

**TRANSCRIPT:**

**INTERVIEWEE:** Susan Hughes

**INTERVIEWER:** David Todd

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(misc.)

**DT:** Well, let's resume. We were talking about how Bexar Audubon was formed originally as a spin-off from San Antonio Audubon and as a group to handle more policy and lobbying kind of educational efforts, while...

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**SH:** We call that advocacy now.

(misc.)

**DT:** While San Antonio Audubon would tend more towards trips and outings. So with this kind of portfolio that Bexar Audubon had, what sort of things did they take on while you were on the board?

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**SH:** Well, some of the—some of the early interests were in open space, which was certainly something that Susan Rust was very much involved in. (clearing throat) Also, you know, they had developed a policy statement on—on water issues and water quality. They frequently provided comments on environmental impact statements and so forth. They were—you know, they—it was pretty broad range of—of things going on, everything from the building of the—well, that was even earlier, but yeah. You know, road construction and, you know...

**DT:** 1981?

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**SH:** Yeah. That—yeah, that was back in the 70's, really, but—but, you know, I mean, there were—there were plenty of issues and they did—they did weigh in on them pretty—pretty regularly, so. You know, I was—I was really not very much involved with Bexar Audubon, you know, in those—in those early years, so in spite of the fact that I've filed a lot of the archives, I haven't necessarily, you know, read them thoroughly. But they were pretty—pretty active—pretty active group. So—and—and still very interested in birds and birding and envir—en—endangered species issues. They had adopted

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Frederick Wilderness Park as in their—and the Audubon had had a—an Adopt-A-Park program for its chapters and—and since we didn't have a refuge, a national refuge in this

area, they adopted Frederick Park. And then of course, one of—one of the interesting things about Bexar Audubon, it—in my opinion is that it—it served for a long—for many, many years as the fiduciary agent for a number of other groups. And really, one of the reasons that Bexar Audubon has not grown the way that, for example, Houston Audubon did, and Houston Audubon has made a—has had a very firm policy, I think,

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of—of not spinning things off. You know, they've really kind of kept things in—intact, as it were, within one organization. But we've spun off many organizations. We spun off Friends of Frederick Wilderness Park. We had—we were working for a while as the fiduciary agent for Friends of Medina River, which then was dissolved and, of course, you know, that—that was all that Applewhite property and so now if, you know, we have

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a Medina River Natural Area that's owned by the—the city. There's a Parks and Wildlife effort out there. Texas A&M—I mean, there's a lot of activity out in that area. And we also spun off, of course, the master naturalist program, you know, which was a—a big part of our activity for a long time. So there've been a number of things. Friend—Mitchell Lake Wetland Society, you know, spun off from—from sort of a combination of San Antonio Audubon and—and—and Bexar Audubon, but we were the fiduciary agent for that for a long time. So there've been quite a few things that we have sort of spawned

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over the years that have gone on to, you know, to be their own organizations fueled by people who had specific interests in—in those areas. As a result, trying to keep generating more volunteers that are interested in the broader Bexar Audubon mission, you know, has been a bit of a struggle for us and we are, you know, we remain a pretty small core of folks that, you know, just keep trading hats from, you know, from election to election pretty much. But—but still trading hats, yeah, so. It's—it's been very—it's been very interesting because, you know, we have this sort of inherent apparent conflict,

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but, you know, in truth, now that we've gotten bi—you know, enough people died that were carrying a lot of baggage to where, you know, now, you know, we really do work together a lot. And—and there's been discussion about whether San Antonio Audubon and Bexar Audubon ought to combine forces and not be two separate organizations. But I remember that Bryan Hale, you know, mentioned to me one time that in Austin, it was—it was very—it was very problematic having this sort of core organization that on

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the one side that was advocacy oriented and then the other group of people who really just wanted to go out and—and bird. And that there was a, you know, a conflict there. A—at least, by having two separate organizations, you know, we're—our—our missions are pretty clear. And now we routinely publicize San Antonio Audubon's birdwalks and, you know, their—their various outing activities and—and they do the same for us. And, as I say, we have a lot of duplicate membership so—and—and we're both very, you know, much supportive of the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center and we're all involved in—

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in making that actually happen. So I—we—we're just at a nice, kind of balanced state now. You know, I'm—I hesitate to even begin to think about rocking the boat. So we have Mitchell Lake Wetland Society, which is very much aligned with many of our goals. Bexar

Audubon, of course, San Antonio Audubon and we're all just—we all just get along, you know.

**DT:** There were two projects I think Bexar Audubon was involved with and you, in particular, of the South Texas...

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**SH:** The Farm and Ranch Forum.

**DT:** Farm and Ranch Forum. And then the SAEN, San Antonio Environmental Network. Can you talk a little bit about those two?

