

An Interview with  
**Glenn Chambers**

at his home in  
Columbia, Missouri

**8 June 2011**

interviewed by Jeff Corrigan



**Oral History Program**  
The State Historical Society of Missouri  
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Collection C3966

Missouri Environmental

CD 59-61



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## PREFACE

Glenn Chambers was born on a grain farm in Bates County, Missouri on June 14, 1936. He grew up loving the outdoors and first got into ornithology by reading a book about birds in the first grade. Before attending college, Chambers took a self-paced course on taxidermy, where he learned to stuff birds. He then graduated from Central Missouri State University in 1958 and got a Masters of Arts in Wildlife Management at the University of Missouri in 1960. Chambers was hired right out of school by the Missouri Department of Conservation as a biologist. He worked there until 1979, when he was hired by Ducks Unlimited as a fundraiser and then as a photographer. He then returned to the department of conservation in 1989 and retired in 1995.

After publishing a photo of a ruffed grouse on the cover of *Missouri Conservationist*, Chambers worked as a research biologist and a cinematographer for the conservation department from 1971 to 1979, and then again from 1989 to 1995. The first film he worked on was the only film at that time about wild turkeys. He shot and edited films designed to promote conservation efforts and educate Missourians about the local wildlife. He won four TV Emmys through these movies. After retiring in 1995, Chambers created Paddlefoot Productions, a company run by him and his wife. The goal of Paddlefoot Productions was to educate children about otter conservation, using the captive otters Chambers had. Over the next few years, Paddlefoot Productions toured around Missouri and surrounding states putting on shows. Following his retirement, Chambers spent the rest of his life working with different organizations and boards to promote conservation in Missouri. Glenn Chambers passed away in July 2017.

The interview was taped on a CompactFlash card, using a Marantz PMD-660 digital recorder and an audio-technica AT825 microphone placed on a tripod. There are periodic background sounds but the recording is of generally high quality.

The following transcript represents a rendering of the oral history interview. Stylistic alterations have been made as part of a general transcription policy. The interviewee offered clarifications and suggestions, which the following transcript reflects. Any use of brackets [ ] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Physical gestures, certain vocal inflections such as imitation, and/or pauses are designated by a combination of italics and brackets [ / ]. Any use of parentheses ( ) indicates a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation, or laughter. Quotation marks [“”] identify speech depicting dialogue, speech patterns, or the initial use of nicknames. Em dashes [—] are used as a stylistic method to show a meaningful pause or an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech or when indicating a court case title. Particularly animated speech is identified with **bold** lettering. Underlining [   ] indicates a proper title of a publication. The use of underlining and double question marks in parentheses [   (??) ] denotes unintelligible phrases. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor, Sean Rost.

**\*Please note that Glenn Chambers passed away before this transcript was finished, so he was not able to review it or clarify any points.**



Narrator: Glenn Chambers  
Interviewer: Jeff Corrigan  
Date: June 8, 2011  
Transcribed by: Teresa Bergen

**[Begin Interview.]**

**[Begin Track One.]**

Corrigan: This is Jeff Corrigan, oral historian for the State Historical Society of Missouri. And I'm in Columbia, Missouri, in the home of Glenn Chambers. This is the second time that I'm interviewing Mr. Chambers. Today's date is June 8, 2011. Where we left off last time we were talking about photography in your childhood. We were talking about how you used to, you carved out the notch in the door to take pictures of the birds that were getting in the cracklings. But I wanted to continue asking you about photography. And I wanted to ask you how do you see photography yourself? Do you see it as an art form? A science? Is it both? How do you see photography?

Chambers: I see photography as both. It's an art form. You know, you have to have a certain eye for composition, color, light, things like that. But also, it's a major contribution to science because you can document a lot of things in a photograph that you can try to explain to people. But if you can show them a picture of what's going on, you know, a picture's worth a thousand words. So, yeah, I see it as a form of both. A combination of both.

Corrigan: Now when you were taking pictures of animals, were you trying to document animal behavior? Or animal—their habitat? I mean, not their habitats, their habits? Or was there something specific you were always trying to document? Or were you just trying to get them in their natural poses and settings?

Chambers: Most of my photographs were usually based around a photo essay of the life history of the critter. In other words, if I was doing prairie chickens, I'd do the hen on the nest and the babies. And growing up. And booming on the fall leks and then what do they do in the wintertime. And that's the way, when I was making wildlife motion pictures, the movies that Charlie and I did, were usually life history stuff. Now that was my main focus was life history. I took some little aspects, interesting aspect of life history of a critter and really documented it. And some of them, it was not easy to get a life history story of them. Because they lived far away from where I was. Or they didn't lend themselves well to people being around them. Some of them were extremely wily. And so, yeah, I was, you know, opportunistic. If I saw something that would give me an opportunity to photograph an unusual behavior, well, I'd chase that down. But I was kind of a behaviorist type guy anyway, and liked to share with people through the photographic media what was going on with these critters. And that was pretty much my focus. However, also a large part of this was their habitat. Where they lived. Rather than

just showing a close-up of a coyote's head, I'd take, in this effort to show part of the life history, I'd take pictures of the animals with the wide landscape so you can understand what a prairie was, where these critters lived. So, yeah, it was, I was pretty much all inclusive of that stuff. And it was in-depth. And once I got on a subject, I stayed right after it. You didn't back off. Because one thing would lead to another. And you'd find one interesting aspect of a life history of an animal. And then the first thing you know, wow, this animal does something really special in the wintertime. It either hibernates or it you know lives underwater and comes up in a dam, like the beaver and that stuff. So it gave you, it gave a wide perspective of things to get interested in, and things to follow, taking pictures of them.

Corrigan: Did you ever think early on that you could support yourself and make a career out of photography? Or did you it was just always going to be a hobby?

Chambers: No. I, of course, like I said earlier, my goal was to become a biologist and make a career of being a wildlife biologist. However, I did have such a heavy inclination toward photography that I knew that was going to be a part of it. But in the early years, I considered that only as a hobby. But I was good at it—

**[End Track One. Begin Track Two.]**

Chambers: —and I worked at it hard. And I had good direction from Charlie and Libby. And with my own instincts. And I'm the kind of a person that doesn't let up. Once you get going, you just stay after it. So that kind of led to a little deeper relationship with the art of photography. And then of course when I got into wildlife motion pictures that was really in-depth stuff. But it started out pretty much as a hobby, then developed into more of a way of life with me. And then I did a lot of freelance stuff. So it eventually worked itself into a way that I could supplement my income by selling pictures and writing articles about the critters that I was photographing. So it kind of all melded together.

