've got so many people from towns, cities, and they come out here with enough equipment - my Lord, the money that they spend! Four-wheelers, trailers, guns, deer stands, corn feeders, corn. You can go down there and buy a lot of good beef. If I was going to spend it, I'd go down to the feedlot and shoot me a good, fat steer.

Diana Dwyer [00:22:36] Go to a zoo.

Glynn Riley [00:23:30] So hunting, I don't know where that's going to go. It's kind of, I've outlived my whatever.

Diana Dwyer [00:23:43] Is there a problem here with some chronic wasting disease?

Glynn Riley [00:23:45] No.

Diana Dwyer [00:23:46] Are you worried about wildlife disease?

Glynn Riley [00:23:48] No.

Diana Dwyer [00:23:48] With avian influenza?

Glynn Riley [00:23:53] There's no chronic wasting disease that I know of, and I'm not really worried about avian influenza, the bird flu. It'll either be here or it won't. And I don't think there's a thing in the world we can do about it. If it does, they have a plan since 9/11. Everybody's worried about the introduction of things like black leg or hoof in mouth disease, and so they have a plan that if hoof in mouth disease, or foot in mouth disease they call it now, were to show up, that you would eliminate all of the animals in a 30-mile circle. If that shows, I will retire, because you ain't gonna be a popular fellow at all.

Diana Dwyer [00:24:41] That happened in Great Britain when they had to kill all those people's birds. It was horrible.

Glynn Riley [00:24:44] That'll make me retire. I don't know where all that's going to go. I'd be interested to know where wildlife management is going to go. When I went down there to A&M to see Dr., I've forgotten his name. Davis? W.B. Davis, yeah - where I got the book that time. There was about 70 people taking wildlife management at that time and now, and there was about 7000 students in A&M. And now they're 50 thousand. And no telling how many wildlife students.

Glynn Riley [00:25:27] And I was starting over here at Parker, which is part of A&M. And there were six of taking wildlife management. We were all country boys, you know. Now you've got all sorts of folks in there taking wildlife.

Diana Dwyer [00:25:34] A lot of young women are going.

Glynn Riley [00:25:35] Yeah.

Diana Dwyer [00:25:35] Into the field.

Glynn Riley [00:25:46] Yeah. You know, and, and I don't know what percent of them actually get a job in wildlife field, but it's pretty sparse. You've just got a certain, you've got state and federal agencies, and a few private people, and that's about it.

Diana Dwyer [00:26:07] Yeah, we have a lot of competition for the jobs we have.

Glynn Riley [00:26:11] Oh, yeah.

Diana Dwyer [00:26:11] The problem at the Research Center is that they usually want a Ph.D., But I know they had a lot of people applying for the wildlife disease jobs.

Glynn Riley [00:26:11] I got one, one son, and I discouraged from me. He's got a Master's degree and manages an insurance deal for a company - regional claims manager over four or five states, all the workman's compensation claims that they take. He's got a bunch of people work for him. I've got one grandson. He started school and he's going to major in biomedical engineering.

Diana Dwyer [00:26:42] That's interesting.

Glynn Riley [00:26:43] And if he's smart enough to make it, and can pass five different calculus courses.

Diana Dwyer [00:26:43] Oh, God.

Glynn Riley [00:27:02] So maybe he'll get rich. I don't know.

Diana Dwyer [00:27:08] I hope you see it, live to see it!

Glynn Riley [00:27:12] Yeah, yeah. He's a pretty smart kid. He's taking calculus now, this summer. He's passing, but he's got four more to go, and a bunch of other stuff.

Glynn Riley [00:27:28] So I don't know where wildlife management is going to go, but I'm glad I lived when I did. It's going to get too technical, I think.

Diana Dwyer [00:27:35] You won't be able to even go out and look at a deer any more without getting a permit for it.

Glynn Riley [00:27:35] Oh, there's so many here. There's a deer every place. I'll tell you what the problem is, and I don't know what they're going to do about it, but the people hitting deer with cars is a huge problem.

Diana Dwyer [00:27:56] Back East especially, we've had a lot of...

Glynn Riley [00:28:03] My wife's older sister's grandson was killed coming home from college. He hit a deer in a little old sports car, and it came right through the windshield, killed him. 21 years old.

Diana Dwyer [00:28:17] Oh, God!

Glynn Riley [00:28:17] And in this area, there's so many deer on the road, especially when it's dry. They'll come to the road to feed because it's not grazed there. And there's just a huge amount of deer that get hit. I don't know what the insurance bill is in Texas, but I read in Newsweek or something one day, in Georgia, they had compiled all that information from the insurance agencies, and it was millions and millions and millions of dollars, not to mention I think they said there was about 250 people a year get killed. So, what do you do? The State, it's their wildlife till you hit him with your car, and then it's yours.

Diana Dwyer [00:29:08] Like bear breaking into your house in Colorado: it becomes your problem.

Glynn Riley [00:29:10] Right. And I saw a deal the other day in Florida or some place. An alligator was up on some lady's porch chewing up the dog, and she killed it and they ticketed her for hunting without a license or out of season, or something.

Diana Dwyer [00:29:10] Oh, God.

Glynn Riley [00:29:10] That's not hunting.

Diana Dwyer [00:29:10] It's homeowners defending their home!

Glynn Riley [00:29:35] Yeah, get a Webster and look up hunting. See what hunting is.

Diana Dwyer [00:29:38] That's ridiculous.

Glynn Riley [00:29:40] Yeah, it is. It really is.

Diana Dwyer [00:29:42] Did they think she was using the dog as bait? That's horrible.

Glynn Riley [00:29:47] They will catch a dog. I had a friend that had one caught his squirrel dog, and he was really upset about it. He said, "What are you all going to do about that blankity-blank alligator?" And I said, "Albert, there's nothing I can do." "I can." So, I've got a picture of him in there: front-end loader, pulling him apart!

Glynn Riley [00:30:19] It's 2:43.

Diana Dwyer [00:30:19] Oh God. Can you think of anything else? I might have worn you out.

Glynn Riley [00:30:19] No, I could talk for days, but we won't.

Diana Dwyer [00:30:19] Okay.

Glynn Riley [00:30:19] When you leave, I'll think of something I wish I'd told you.

Diana Dwyer [00:30:19] You can always write me a letter.

Glynn Riley [00:30:32] Yeah, if I think of something, I'll call you or something.

Glynn Riley [00:30:33] I hope they have good luck with their book.

Diana Dwyer [00:30:33] John's working away on it. He said it'll probably be a couple of years before it gets published. We'll make sure you get a copy of it.

Glynn Riley [00:30:33] Yeah, I'll autograph it and give it to my grandson.