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**SH:** The Environmental Network was—was, of course, an outgrowth of what, you know, Susan Rust had—had started and she, in fact, was a one person show as far as the Environmental Network was concerned for a long time. Not too long before Susan left San Antonio, she came to be of the opinion that probably the—the network had done the job that it had set out to do in terms of communication and the contemplation was that we would just abandon that activity. But Bexar Audubon had a—a meeting and talked with the people who had—had been involved in it and said you know, do we, you know, isn't this still a valuable activity to get folks together on this? And everybody said yes,

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yes, yes and so we tried for a while ha—keeping it sort of a cooperative arrangement where, you know, different organizations would sponsor programs different quarters. But in truth, Bexar Audubon was the driver behind that. So we've just kind of come to grips with the fact that if we want the Environmental Network to exist, that we're pretty much going to do it and try to be as inclusive as we can for these issues forums and invite everybody to come. But, you know, we just not only are taking—taking the responsibility for it, but we'll also try to take a little bit of the credit for it, which is a—

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something that we haven't always—always done. So we continue on pretty much a quarterly basis, doing these issues forums, typically panels. We, you know, try to get something that's at least a little bit controversial, try to provide it in a balanced way and en—engage the community to the greatest extent possible in, you know, some of these timely issues.

**DT:** Can you give some examples of some issues that were discussed?

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**SH:** Well, the one that's coming up pretty soon is—is—in—in March is entitled Mow It or Grow It and that has to do with the—the issue that we were talking about earlier of wildscaping, for example. And—and I guess about six months or so ago, the city started putting up billboards around town that says—say mow it, don't grow it and, you know, with the idea, you know, that people should keep their lawns, you know, tidy and so forth. So—but that kind of, you know, flies in the face of some of the things that we're trying to achieve by, you know, not keeping, you know, or encouraging people not to do

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manicured lawns. So one of the questions posited is well, you know, when we have, on the one hand, Texas Parks and Wildlife sponsoring this wildscaping program across the state and we have e—even San Antonio Water System has a wildscape program and a rebate program if you turn your turf grass into, you know, something less, you know, irrigation intensive. And, you know, so aren't we sending some kind of mixed messages here when we put up, you know, big billboards that say, you know, mow it, you know, don't grow it and here we're saying grow it, don't mow it. And I think there've been the cases where citizens have been cited for, you know, for having, you know, too much growth in their yards and they've come in—I don't know this particular case, but it's—it's one that was referenced by someone. People have come in—in and—and done all

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this, you know, clearing out and then they've been cited for having cut down a tree, you know, in—in—in conflict with the tree ordinance—tree preservation ordinance. So while that may be an extreme example, we do have a little bit of contradiction going on and it would be nice to clarify some of these things, which, you know, San Antonio Water System, the—the—the Ar—City Arborists, you know, they're saying one thing, the city code compliance folks are saying something else. So, you know, let's kind of try to get

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our stories straight. So that's one thing. We've had a number of—a number of forums on water issues. We've had a number of forums on transportation issues. We've, you know, just—we kind of go all over the board.

**DT:** I think you also mentioned that you've been involved in this effort to improve the dialogue between the farm and ranch community and the environmental community through this farm and ranch forum. Can you talk about how that got started and what efforts you've made?

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**SH:** Well, it really got started—and I go back to Susan Rust again, who along with Larry White, who is now—well, is now retired from Texas A&M, but he was the County Ag Agent here for awhile. But she and—Susan and Larry had put together something called a Rangeland Environmental Issues Forum and it involved a—a number of environmentalists, a number of ranchers and so forth that had come together and they'd

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done some field trips and so forth, trying to get some communication going between the—the landowners and the urban conservationists. REIF kind of eventually petered out a little bit, but I had been involved in a number of forums, I—I guess you would say. Some panel discussions and so forth centering around the golden-cheeked warbler incident that—that happened back when. And—and that was another issue that really catalyzed the idea that, you know, we really must communicate one group with the other and we cannot have these—these divisive relationships.

**DT:** You're talking about the critical habitat designation?

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**SH:** Yes. The critical habitat designation for the—for the golden-cheeked warbler. When—which was probably one of the most unfortunate things that ever happened in central Texas. When—when that—when that story broke and the headlines in the *San Antonio Express News* were—you know, I can't remember what the number was anymore, but you know, 30 central Texas counties, you know, to be designated critical habitat for the golden-cheeked warbler, you know, which of course was grossly incorrect, you know. But once it was on the front page of the paper, you know, it became truth and a retraction on page six just doesn't really change the fact that the perceived truth is that all these counties were going to be designated as critical habitat. Well, as you, you know, as you know, I mean, people brought out their bulldozers and cut down every, you know, pushed down every cedar tree they could find and—and, you know, dragged cedar trees

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down the—down Congress Avenue to the Capitol and, I mean, there was a—a great hue and cry about, you know, the—the impact on property rights of—of these designations. And, you know, I mentioned earlier, my dad, you know, was one of these folks who, you know, little birds were just little birds. You know, it wasn't a matter of, you know, there being warblers and chickadees and, you know, all these, you know, der—different species, they were just little birds. And I think the same thing is probably the case for most farmers and ranchers. This doesn't mean that they don't appreciate them; it means