Corrigan: Speaking about the articles, do you remember the first picture that you ever published or sold?

Chambers: Yeah, the first picture that I, the most vivid picture that I remember that was ever published was in April of 1964 on the cover of the *Missouri Conservationist*. And I had spent months photographing ruffed grouse down in the Ashland Wildlife Area. It's now the Thomas S. Baskett Area. Down near Ashland. And that was where the reintroduction program, we were trading wild turkeys to Ohio for ruffed grouse. And we were in a program to try to re-establish ruffed grouse in Missouri because it had lived there before. It was a native species. And we wanted to see if we could bring them back. So we were in this swap with Ohio. We traded turkeys for ruffed grouse, and the ruffed grouse were coming here. And so the grouse population, of course, was zip before we started. And we released enough birds down there that we had a reasonable population. At least enough that I could go down there and find drumming logs, and take pictures of the birds, which was fine. Because the only picture up to that time that I had ever seen of a ruffed grouse drumming on a log was taken by Dr. Arthur A. Allen at the Cornell

University Department of Ornithology. And Arthur A. Allen was a renowned bird photographer. And he had that picture of a ruffed grouse. And that was taken, gosh, that was taken back in the late '30s or early '40s. And I said wow, if he can do this, I can do it. Because I've never seen another ruffed grouse picture drumming like that. So I had this opportunity. And so I applied my in-depth courage into this thing and decided I was going to get it—the bottom line was I spent several months down there one spring photographing those birds. And consequently, I made some really remarkable photographs. And it fit right in with demonstrating to the people here in the state of Missouri through the conservationist magazine of what was going on. So in April 1964, they published that on the cover of the Missouri Department of Conservation *Conservationist* magazine. And then right in the center, I had a center spread with black and white of different phases, different positions that these birds get in. I had some preening and some strutting and some different things they do associated with the activity on the log. And that was the first published picture I had that really went anywhere. And then right away, *Time Life* books saw it and they published it in *Time Life* books. And then other people saw it. I mean, I was not promoting it. People just happened to come across and say wow, look at this picture of this ruffed grouse drumming on the log. And I had, you know, front view, side view, strutting. It was all taken with strobe lights after dark. They're beautiful pictures. And it caught the attention of a lot of people. And that's the first picture that I had published and it kind of gave me my jump start.

Corrigan: You said that was part of a spread. Did you write the article for it, too? Or did you just provide the pictures of the magazine inside in that layout? Or was it just photographs?

Chambers: It was photographs. The only part that I had to do with that magazine, I had the cover and the center spread.

Corrigan: Okay.

**[End Track Two. Begin Track Three.]**

Chambers: And it was a photographic essay about, in black and white, on the interior of the magazine. And the cover, of course, was color. It was a photo essay on the drumming activities of ruffed grouse.

Corrigan: Now you said you took a couple of months to get that one.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: I imagine it took quite a while to get many perfect shots over your career. Can you tell me about some of the shots that stick out the most in your mind? How long you had to wait, or the circumstances around it? I know you've had a lot. I wonder which ones stick out in your head the most.

Chambers: This ruffed grouse one is probably one of the most dedicated photographic essays I ever got into. Because number one, the grouse was new to Missouri. Number two, no one had done much photography on it so it was kind of a niche of its own. And so you know, and I was a biologist, I was a biologist for the department then, headquartered here out of Columbia. But I made a really intense effort to document the whole deal of this guy on the log. So all these behaviors and stuff that he was doing. So I spent a lot of time at it. I went down there in January. The behavior of these birds is such that in January these males began to visit what's going to be their drumming logs in the spring when they start doing their drumming to attract the females. So in January, before they start drumming, they begin to attend these logs and pick out the logs in the forest that they're going to use as their sounding board. So I went down there when the snow was on and just walked through the woods and find a set of tracks and follow it to where it was going. And I located about three different logs where the birds were, or a bird or a couple of different birds were getting ready to set up territories and do their thing on a log. So then, right away, in January, late January, I move my photography blind in. Not very close. Thirty yards away. And camouflage it real well so it looked just like a little brush pile sitting there in the woods. And then I'd go move it closer to the log and closer to the log. And finally I'd get it up to about, oh, 15 or 20 feet away from the log. And just ease it in there so that there was no dramatic change in the landscape to these birds. You know, they're pretty sensitive to that kind of stuff. But if you moved the blind in gradually, I'd move it oh, every week to ten days, move it a few feet closer. Then by the time the drumming season start, which is late March, I had all of January and February to get the blind positioned. So when the drumming season started in late February, in late March, I had my blind already in position. And all I had to do was get in, all I had to do was get in there and sit and wait. And just be patient. And you know, I started photographing that bird last week—[phone rings] Excuse me. It doesn't need to be ringing. [pause]

Corrigan: Okay. We took a brief pause there for a phone call. You were talking about, now you're to the point where you're in the blind and you said you made the comment, now you just had to take the picture, but it wasn't that easy to get the picture of the ruffed grouse. But you had the blind right there, 15 to 20 feet away.

Chambers: Right. Yeah. I had, by the first or the mid March, I had the blind positioned to where I wanted. Then it was up to the bird to begin his drumming activities. And of course they start kind of slow. Visit the log, every other day or so and drum a little bit. But then when it gets into mid-April, they really, really get serious. And so serious that they'll stay on the log overnight. And drum throughout the night periodically. So I was there to document that. And one of the most interesting things I did was to move the blind around, if you can position the log, I'd move around to the front view, the side view, the rear view. And when I moved the blind to the rear view, it really made the bird nervous.