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that their appreciation is a different type of appreciation from that of a birder or someone who's really interested in species conservation or species recognition or bird watching. So what happened immediately is whenever—it—this is—it's totally my perspective but is whenever this happened and the big hue and cry came about, you know, some little bird—of course, we had the same thing with salamanders, you know, (inaudible) that some little bird, you know, is going to make a difference in how I manage my land. And of course, the truth, the—you know, the facts of the matter were not brought out in terms

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of what comprised habitat and what, you know, what didn't. But the response from the environmental community was something to the effect of you stupid farmer, rancher, whatever. Don't you know that you have habitat for an endangered species on your property? And when somebody is attacked like that, the immediate response is well, n—no, I don't know that, but why should I and why should I care? You know, who are you to tell me, you know, what I know or don't know or what I'm doing, what I'm doing

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wrong and accuse me of, you know, of being this big, bad rancher person who's—you know, who's going to, you know, not provide habitat for this stupid little bird. And so we had this immediate conflict, you know, whereas if we had come in and said let's talk about—let's talk about this and let's understand that there are some very specific areas that comprise habitat for this little bird. Native Texan—every golden-cheeked warbler in the world ever was born—hatched right here in Texas, on your land. How—how fortunate, you know, that there is this wonderful habitat. It's not area that you would

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ever raise crops on or try to ranch on. You wouldn't run cattle in those areas, you know. But look what a—what a nifty little thing this is that's right there on your land. And it's so easy to take care of, you know, if we just, you know, let's talk about this. Instead of setting

up this, you know, this immediate conflict that then made everybody—put everybody on the defensive, you know, and it would just, you know, just stark raving nuts, you know. When—when this story first broke, Lamar Smith called a news conference and he—he called it out on 281, just a little bit north of 1604, you know, and

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in front of this, you know, stand of regrowth cedar, you know, which was now—this property, you know, as well. I got word from somebody who worked at one of the news stations and so I very quickly, you know, pulled together a fact sheet on what actually was habitat for the golden-cheeked warbler and what wasn't and what the im—you know, what this really was all about. And that it wasn't, you know, all of 30 counties, whatever the number was, but it, you know, what—what actually the proposal was. And I crashed

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his—his news conference and I started pulling all these reporters off into the—into the brush, saying you know, you cut all this down. You know, this is not a problem. You know, this is regrowth cedar, it's not habitat for anybody. There's no, you know, minimum 50 percent hab—canopy. There's no oak, you know, trees or any other hardwoods mixed into this. You know, this is what is involved in providing habitat for this bird so let's understand what the issue is. I don't think he liked me before then, I had lobbied him before. But, you know, I don't think he really liked me much after that and,

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of course, now, fortunately, I'm sure he's completely forgotten about me, but you know, that was sort of the beginning of it. And then Ted Eubanks and I did what was called a debate with Marshall Ja—Marshall Kirkendall and Harvey Hildebrand at the Kerr County Republican Club and that was the instada—incident where Marshall Kirkendall said that, you know, he thought that—that when Lincoln freed the slaves, it was the taking of private property. And I had just happened to take along a tape recorder that a friend of mine was operating in the back of the—of the room and that tape just got in the hands

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of somebody from the Office of the American Statesman. So that was an interesting little foray into—but I didn't do it. I was—had given it to the folks up at Audubon Tex—or Tex—the Southwest region, at that point. And it was just lying around whenever this guy came in to talk about it and there it went, so anyway. So that's where all that got started. But—so that was kind of my foray into—into that kind of politics, but it really pointed out to me the absolute importance of good communication between these two communities and that we really do share common values, common goals and we're, you know, there's no reason for us not to get along, you know. So long way of answering your question, but.

**DT:** No, helpful. Very helpful. Let's talk a little bit about Audubon's presence throughout Texas, if you don't mind. From 1994 through 2005, you held different posts with Audubon Texas and Audubon Council of Texas and I was curious if you could talk about the creation of this new sort of Audubon presence, Audubon Texas, and then its predecessor, Audubon Council of Texas. And maybe the whole effort to try and pull the many diverse chapters, these local groups that represent Audubon in various towns and cities, together to discuss their common concerns and try to have a united front.

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**SH:** That's—that was a real—a really enormous challenge and, at the time that I was president of Audubon Council of Texas, oh, was the time when Audubon changed administrations and started talking about doing state offices, doing away with regional offices. Involved personnel changes, trying to write a new charter, trying to ruf—unruffle a lot of feathers, if you'll pardon the—the reference, but it was—it was a time of—of significant conflict and probably still is. We—I think that the shift in Audubon has been a very difficult one for many areas. Texas certainly had a hard time getting off the ground, finding an executive director and another executive director and now, yet another executive director. And trying different models, always—try—trying to bring the—the chapters together and looking at common concerns has—has been difficult

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because of the—the difference in focus. As we were talking earlier, some of these organizations were strictly birding clubs and many were much more activist organizations. And there were huge chapters like Houston and tiny little chapters like Bastrop, you know, or—or somebody out in, you know, Lubbock or Amarillo. And, you know, the—the amount of money that they had, you know, was—was a real issue because there's only so much you can do with—with a dues share if you've only got 20 members in your chapter—or 30—I think 35 is supposed to be the minimum, but—and

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that's, you know, you're just living on—on that. And of course, there've been lots of changes in Audubon; there are cuts in the dues share and so forth. So these are all, you know, newer elements, but it's—it's hard to find that, you know, that common ground. But I guess the most important thing that happened whenever we would get together for these meetings would be that you at least realized that there were other people in other parts of the state that were struggling with some of the same issues and were trying to make a difference. And that's, again, finding that—that common thread amongst these

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very diverse organizations, you know, is—is always im—always important. You know, focusing on commonalities wherever we can find them, you know. So it was very—it—it was a very useful experience. I—I think that the model that exists now is probably going to change again with—you know, we had tried this sort of regional delegation approach because, you know, when you have a meeting and you've got people coming from—from the Golden Triangle area over, you know, around Beaumont and you've got people

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coming from El Paso and people coming from Lubbock and Brownsville, you know, getting together is just a logistical nightmare. And if people don't have the money to get supported on that travel, then, you know, you have very uneven, unequal representation and that is more fodder for conflict. So it's—it's—it's just real difficult. And in Texas, you know, the—the ecological issues are quite varied. You know, it's not like we have a little state that has, you know, pretty much a—one landscape or even just half a dozen landscapes. I mean, we've got everything in the world, you know. El Paso should be

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part of New Mexico, you know. I mean, their issues really aren't the same as those in Beaumont. I mean, there's—so there's—there's that also so it's very difficult sometimes to find, if you're looking for, say—say projects that an Audubon Council or, you know, an Audubon Texas can work on as a—a group of—of concerned individuals, it's kind of

difficult to, you know, to actually identify what that is. You know, the big quail initiative. Wonderful for, you know, our part of the country, you know, but maybe not so important to some of the other areas. And speaking of quail, can I segue back into the

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farm and range forum things? It was as an outgrowth of an initiative in Audubon Texas, and this was while I was on the national board, and we were talking about the—the—I think Dale Bush actually brought to the attention of the group and, you know, Jim Tier, the decline of quail, you know, across the—the southeast and in Texas as well. So we started looking at that a little bit more and—and...

(inaudible)

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**SH:** Pardon me?

**DT:** Bobwhite quail?

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**SH:** Well, bobwhite quail and—and all, you know, all of the—all of those little guys, but, you know, bobwhites are the most common around here. But—but we've got Blue and Scaled and, you know, whatever, you know—I—I don't do species (inaudible). But we—I was sent off to the National Board meeting with a resolution that this was a critical area and one that Audubon should be taking a look at. So I took it to the science committee and they agreed and sent me back saying well, why don't you guys do something about, you know, about this? So we decided to have a quail conference and

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that was our first farm and range forum. We're now on number seven, I guess. But the quail conference brought together every authority on quail in this region. Fred Guthrie, who is now in Oklahoma, but nevertheless had a great grounding down here in the—in south Texas and, you know, folks from Kingsville and A&M and so forth. And it was a really wonderful, wonderful meeting and that—that launched the farm and range forum. And the whole focus of this—well—well, this first meeting really was, you know, at least

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the morning—the morning program was 100 percent quail. But in the afternoon, we had, you know, other—other programs on talking about habitat management and, you know, what—what you can basically do to improve your—you know, improve your land for quail and other critters and for livestock as well—oh, by the way. And it—really, we had a wonderful response from the—from the ranching community. It was just, you know, just wonderful. My biggest disappointment with the farm and range forum is that we have failed to attract the number of urban conservationists that we had hoped. It's almost

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always farm and ranch people that come to the Audubon South Texas farm and range forum. Frustrates the daylights out of me, but I will on the other hand say that of all the things I've done in committees in my life, this has got to be the best bunch of planners that I have ever had the—to work with. Helen Holdsworth with—who's now with Texas Wildlife Association, is, I mean, I have become her left hand rather than she my right arm. It's—



she's just dynamite. And Philip Wright and Larry Allen with the USDA—with the RCS have just been wonderful. We've had participation from extension and so

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forth. And when we have our planning meetings, we get in there, hour and a half later, we're out. We've got programs planned; we've got people with assignments that they have volunteered for. Oh, I'll do this. I'll do this. You know, it's like how wonderful and everybody's, you know, entirely dedicated to this—this whole concept of talking about how we can help to manage habitat. You know, and—and because of the fact that it's very broad based, we're not just saying just wildlife. I mean, this also helps you

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make a living. I mean, that's been the—the subtitle for—for every one of these, has been *Managing to Make a Living*. And that's the whole focus of it, you know, is how do you manage your land to help you make a living, to be able to stay on the land, which means that we have less habitat fragmentation, we have more habitat for wildlife. You know, all these kinds of things that, you know, move along which makes every—you know, makes everybody happier and the world healthier. So that's—that's been the—the way that's—that's kind of gone. And the farm and range community is right there, you know. They really are.