**[End Track Three. Begin Track Four.]**

Chambers: I mean, he was accustomed to the blind in the different places that I would move it. But he sure didn't like the idea of me being back behind him. He was okay when

I was out in front of him because he could see and he didn't have to worry about what was going on behind him. But when I moved around to get that three-quarter rear view that's on the cover of *The Conservationist*, he got a little nervous about that. And it took, you know, I'd take a picture and then he'd leave the log and he wouldn't come back for a couple of days. But he finally adjusted to it. And in the meantime, I'd go, you know, I started, I started going down there in late March and early April. And every day that it wasn't raining, every day from then until the fourteenth of June, when he drummed the last time, because the mating season was over, every morning that it wasn't raining, I was in that blind photographing. And I mean, that's some other kind of dedication. And it wasn't that I was expecting to get something that I hadn't got before. But it was just my drive to succeed in this thing and to document something that hadn't been done for a while. So I really, really put a lot of effort into it. And you say, why didn't I go in the morning when it was raining? Well, the most obvious reason is you don't want to get your camera equipment wet. The second reason is that the birds' plumage are not nice when they're wet. They are waterproof, but there's some ends of the feathers that stick together and stuff like that. So rainy days, I took a rest. But you know, I'd leave Columbia at two o'clock in the morning. I'd get down in the photography blind at four. If the bird was on the log, and many times, it was, it would flush and fly away. I'd get in the blind. And then it would come back. But even that, with that much disturbance, that bird finally got so that when I would walk up and flush him off the log, he'd fly away and he wouldn't come back. So then I'd start taking two people. Two of us would go to the blind. I'd go inside and then someone would walk away. And pretty soon you hear [bird sound] he's coming right back on the log. So they get smart to this goofy stuff us photographers do to them. So we have to permit them to adjust. And we have to adjust ourselves so that we can, if we're going to succeed at this, if it takes two people to get up at two o'clock in the morning and walk into the blind, that's what we're going to do. Because that's what it's all about.

Corrigan: So they were intelligent birds.

Chambers: Yeah. They were, they're conditioned to one set of conditions. And when those conditions change, they said well something else got to change, too.

Corrigan: Now when you'd go at two in the morning, when were you actually taking the photos? Because it was dark out then.

Chambers: See, these birds, the most spectacular picture you can take of these birds is when they have a black background or a dark background. I stayed and took pictures of it in the daylight. But in that dappled light, you know, the leaves aren't out on the trees yet. And some of the pictures are nice, and I have a whole collection of them. But the best ones were the ones that I used electronic flashes to get their exposure on one and stop the action of their wings. In the sunlight, you know, back then film wasn't as good as shooting with a digital camera nowadays. So you just didn't have the shutter speed. You just didn't have an ISO or the film speed to permit that. So the spectacular way to show it to people was to shoot it in the dark, or at least when there wasn't broad daylight where the flash would override any light that was coming in. And that's why I used multiple

flashes. I think the most I ever had was four flash guns going at once. The flash, yeah, the flash on the camera. And then I had the other three slaved so that when I touched the one off in the camera, all four lights would go off at once. And that gave me a nice, I could vary the lighting, I could vary the, back some off. If I thought it was too hot, I'd back it away a few feet. And of course, birds got to get used to all that stuff, too. So when you set the blind up, you know you're going to be—

**[End Track Four. Begin Track Five.]**

Chambers: —using these flash guns. So you'd make little, I just made little dummy flash, they were, I took a two by four and sawed them in about four-inch lengths. And they were just about the size of a little flash gun. And put tin foil on the front of them, so it looked like the front of the flash where the light was going to come out of it. And I'd position those on tripods or anchor them in a tree where they were pointing down toward the log. And just got everything going. And you know, when I would begin on this thing, I'd shoot test strips. I'd take one of my boots off and set it on the log, okay? And photograph it and focus on it in the dark. You follow me?

Corrigan: Um-hm.

Chambers: And shine a flashlight on it and focus on it. And then shoot a bunch of test strips so I knew where I was. I knew it should be shooting at F22 or F16, depending on where I had my lights. So that way, when I got there and the birds came, it wasn't a trial and error. I knew right when I was on target. And it worked that way for doing the ruffed grouse and bobcats and a lot of other critters that I shot in the dark.

Corrigan: Now these, the two by four with the tin foil, that was just to get the birds associated with it, right?

Chambers: Yeah. That was just a little dummy flash that looked like something they'd get used to seeing. And it didn't hurt them. If you get everything set up and all at once you start dropping flash guns in the trees around, they're going to take a look around and say unh-uh, this is not what this is all about. And they're not going to, they'll find another log somewhere in the woods to go do their thing.

Corrigan: Now would they, would they often switch logs?

Chambers: Yup.

Corrigan: Or once they picked out their log—

Chambers: Once they picked out their log, they were pretty much dedicated to coming back to that drumming log. But with a lot of disturbance, they would move to other logs. In other words, this bird, and I was working primarily with two birds, one of them was especially good at—he figured me out. And I'd come up and I'd take one picture. Well he'd go off, oh, 75 yard. I hear him over there [drumming noise] I hear him get going. So

what I did—you know, that was a lost cause, he's not going to come back. He's drumming over there. So what I'd do, I'd go find that log in the daytime when he wasn't there. And I'd pile brush on it so he couldn't get on it. Okay? (Corrigan laughs) So then he'd, okay, so he'd come back to this log. And boom, I'd take a flash picture and he'd go over to that log. Well he couldn't get on it. So then he'd come back to my log. So you know, you'd just kind of have to maneuver these critters around and work with them. And figure out, you know, and you've got to be thinking ahead all the time. Because you're out there where they are. They're used to it every day. You're on a part-time basis with them. And so yeah, you've got to be thinking ahead of the curve on any of these critters that you're going to get really good pictures of.

Corrigan: Now you said the grouse were being reintroduced into Missouri.

Chambers: Um-hm.

Corrigan: How is the population now?

Chambers: The population, you know, after we quit releasing, the birds hung on for a few years, four, five, six years. And then they began to tail off. And then we didn't see any hens, and we saw a few males. It was what we call a straggling failure. And as far as I know, there's not a grouse in that area now. And this was back in the 1970s when we did this.

Corrigan: Okay. So it wasn't a successful reintroduction?

Chambers: No. We established a little population and they persisted for a while but then they disintegrated. And it was because the habitat, there had been too much fire in the woods before we did this. There had been too much overgrazing. The understory wasn't what these birds needed. We thought it was. We made the experiment. We did do another experiment down close on the Missouri River breaks that was successful, and there's still a few birds there. But the year before last, in 19--, let's see, in 20--, 2009, we closed the season on them there because—

**[End Track Five. Begin Track Six]**

Chambers: —began dwindling out. But they've been there for a number of years. And we don't know why. It may be wet springs. You know, we've had three terribly wet springs. And these critters have to have somewhat of a dry spring so that your babies can get out and get dried off without walking through that wet leaves and wet vegetation all the time. So we have just recently closed the season on them. There was enough there we could hunt. But now they've slipped, so we closed the season. And who knows, that population may eventually fail, too.