(misc.)

**DT:** Well, you've told us some about the work of Bexar Audubon, the local chapter, and about Audubon Texas and the Audubon Council of Texas, the state presence for Audubon. You've also been elected to serve on the national Audubon Society and I thought you might be able to tell us a little bit about their efforts and particular your interests and work on population, which has involved a good deal of your time.

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**SH:** When Ted Eubanks was elected to the National Audubon Board and I sort of helped him campaign, it was one of the first times when, you know, in recent history when there was a contested race for someone for the Aud—for the National Audubon Board from the regional repress—for the regional representatives. But we got Ted

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elected and he was very influential in really shaping the—the nature of Audubon, I think, for into—into the future, although Ted, quite a strong personality and—and there are some people who remember him very fondly and some people who said oh. Yeah, Ted. But—but he was really a great inspiration to me and when—and after his first term there, he decided after a year that he didn't want to finish his term. So—so I decided that I would run for that office and was indeed elected to—to complete his term. So I had quite huge shoes to fill there, but he had laid great groundwork. And in fact, it was—I—I still

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have the communication between him and—and the group of us that were known as the Zepotistas del Norte. We had T-shirts and everything. We even went to Kearney, Nebraska for a board meeting before Ted had been elected to the board to—to basically protest what we saw as—as sort of a miscarriage of direction on the part of National Audubon. So we had—it was a—it was a group that came together only because of the miracle of email. So

very, you know, kind of early on in those—in those days. But—but we were rabble rousers and—and so Ted got elected to the National Audubon Board and—and we were doing all the strategic planning, you know, throughout the country

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and it—we got to the—they got—they got to the point in strategic planning where they were, you know, writing all this up and coming up with this great, you know, grand strategic plan. But it didn't have the zinger that it needed to really get, you know, get it all pulled together. So late one night, Ted drafted this statement and sent it out and said you know, what do you guys think about this? And it was the culture of conservation and

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this wonderful prologue that was adopted as the prologue to this—to the strategic plan, which is—remains to me one of the—one of the most eloquent statements ever written by a conservationist for—for anything. And Ted was a—is a great writer anyway and a great visionary, but he really nailed it on this one. And so it's that culture of conservation that really is what, you know, is—drives most of us who are still with Audubon to, you know, to stay with that—with that vision. So he gets kudos, awards, obeisances, you know, whatever—whatever it takes for—for this wonderful contribution that he made to—

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to conservation in many ways, but especially in encapsulating that vision. So—so I got on the—on the board and, you know, my—my big deal was always, because I had had some communication or—over the years with people like Jessie Grantham and some other folks that I had met who were working with—with—with Audubon and the—on the—in the refuges. And I had such a—a great deal of—of respect for—for these people as scientists and as land managers and so forth. So I, you know, I kept—there was less and less emphasis being—being placed on and support for the people who were actually

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on the ground doing the conservation work that we, you know, supposedly were—were there to do and to model and so forth. And so most of the time that I was on—on the board, I—I spent a lot of time talking about supporting the staff and the importance of chapters and—and how valuable this grassroots network of people all over the country really was. I mean, we were unique and this was something that was identified in the strategic plan but has been absolutely minimized in terms of the—the value that's been

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da—been accorded them by the current ad—administration of Audubon. I think it's maybe changing a—a little bit but it's been very frustrating to many of us and it's the primary reason, I guess, that I declined to run for another—for a—a third term on the board was just the—because I just felt like my message was, you know, I—I could talk till I was blue in the face. And—and after meetings, people would come up and say I'm sure glad you said that, but you know, they wouldn't give me support at—during the meeting. You know, it's like, you know. So that was, you know, a little bit frustrating.

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But you know, and—and conservation happens at the local level, so you know, I just thought I would go back and dedicate my time to—to this. But—but my association with National Audubon really started when, you know, I was just a—a chapter, you know, person and they were having a series of—of what we referred to lovingly as boot camps. And they would bring activists from chapters to Washington and put us through a week of

intensive learning activities and then at the end of the week, we'd go to the hill and—and lobby. And spend a couple of days doing that, you know, and—and it was a

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remarkable experience. I—I did a number of these. I think the first one was on endangered species issues and then I did a population boot camp and that was what really kind of got me solidly in the population camp. I was—when I—when I got interested in conservation, you know, I—I started off thinking about, you know, these furry creatures because I really like furry creatures. And then I kind of moved from that into—to realizing that, you know, well, that, you know, these are problem issues. I wasn't really

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important—focused on endangered species issues. That kind of got me aware of endangered species issues in this area, which of course, you know, are not furry creatures, but—you know, but rather critters that live in the—in the springs and are dependent on same. But, you know, but that was the connection and so I went from looking at endangered species and—and not wanting anything to do with people issues because, after all, people were the problem, right? So didn't want to deal with people. And then suddenly one day, I woke up and, you know, realized uh, yeah, people are the problem,

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you know. So if you want to protect habitat, you've got to deal with population—human population issues. And, you know, in spite of the fact that I didn't care for that very much, I realized that that was elemental to everything. So I kind of threw my hat in the population cart and went off that. And of course, Pat Waak was the head of the population program at National Audubon for many years and Audubon has the finest populat—you had the first and the finest population program of any mainstream environmental organization. Even though many people, even on the board, didn't know

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it, you know. It was something of a stealth program, I guess, in—in many respects, but it was absolutely top notch and really well respected. And I would find as I would go to the hill and lobby on these issues that it was, indeed, as—as Pat told us, it was really significant that an organization like Audubon brought a population message to the hill because they were get—being lobbied all the time by Planned Parenthood and, you know, all of these more traditional, you know, the—the Population Reference Bureau and, you

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know, I mean, all of these—all of these—Zero Population Growth and so forth. And the message, while somewhat different, was basically the same. But somebody from Audubon comes in and starts talking about the impacts of human population on wildlife habitat and the ability of the ecosystem to sustain all of us, it's a different message. And, you know, these staffers that had sat through, you know, ten million presentations by various and sundry lobbying groups all of a sudden get this message from Audubon. And they say why is Audubon interested in human population issues? What do you care about

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birth control, you know? Why should we support the UNFBA? You know, and—but it was—became obvious to some that—that there really was a connection and it was a different way that they could approach it.

**DT:** What is the link?

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**SH:** Well, the link is that the more—human population, human—human people versus all our dog and cat people. But—it—it—really do—are—are resource intensive. And, you know, we—we consume a lot of resources. We clear a lot of area that's habitat for other creeter—critters without even beginning to think about what the impacts are, you know. Influencing the amount of water that goes downstream, you know, is a major impact on the animals that live in the streams, the animals in the bays and estuaries. You know, all—I mean, we're—we're the 600 pound gorilla in this story and we throw our weight around without much concern for what the impacts are going to be on—on anything else.

**DT:** What do you say the folks who—because part of it's population, but it's more of consumption. That it's—you know, you have a relatively large population in the Third World, but it doesn't have the same effect as the similar population or a similar growth rate here in the United States or Europe because we just use so many more resources.

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**SH:** Well, it's both, certainly. There's no—no question about that. I mean, we do consume resources at a phenomenal rate in developed countries. But—but everybody—I mean, we are the model for the rest of the world. And even though, at this point in time, some of the developing countries aren't as resource intensive in their—in their consumption as—as we are, that's their aspiration. And, you know, and if you—you can't just sit here and say well, our population isn't that great but you over there, you know, you got to—you got to cut back on this and, by the way, you know, it's really not

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appropriate for everybody to have an automobile. You know, I mean, we—we know because we've done it—I'm sorry. That—you know, that argument just doesn't fly. You know, everybody has to take responsibility for reducing consumption, for maintaining—or trying to achieve some level of stability in terms of overall population growth and to, you know, to—to try to balance all that out, to think about what the impacts are. And one place that I—I want to make sure we talk about is—is the failure of economics in terms

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of our ability to cope with resource depletion. And we do not have an economic model that takes into consideration the value of resources that are consumed and the life cycle, accounting for, you know, for resources and all these kinds of things, you know, that—that, you know, Hawken and others have talked about quite eloquently. But we still don't have any kind of an economic model that really takes that into consideration. That it—it's in the mainstream, I mean, you know, there—there are those who are making attempts, but it certainly isn't part of, you know, what goes on in the—you know, in the

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halls of Washington. You don't necessarily see people accounting for those kinds of habitat impacts or, you know, whatever and deciding any kind of an economic value to them. And until we do that, a lot of people in the world aren't going to understand, you know, u—unless it's translated into dollars and cents. So I think that's a major failure of our economy and—and that of the world.

**DT:** What happens if you can convince folks that the population is a serious problem and something ought to be done, but you quickly run into territory that's pretty sensitive, whether it's controversial issues like abortion or xenophobic issues involving immigration? How do you get the message out there in a way that it doesn't run afoul of those concerns?