Corrigan: And that was where again? Down by the Missouri River, you said?

Chambers: Yeah. I'm trying to think here. It was, I'll come back to it in a minute. I can't think right now where it was. Okay.

Corrigan: Okay. Did you have any close calls with any animals? I know you, not necessarily the grouse, but you mentioned some larger animals. Bobcats, different things. Did you have any close calls with any animals?

Chambers: Yeah, when I was photographing Alaskan brown bears up on the McNeil River, back in the mid-nineties, yeah, I was photographing, I went out, I was able to go out on the McNeil River with the advice from Larry Aumiller, who was the bear biologist for Alaska Fish and Game. And he set me up in a place on the McNeil River where I could go out there and stay. I had a bush pilot take me out there and left me off. And I was there almost two weeks photographing Alaskan brown bears. At the falls there at the McNeil River where everybody goes. But there wasn't anyone out there at the time that I went. But anyway, there was this mother that had three cubs. This mother, Alaskan brown bear, grizzly. So she had three cubs. And I spent oh, the better part of almost ten or eleven days getting used to her and photographing her and her babies. And up there there's really dense alder thickets. Alder is a shrub that gets just a little bit taller than your head. And it's what we call a dog-hair stand. [phone rings] Let me see who that is. Okay. [pause]

Corrigan: Okay. We took a brief pause there again.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: So you were telling me the alder thickets were about as high as you were.

Chambers: Right.

Corrigan: And you were talking about the mother bear and her three cubs.

Chambers: Right. I spent about ten days adjust, getting this bear adjusted to me. I'd talk to her. Us wildlife photographers are goofy. And we can read the body language of these critters. And you can tell a lot of times how close to get to them and what to say. So part of this experience of getting them adjusted to you is talking. And you know, just in a—you're not screaming at them, you're just visiting with them, okay? They're not visiting back, they're just listening, okay? So anyway, I was getting this bear accustomed to me because I knew where she was going to go in the daytime to nurse her babies and I knew where she was going to go to the river to feed. And you know, I'd figured all this out by watching her behavior. But one day I was going through the alder thicket. And Larry had told me, he said, "Now if that female ever stands up on her back legs and goes, 'huff, huff, huff!'", he said, "just back off." He said, "That means you're too close to her." So one day I was creeping through the, and I didn't know where she was. These bears make paths through these alder thickets. They're so dense that these critters make paths through there. And I was creeping down this path. And sure enough, I came around the corner and here she was, too close to me. And she stood up on her back legs, back on her back legs.

And huffed at me a couple three times. And I just backed off. But that's the only, that's the only time that I ever was in danger, when I felt in danger of—

**[End Track 6. Begin Track 7.]**

Chambers: —a life-threatening situation with any of the critters that I was ever around. And of course, you would expect that from an Alaskan grizzly that weighs fifteen hundred pounds and me a little 130-pounder. But that was the only really close encounter. And because of my education about what to do in these situations and how to handle the situation, and because the bear was somewhat used to me, she was used to seeing me around there. But you know, from her point of view, I've got three babies here, you're not going to mess with me or disturb me. So she was just giving me a warning. And I backed off and we were fine. I continued to photograph her, oh, for the next two or three days.

Corrigan: Is that all you were photographing there in that trip was the black, or the brown bears?

Chambers: Yup. Um-hm. I just went there to photograph the Alaskan brown bears. And luckily Larry put me in a spot where this female had three cubs. And yeah, I spent several days with them and got some really, really nice pictures of them. Yeah.

Corrigan: Now you said you spent months on the ruffed grouse.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: Was there any other—

Chambers: On the ruffed grouse.

Corrigan: Ruffed grouse.

Chambers: R-u-f-f-e-d.

Corrigan: Yeah. Ruffed grouse.

Chambers: Yup, yup.

Corrigan: Were there any other animals that took a long time to really get?

Chambers: Oh—

Corrigan: What I'm thinking of in particular I wanted you to talk about was I know in your tour you mentioned how many times you had photographed hummingbirds. But it took, it was only one photograph of maybe 10,000, I believe you said, that actually was the only one you got where the wings were both extended.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: How long were you photographing hummingbirds till you got that photograph?

Chambers: Oh, probably three weeks. You know, I've done this, if I did it this year it would be the fourth year. But I'm not. I've got all the hummingbird pictures I need of the ruby-throated. Except nesting stuff. I'd always go after more nesting stuff, because that's very unusual. But anyway, with those birds. But I did articles for the *Audubon Magazine* for a number of years. And I was given assignments like sandhill cranes and crows. And those birds are very perceptive of any change in their environment. And it was a real challenge. I was telling you about the ruffed grouse who could count to two. Crows can count to about six. Sandhill cranes can count to five or six. That many people go to the blind before they come back. So it takes a lot of dedication and a lot of understanding of these critters. And just a lot of patience to capture these images that you need. Some of the birds are quite easy and adaptable to the blind situation. For instance, prairie chickens. Sage grouse. The sharp-tailed grouse. You don't have to put a blind up and leave it for three weeks to get good pictures of those. You know, you can put a blind up with sage grouse and prairie chickens. Leave it up in the vicinity. I mean really, right on the lek, right on the booming grounds, right on the strutting grounds in the case of the sage grouse. Leave it there for a couple three days and they completely accommodate and adjusted to it. But some of these critters are not that accommodating. And crows are one of them and sandhill cranes are another one. And probably many other birds that I haven't photographed. The hummingbirds are easy. You don't even need a photography blind. Just go to a place where they're using someone with a humming bird feeder that have flowers that you want to photograph. And just go over there and sit and wait. And let them just get used to your presence. Just sit down in a chair. You don't even have to have your camera with you. Just sit there. And you know, keep moving the feeder closer to you. And they say well, this guy's not going to hurt me. So they poke their bills in there and feed. So it's a matter in a lot of cases of just acclimating these birds to who you are and trying to have an understanding of their behavior. So, and one of the most important things is—