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**SH:** I wish I knew. No, it—it is. It is very difficult. It's a very, very sticky issue and I think there's—probably the only—the only and best things that we can do is to try to look at what are the factors that most influence the—the stability of a population or—or a trend towards stability in a population. And I think the evidence is pretty clear that such things as empowerment of women is very important. Offering options to people, which of course, is all, you know, part of that. Providing people the security to know that if they have one or two or three children that they will live to maturity. I mean, there's all—this whole complicated situation and—and just the responsibility that we—we

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mustn't think just about the fact that we're here now and, you know, that—that maybe the world won't last through this generation, so what difference does it make? I think we—you know, we really must instill in people the idea that, you know, we're probably here for the long-term in some way or another, so let's not make life totally miserable and—and unsustainable for generations that come. I—I, you know, I'd—I—I wish I knew the secret, but I think the—I think as close as we can get is to—to look at ways that we can make it possible for people to live at a little higher level on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, you know. You're not going to get to people sitting around thinking about, you

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know, self-actualization if they can't feed their children and then they don't have shelter and, you know, these basic things in life. And we—we have to make it possible for that to happen. That's how I—I really got involved in the work that I've been doing in Mexico is—is through my friend, Susan Smith, whom I met in 1991 at a—an Audubon population conference. And she worked for so many years there trying to help the people in the state of (?), which probably exports more migrants to Texas than any other state in

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Mexico, to im—improve the quality of life and to help them protect their watershed and to, you know, do all these kinds of things that—to make it possible for—for people to have a—to develop a different perspective on—on mortality, I guess.

**DT:** Well, speaking of the watershed you've been working on down in Mexico, this might be a good chance to visit about the Edwards Aquifer and the watershed that San Antonio finds itself in and some of the water troubles and shortages that you've been dealing with as a board member of the Edwards Aquifer Authority and also as the environmental representative on the South Central Texas Regional Water Planning Group. Maybe you can get into that.

(misc.)

**DT:** Susan, maybe you can tell us a little bit about the role that you've taken on with Edwards Aquifer Authority and also what the Authority in general has done over practically the last decade now that you've been involved.

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**SH:** I've never held a job this long, at least not one for pay. Maybe that's the secret, I should've been working for free all these years. But when I was elected to the EAA board, was the—at the first election that they had and I—I—I—there were seven or eight, maybe ten candidates in this particular district and I think I won by a margin of maybe 32

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votes. Something like that, it's a plurality election, so that's—that was my mandate, you know. So they called me Landslide Susan Hughes, ran in the newspaper. But anyway, I came there and I, you know, I had a very clear, you know, environmental bent to my—to my interests. I think nobody—nobody had any misapprehensions about why I was there and what my interests were, so. And I've tried to keep it that way always. I think transparency has been perhaps my—my greatest advocate and—and weapon and whatever you might—might want to call it in my—my political career. But I came in

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and, course, th—you know, there were people there who had been water warriors forever, basically. People who—you know, everybody there, you know, says well, I was in the room when they, you know, pounded out the Senate Bill 1477 and I was in the room and I know what the real message was and I know, you know. I didn't know any of that, so I was coming in pretty much fresh, ex—you know, except that I had been elected to the underground water district boards, despite the fact that I never got to serve, but. So I was pretty much of a newbie and came in and—and we set about trying to forge relationships

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out of this previously very contentious group. Several of us pretty much insisted that we put some resources into an offsite meeting of the board members where we would get to know each other as people, not just as, you know, representatives of positions and interests and geographical areas and so forth. But—but that we really got to know who we were, where we were coming from and, you know, could appreciate each other's backgrounds and perspectives. And I think that early effort to bring people together that

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way, that we've continued every year, really set the groundwork for us being to—able to work together as well as we have. Certainly I wouldn't begin to say that we haven't had times whenever, you know, we would've, you know, thrown our fellow board members, you know, in a—down into the deepest sinkhole we could find, you know. But—but still, all in all, we have managed to adopt a regional approach, recognizing that, you know, we have three or four very distinct interests represented there. Certainly the—the western interests, which are principally agricultural. The center area, which is, you

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know, Bexar County and environs, you know, which is the—the big player in terms of water consumption. And the springs area, which has its recreational interests—I mean, that endangered species interests and so forth. And then, of course, there is downstream and the bays and estuaries. We can't, you know, we cannot forget them. So it's a system and that's the sort of thing that I—I guess I've probably become a broken record saying, you

know, you can't manage a natural resource based on geopolitical boundaries, but here we are trying to manage a natural resource based on geopolitical boundaries, you know. So how do we best try to manage to do that in an effective way so that everybody,

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you know, you—we used to say win-win. I learned recently in some mediation training, the—the better term is that all gain. And I like that very much because we've really tried to—to do that and make sure. I mean, I'm not a big fan of irrigated agriculture. You know, I—I wouldn't be. Why would—you know, why would I be a big fan of irrigated agriculture? But I also realize that it's really important for those communities

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economically to have an—a productive irrigated agriculture, you know, industry. That's—that's why there's teachers there. That's why there's people that work on the tractors. That's why there's people that, you know, sell seed. That's why there's people that, you know, that—this whole community is—revolves around the fact that there is irrigated agriculture there. Now I may want to encourage people to move to dry land farming, choose more appropriate crops, whatever it may be, but I have to recognize that that has to be done in the context of—of a conversion process rather than just saying well, we don't care whether you have irrigation water or not. You know, that and, of

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course, you recognize that, you know, the Uvalde Pool. When—when things get dry over here, you know, they're st—they're still running fine, you know. I mean, it's the—their—their water lines, their water level lines, you know, are pretty much like this until prewatering starts and then we drop down a little bit and then we run till the Fourth of July and then it pops back up again, you know, so. So there's, you know, it's a—it's a different hydrological system and you have to take that into consideration as well. San Antonio and this kind of spills over into some of the regional planning issues, you know.