**[End Track Seven. Begin Track Eight.]**

Chambers: —their body actions and their body language. Just observe that and then you'll know how close to get. And a perfect example of this was last Thanksgiving in 2010, Thanksgiving 2010 when I went to Wyoming to photograph big-horned sheep. I had some photography blinds with me. But that was what I call a regular stalk and shoot. You stalk the critter. You get close enough. You get the shots that you want. But here again, you've got to be very cognizant of what that animal's behavior is when you're trying to photograph it. In other words, I was up there during the breeding season when the ewes are in heat, or in estrus. And of course the whole scenario is all about the breeding activities. And that's what they're involved in. So you can take advantage of their weaknesses at that time to creep in and get close. So that's the stalk and shoot aspect

of it. But in order to be successful, you've got to know somewhat about the animal's behavior. You've got to know its body language. You can tell if you get 100 yards away from them and they're disturbed. They quit chasing the ewes or they quit horning each other, the rams, you know you're too close. So you've got to back off. However, at 100 yards and you're not causing a disturbance among them, move on up. And then you're 75 yards. And if it still happens, move on up. And then you're 40 yards away from them. So you know, you can just work gently around these critters and take advantage of their situation and what they're into. Whether they're into mating activities or whether they're feeding or whether they're tending the nest with the babies or whatever. And just take advantage of their behavior at the time. And it will work for you if you watch the body language.

Corrigan: Now with the crows and the sandhill cranes, you said they can count up to five or six.

Chambers: Um-hm.

Corrigan: So you were having to take five or six people with you?

Chambers: Yes. Yes.

Corrigan: Who was going with you? Just your family or your coworkers?

Chambers: Well, well, when I was up in Nebraska, I would, I was staying with ranchers. And I'd say, "Could you guys go," and of course you didn't have to go at two o'clock in the morning for those guys. You'd get out there about daylight. But I'd take three of these kids or four of these kids and walk. Then they'd come back and they'd go catch a school bus. So that was the deal. The best luck I had with the sandhill cranes of getting the really good pictures that I wanted and the spectacular stuff that's in that article, called "The Day of the Crane." It was published sometime in the mid-seventies. This rancher gave me permission to go anywhere on his ranch that I wanted to. And of course these cranes congregate along the Platte River in the spring, in the spring migration. From about, oh, Grand Isle and clear out to Hershey. All along I-80 there where the braided Platte River runs close to the highway. And so anyway, I went way on out there to Hershey because I liked it out there at Hershey because most of the birdwatchers and people that disturb what I want to do stop at Grand Isle or Kearney or somewhere back that way. But I went on way west to get, leave the people behind me. Because they were, National Audubon Society has a big sanctuary out there and the people gather around. I can't do my thing with that many people around disturbing everything. So you've got to get away from it. So I went clear on out and became friends with ranchers out there. And this one rancher, he said, "You can do whatever you want." He said, "Those sandhill cranes," he said, "they'll be here three or four weeks and then they're gone." So I went down there. I need some pictures of these birds. Late in the afternoon and early in the morning, when they're in the river itself. They wade down in the river until, where the water—

**[End Track Eight. Begin Track Nine.]**

Chambers: —to where they're standing about two feet deep in the water. And they stand there, they roost standing in the water, a lot of them do. So I wanted to capture that with the river in the background. Nice scenic thing with a few hundred birds in the foreground. And so what I did was went out there and I found an abandoned beaver lodge out in the river. The river was braided, went around both sides of me, of where this beaver lodge was. So I just dismantled, very gently dismantled that beaver lodge. Put my photography blind right inside it. And then covered that back up. Used the logs and the sticks that the beavers had created this lodge out of. Created it back, left me a hole where I could get the lens through. And then I'd go get in that thing. You know, I wanted to get them when they come in from the fields in late afternoon. Get the sunset and all that stuff. So I'd go get in that goofy blind about, oh, four o'clock in the afternoon. Take me a sack lunch. And I'd put a little tarpaulin down so I wouldn't get wet. Took my sleeping bag. And I just slept in there all night. And I'd get in there about four o'clock in the afternoon, five o'clock, before the birds started coming in there to roost, because they liked to come to these same areas to roost every day. So I'd get in there and have my sack supper and wait. And pretty soon you can hear them [makes trilling noise] they start coming in and take your pictures. Stay overnight with them. You'll hear all this ruckus they go through all night long, splashing around and carrying on. And then the next morning, well of course you're awake because they've awakened you. And get pictures of the fog on the river and the nice aesthetic type stuff. And that's what the photographic essay was all about. But that's the way there that I got the best crane pictures that I got. You can get them out in those fields. But a picture of a sandhill crane in a field, in a corn field, a stubble field or, you know, where I had my blind, if I was photographing those in the marshes or in the field, I'd burrow back in a haystack. So I'd have to have, those birds could see you, so I'd have to have someone walking in there with me and then walking out. But this deal with the beaver lodge, you don't have to have anyone. Just walk in there by myself, four o'clock in the afternoon when the birds are five miles away feeding in the field somewhere. And when they start coming back to roost at night, well I'm already there and set. So that's my technique on that.

Corrigan: What time of year was this? When are the cranes there?

Chambers: Crane day up there is March the fifteenth. That's about when the major part of the migration is going to be there. And I'd get there, oh, March the tenth and stay, depending on the weather. I've been up there, it took me three years to do that photographic essay. And I was up there in March in Nebraska, you're going to get snowstorms. So I was there through snowstorms and windstorms and whatever. But middle of March is the time of the year when they're on their migration route back from Texas and where they winter back to the breeding grounds on the tundra in Northwest Territories and Alberta and those places. Manitoba, northern Manitoba.

Corrigan: So they're there for a couple of weeks, you said, about three weeks?

Chambers: Yeah, they're there about, you can count on them for about three weeks.

Corrigan: And then you did that for three years to get the, to finish that essay. Photo essay.

Chambers: Right. Um-hm.

Corrigan: Okay. When did you actually switch from thirty-five millimeter to digital?

Chambers: Okay. From thirty-five millimeter film to switch, oh, let me think. Probably four years ago. The crowning blow was when it became so difficult to get film for my film cameras, and so difficult to find a place where they would process it. Then is when I knew that if I'm going to stay in this race, I've got to switch from film to digital. And I'm probably one of the—

**[End Track 9. Begin Track 10.]**

Chambers: —the longest hangers-onner to film of anybody. Because I drug my feet and I drug my feet. I just didn't want to do it. But consequently, the way that technology was changing, there was no way that I was going to survive and stay up with photographic assignments and stuff unless I went digital. So that happened about five years ago.

Corrigan: Why do you think, you said you drug your feet. Why is that? I'm curious. Do you think there's, is there possibly a loss there? Because I mean, if you're taking a digital photograph you can just keep shooting. Shoot, shoot, shoot, shoot, shoot. And you don't have to think about how much film am I using? How much is this going to cost to process, to print? Do you think there's a loss in that art form, to look for that shot? Or do you just think it's a different, just a different, you're still waiting and looking for that good shot, it's just a different kind of way to get there?

Chambers: Well I think the first part of this equation is that I resist change. Okay? I'm seventy-five years old, and I'm not into changing every time the sun comes up. So I resisted just because of making the change. And number two, at the time when I went digital, I wasn't convinced that digital was better than film. At that time. Of course, we didn't have twenty-one megapixel cameras then like I have now. And the technology has advanced in the last, say, seven or eight years in the digital world to where it's getting better all the time. There's a certain look that you get with film that you don't get with shooting digital stuff. And maybe this is all in my head. But I know definitely that it's the case, because I was a cinematographer for many years. And when tape came aboard, when we started shooting video on tape, everybody wanted the film look on tape. And it was really, really hard to reproduce it. Because there's something about that grain. One of my editor says, "Glenn," and if I could think of this, she's a gal that's in charge of *Ranger Rick* magazine. And she said, "Glenn, silver speaks louder than pixels." A nice way to say it. Silver, which is the component of film that captures the image, okay, silver speaks louder than pixels. But even she encouraged me, she said, "Glenn, you've go to switch over." And I've done things for *Ranger Rick* magazine for forty years. National Wildlife Federation. Longer than that. Fifty years. And so, but Susan McElhinney told me, she said, "Glenn, silver speaks louder than pixels." But she said, "You're going to

have to abandon your film ways and come along in the digital world, because you're going to get left behind if you don't. And that's true. There's no question about it. So that's partly the reason that I drug my feet so long going digital. Part of it was all in my head. You know, it was psychological. But I now, through the help of Jeff Berg, who was, Roger Berg was the owner of Columbia Photo for many years. And he was a very, very close friend of mine. And he was a computer's computer. That guy was ahead of everybody else in the computer world, regardless of what. And especially in digital imaging. So when Roger passed away, his son Jeff took over the business. And Jeff's my right-hand man on digital stuff. I mean, I don't know how to do Photoshop or any of that stuff. I tell Jeff, we put this stuff on the hard drive on his Mac. And I say, "Okay, I want this to be a little brighter. I need a little more contrast. I need some saturation." Whatever. And Jeff adjusts that picture to where I can visualize it like it was when I was sitting there. Anyway—

**[End Track 10. Begin Track 11.]**

Chambers: So Jeff has helped me transition also. Roger punched on me and kicked me around for years and years. Made fun of me in a good way because I wouldn't switch over. And I don't know while he was still alive whether I was switched over. I don't know how long he's been gone. But I don't know whether I even made the switch while he was still alive. I don't think I did. I think it was after he passed away that I switched from film to the digital world. But the technology is advancing and still keeps advancing. And the digital stuff is really good nowadays. I don't question it. If I had my choice to go back to film or digital, I'd probably stay digital now. For the reasons you pointed out about the, you can take 50 pictures here in two minutes, and you can edit them right there in front of you. If this isn't what you want, you erase it. Keep going. They have flash cards, you know, even with my twenty-one megapixel camera, we've got flash cards now, thirty-two gigs. We can put a thousand pictures on one flash card. So the technology has advanced. And you're goofy if you don't keep up with it.

Corrigan: Well, and you're right to say that ten, fifteen years ago when people started to switch over, there's a big difference between a digital camera that was doing three megapixels, four megapixels, six—

Chambers: Yeah. They finally got it.

Corrigan: —versus what you were doing with your thirty-five millimeter camera. You could get a good quality picture. But I think, as you said, it's kept improving. You're up to twenty-one megapixels?

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: What's the camera you actually have now?

Chambers: I've got a Canon EOS5D. That's a state of the art camera right now. It's a twenty-one megapixel. It's as good of a digital camera that Canon makes. Nikon has, I

think, a twenty-three megapixel. Well, next year, Canon's going to have a twenty-five. I mean, these competitive cameras are going to try to stay one jump ahead of the others. And I tell you, you cannot in the digital world stay completely brand new with everything. Because technology is going to change so fast that something you have is going to be obsolete by the time you get around to getting it. So my advice is, pick the best you can at the time. Be prepared to rethink in two or three years, because the technology is going to advance so fast that things are going to keep getting better and better, the way I look at it.

Corrigan: Well, it's kind of like computers.

Chambers: Yeah. Exactly.

Corrigan: They were big, huge, bulky. And now you can get them thin. And they keep getting smaller. Keep getting better.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: A lot of them keep getting cheaper.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: Now is that the—well, for probably lower quality digital cameras, they are fairly cheap and accessible to anybody.

Chambers: Yeah. Oh, sure. Yeah. You know, that's one of the—that's a good point. And I say that to make the following statements. You know, back when I started in the photography business, I'm seventy-five, I want to say fifty years ago, when I was twenty-five years old. That's when I really got into it. That's about the time when the grouse picture was published and all that. Well back then, there weren't very many people doing what I was doing. Charlie Schwartz and I, you could name them on one hand. Leonard Lee Rue, Maslowski(??) brothers. The Muench(??) brothers. Myself. Charlie. There was just a few of us that were really into wildlife photography. That's fifty years ago. Today, there's wildlife photography everywhere. And part of the reason why is the reason you just pointed out a while ago. There are so many different kinds of good cameras out there now. And some of them are not very, are fairly inexpensive compared to my top of the line brand. You have all kinds of modes of transportation now. You have helicopters and four-wheelers and jet boats and air boats. And you have ways to get around that fifty years ago, we didn't have. We didn't have a four-wheeler. You walked everywhere you went, carried it on your back. You know, today's wildlife photographers—

**[End Track 11. Begin Track 12.]**

Chambers: —I mean with the advancements in even like photography blinds. And all this accessory equipment that you can buy to move around the country. And a lot of these folks are young people that are not married. They're not tied down with a family back

home. They can go live in Africa. Find a roommate and the two of them have interests alike and want to photograph. And they go and live in Africa and turn out some absolutely beautiful stuff. You know, that wasn't so 50 years ago. There just wasn't that kind of money around. Things were not, modes of transportation were not that good back then. And it was a whole different world. And I've watched that evolutionary process of the change from then to now. And I enjoy thinking about the time when we had to do it the hard way. But I do enjoy the times now when we can do it the easy way. I mean, I don't have a problem at all if I'm going to be two and a half miles back in the woods somewhere taking my four-wheel drive Suburban with all my equipment in it and trucking right back there on a forestry road where they permit you to go. And go back in there and set up your photography blind and do it. We used to have to walk. (laughs) Carry it on your back! Hire someone to go with you and do the grunt work. Yeah.