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Yes, we are, you know, a million some odd people. Some odder than others, but, you know, we still nevertheless are the economic generator for this region. The people in every county that surrounds us live, work—somehow economically depend on—on San Antonio as an economic generator. We need to have water to do that. We have the best record in terms of conservation of any city in the state and probably in the country. So

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we have been responsible in terms of our water usage and the way we, you know, go about, you know, doling out, you know, who gets—who gets what and how we use it. So I don't feel too badly about that, but we still do have a limited resource. And the thing that is the—again, it's sort of canary in the coalmine—is, of course, the springs. It would be great if the springs were lower, you know. We'd have a lot more water to work with if they were, you know, if they were geographically lower than where they are. But they're not. So if we're going to keep the springs going and that's another economic generator for New Braunfels and for San Marcos. And, you know, plus, you know, the—the—the

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downstream and we've—it's—it's incumbent upon us to keep that system working. The springs dry up. Now granted, you know, there are droughts of record. You know, we cannot guarantee that the springs will never dry up, even if we cut pumping to almost nothing. But we can do our dead level best to make sure that—that we take whatever

precautions are necessary to keep the springs flowing to the extent possible and also to provide, you know, habitat refuge, you know, whatever for the species, you know, in the event that—that—that the springs would dry. And, you know, we're—we could be faced

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with that this year. I don't—you know, it's not looking real good for us in terms of precipitation around here. So—and then, you know, never forget the bays and estuaries, you know. So what we've tried—what I've tried to do and I've had remarkably good support from—from everyone on the board, you know, over the years is to—is to try to—to keep that regional approach and to try to balance those interests and, you know, and—

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and—and try to make it work for everybody, you know, so that—so that we all take stock in the future benefit of all of us. We have a fifteen minim—member board and two appointed members and so there's a, you know, a wide diversity of—of interests. But, you know, all in all, we've been pretty good about, you know, keeping things on a level playing field. When I—when I first came on the board and I—I became the—I have been for ten years now, the chair of the research and technology committee and one of the things that I asked early on to the hydrogeologists, you know, that I—that I knew,

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what—if—if you could have anything, you know, that you wanted in terms of helping to manage this aquifer, what would you—what would you want? And I could—you know, I had in mind, you know, all these different things that they could want. Well, almost I would say to a man—and they were all men—but they said well, we would sure like to have access to the **El Seiri** well that's over by Comal Springs. This was a well that was drilled during the drought in the 50's and provided water to the—to the power plant there whenever the springs dried up. And there's always been this threat, I guess we would call it, from folks that have talked about recharge and recirculation and artificial aug—

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augmentation of the springs and so forth which is—was the root of so much conflict in—in this region. And great distrust, I mean, just absolute distrust. They—the people at LCRA and New Braunfels Utilities, I mean, if they saw anybody in the world coming close to that well, which had been, you know, not plugged, but, you know, but sealed and inoperable for many, many, many years, I mean, they would just go ballistic. Absolutely

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ballistic. So no, no, no. Nobody's getting access to that well because as soon as somebody gets access to that well, we're going to have this augmentation thing and we don't want that and, you know, because we want to keep the springs flowing and this is, you know, it's all part of it—part of the—the great big huge, you know, cumulus cloud of—of activities around this. So—but it's—the well was in such a location that it was probably in the same fault block as the springs and if we could get access to the well, we might have a much better opportunity to understand the hydraulics of the springs because, you know, we didn't have any other monitoring wells close by. And J-17, you know,

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the—the well out at Fort Sam Houston just isn't close enough. I mean, there's pretty good correlation, but it would be so nice to have a well that was really much closer to Comal Springs. So I set that as my—my first goal was getting access to that well. And so I started calling meetings between all these people who were coming in, you know, was wondering



whether there were submachine guns under the coats, you know, and trying to—trying to establish credibility. Trying to establish trust. Trying to delineate very clearly what the objectives were that we had in wanting to get access to this well and

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what the benefits could be to them and to the rest of us in the region if we had this extra monitoring capacity at that well. And after—I don't know how many months it took, seemed like forever, but finally, we got a—an agreement drawn that we could have access to that well. And that was undoubtedly my finest hour in terms of my—my service on the EAA board because nobody thought that we could do that. Nobody thought we were going to be able to—to get over those hurdles. So that was a—that was a big one.

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