Corrigan: Yeah. Although with the type of camera you have now, although you're not spending money on processing and film, you are spending it more, because the camera itself is more expensive.

Chambers: Yeah. The camera's more expensive. The flash cards – gosh, I bought that thirty-two gig flash card. That thing's like five hundred bucks or something like that. So along with these innovations come some expense with the advances they made in this stuff.

Corrigan: Well like you said earlier, though, you don't need the new product every year. But you just have to know that you're going to have to maybe in the next five years—

Chambers: Yeah. Update. Exactly.

Corrigan: It's got a shorter lifespan, but you don't have to get it every year.

Chambers: Right.

Corrigan: Because the difference probably, I'm guessing, between a camera today and three years ago is they're getting better, but they're not a huge difference to necessarily have to put out all that money.

Chambers: Yeah. Right. Yeah. You know, when I, when I switched from film to digital, I had four systems. I had Leicas, I had Minoltas, I had Nikons and I had Canon. Well, all that stuff's obsolete now. I've given the film cameras to one of my sons. And I gave one of my good Canons to my granddaughter. Because she likes to shoot black and white. Well, black and white's fine. And there's a place for black and white. And she's found her niche with it and she loves it. Well, the film camera's the way to go with that. You can shoot digital black and white, just flip the button and all at once you're taking pictures that don't have any chrome in them. But she likes that thing and she processes her own film. And you know, it's kind of a hobby type deal for her, and that's wonderful. But us guys that are in this thing professionally, I mean, we've got to stay abreast of what's going on. And I ask whenever I'm getting ready to buy a new camera, I always

visit with the people that I'm buying from and say, "Now what shall I do with this D20 that I'm no longer going to be using?" They say, "Just put it in the gadget bag and keep it for a backup." They say, "It's not worth anything on the market." I mean, some people will buy those used cameras. But if a professional photographer has had the camera for three or four years, it's been around the horn. And I take pretty good care of my stuff. But they do get banged up and whatever. And it decreases the value of them. So it does make sense just to hang onto them for a backup. But how many backups do you need? I've got the 5D now. Probably in a couple of years, or maybe even less than that, I'll be upgrading to one that could be as much as twenty-five, twenty-six megapixels. And if I do, then the 5D will become my second camera. Well, the 20D is going to be my third camera. So it will get left at home. I'm not going to carry three—

**[End Track 12. Begin Track 13.]**

Chambers: —I carry two, but not three. Because I'm more careful. But I do carry lots of flash cards. And here's the reason why. I do a lot of stuff, water fowl photography, stuff over water, stuff out in the marshes. And the tragic thing would be, have one of these big flash cards like a thirty-two gig with a thousand pictures on it, you drop that sucker in the water and it's toast. Well, where have you been for the last five days is gone. So my practice is, I have a number of, when I feel I'm in a pretty secure place, like photographing sage grouse or anything that's terrestrial, not aquatic, I'll take the big flash cards with me. Because I want to shoot a lot of stuff, you know, rapid sequence stuff. So you click, click, click, click, click, so you can get a lot of images behind you real quick. And you pick out the one that's the best action and you go for it. But anyway, so, the long and short of that is I take those smaller flash cards when I go on an aquatic situation. And I take the bigger ones when I'm going terrestrial.

Corrigan: Do you, say, you've got five aquatic ones, are they maybe only five gigabytes a piece?

Chambers: Well, no, they've got to be, I think mine are thirty-six, eighteen, six, I can't recall. They're down there in the gadget bag, but they're something like that. They're graduated like that.

Corrigan: Do you use one, maybe you'll use one Monday and Tuesday, you'll use a different one Wednesday and Thursday?

Chambers: Just mark them. But I like to clear them, I like to clear them really quick. When I get back in from a shoot, I like to go ahead and put that onto my laptop or put that into the hard drive on my Mac tower so that I can clear all those flash cards. It's easier to catalog them, to keep track of them. Because I'll do something, say, like, I'll do something today, I'll be photographing the groundhog with her babies out here. Well this afternoon, I want to go to the prairie to photograph prairie flowers. Well, I've got to either decide if I'm going to clear those images off, put them on my hard drive, and have a clean, formatted flash card, or whether I'm going to put them on there together. Then

when you're getting ready to catalog them, well, I remember I shot the groundhogs, and then I went to the prairie. But how did I file that? Where is it? So that creates a problem.

Corrigan: How are you cataloging them? Is it by the trip? Is it by the date? Is it by the animal itself?

Chambers: I catalog by subjects and date. That's the easiest way for me to catalog them. And I'm into a program now called Lightroom 3. Which really I'm just learning it, but it's a neat way to keep up with your images. So that's kind of what I'm into now.

Corrigan: Now you mentioned Columbia Photo earlier.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: Is that, where were, since you're based here in Columbia, where were you getting your photographs processed and printed?

Chambers: Okay, all the—I would buy my film, use professional film, it's all either frozen or kept cold. And so you buy the professional film, Kodachrome twenty-five, Kodachrome sixteen to start with, and twenty-five, and then sixty-four. But I would get that from Columbia Photo. I'd buy it by the brick, okay, what you call a brick, it's one, two, three, four, probably twenty-four rolls in a batch. I don't know. It's a nice package. We called it a brick. And I'd pull five or six rolls out of there and keep it cool in the refrigerator. And I'd freeze the rest of it. And then as I used it up, I'd get it. And then, but I did, I had all my processing done by Kodak. And the reason for that is that at that time they had a monopoly on processing Kodachrome sixty-four and Kodachrome twenty-five.

**[End Track 13. Begin Track 14.]**

Chambers: That was all settled in a lawsuit of whatever you call it, monopoly. And then they had to start farming this stuff out. Well when they started farming out their processing, that's when the whole thing began to degenerate. When they began farming out their processing, I still had the option to send my stuff to Rochester, New York, and have it processed by Kodak. And that's what I did. I just set up a system with them when I'd come back from a photographic shoot I'd have twenty rolls or whatever. And I'd batch it. I wouldn't send the whole batch at one time. I'd send seven rolls, six rolls, and ten rolls. Then I'd have them process that. I knew the people at the place there. And I'd have them, okay, we're not going to process on Monday, we're not going to process on Friday, we're not going to process it a day before or after a holiday. I learned that the hard way, because these folks that are running the machinery that does this processing, when Friday comes, they're ready to go home. When Monday comes, they've had a bad weekend. When a holiday's coming, they're really keyed up. And a day before and a day after a holiday, zip. So I had the arrangement with them, we only processed Tuesday through Thursday my stuff. And I had that arrangement with the laboratory, the gal at the laboratory. She said, "Yes, Mr. Chambers, this is your request, this is the way we'll do

it.” And I had really good luck with that. But before I’d learned the hard way, I’d made a trip to British Columbia. And I was photographing Barrow’s goldeneyes, their courtship ritual. And man oh man, I had some beautiful behavioral stuff. And I shipped it in there. And they processed it on a Friday or a Monday or something. And someone went to sleep at the switch. And when I got it back, it was, all you could see was the blacks and the whites. There was no color of anything. And wow, you talk about coming unglued. And Colby Chandler was the president at Kodak at that time. And man, I called up Colby, I developed a good relationship with him, the president of Kodak. And I said, “Colby, this is not right.” I said, “We—us guys around here in the field, spending thousands of someone’s dollars. Travel, film, cameras and whatever. And send it in here and a bunch of your jokers go to sleep at the switch like this and let this happen. This is not going to happen.” And so then that’s when he put me in charge with the gal at the head of the laboratory. And he said, “Okay, Glenn, here’s a way to do this.” So I—through that. And I have a file down there an inch thick on Kodak problems, okay? Through the years, the problems I’ve had with Kodak, like this one I just told you about. So a lot of people would just roll with the punches, say, “Well, it just happened.” But boy, I tell you, as a professional, you cannot take that for an answer. You’ve got to be aggressive, you’ve got to get in there and you’ve got to hit these guys face to face and say, “Hey, I’m making a living out here doing this the same way as you are being president of Kodak Company. And buddy, we’re going to get her straight now or you want to do it later.” And I’ve had a good relationship with those people. But you’ve got to get their attention. And there’s only way to get their attention is after you’ve had a major loss like that and you’re so upset about it (laughs) you can use some words that they understand, that I don’t want this guy in my face again. So, I don’t know whether that answer your question or not, but that—

Corrigan: Yeah. Yeah. It did. Switching gears a little bit, could you talk a little bit about the development of conservation in Missouri? As you see it. Or as you saw it through the last fifty, sixty years.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: A lot of people always say Missouri was so far ahead of the game. Why was that?

Chambers: That was because right here in the town of Columbia, we had some visionaries. We had E. Sydney Stevens, who was an attorney here. We had Edward K. Love. We had Charlie Callison. We had any number of these conservation pioneers that had—this occurred back in the mid-thirties, when the Conservation—

**[End Track 14. Begin Track 15.]**

Chambers: —Federation of Missouri was born. And I was the president of it for two and a half years just recently. But anyway, back in the mid-thirties, 1937, this organization was born. And it was born because these visionaries were tired of the gut bucket politics that was going back then. The local county commissioner setting the seasons for ducks in

his county. Someone else setting prairie chicken season for them. There was no rhyme nor reason. Things had gone to pot. They'd overgrazed the woods, had burnt the woods. The fish were gone. The birds were gone. The ducks were gone. You know, we'd just been through the Depression and people were bottomed out. And these visionaries, like E. Sydney Stevens and Edward K. Love, these folks, said "Hey, there's a better way." We're going to get together and we're going to create a conservation commission in Missouri that's free of politics. We're not going to let the dumb county judge down here in Dade County set the limit on prairie chickens. We're not going to let the governor's best friend up in Adair County set the—of course, there were no deer then. But set whatever regulations. So a new organization was born, which was called the Missouri Conservation Commission. And that was back in 1937. And that was because of the Conservation Federation of Missouri with these visionaries that created that and said we're going to create a four-man conservation commission. The conservation commission will be charged with the maintenance of the fish, forestry, and wildlife of the state, period. And they're not going to be responsible to the governor. They're going to be their own entity. And we're going to let the people vote and decide if they want to do this or if they want to have the political arrangement. So it went to a vote, and the people overwhelmingly passed it. And no other state had done this. And that put us in the forefront. And we've only advanced and been the leaders all the way. In 1976 we passed the 1/8 of 1 percent sales tax, which was never heard of in a state. The people passed that. They wanted it and they dedicated that money to the conservation department. Which has led to all the good things that the department has done, the conservation areas we have around, you know, the research that we do on the wild critters, the good forestry program we have at the state. All of that is because the citizens themselves decided, hey, we're going to have something set apart from what we've had in the past. And this is the way it's going to be. And the only way that this going to happen is if we let the people in Missouri vote on it and decide if that's what they want. If the people want it, it will fly. If they don't want it, it won't. And they wanted it, and it flew. That's what's put us, really, bottom line, what's put us number one in the whole nation. And we've been that way since the mid-1930s, and we are that way today. Everybody looks at the Missouri Department of Conservation and said, "You guys are the best. You have a good research staff, you have good leadership, and it doesn't change with the political whims of a new governor. Your directors are in place for a number of years. Most of them worked their way up through the organization. So it's a really, really a good system."

Corrigan: The sales tax was in the seventies.

Chambers: Um-hm.

Corrigan: Is that still adequate funding?

Chambers: Yeah, yeah. You know, adequate funding, it is still adequate funding. You've got to realize that when the economy falls off like it has, that you know, money's not going to be coming in. So what the first thing you do is you start cutting programs. You begin to reduce the payroll. You cut out programs and stuff. So the department has done an excellent job of cutting out the fat. And laying off people, giving them early

retirement, closing some of the regional offices, things like this. And the populace out there across the state is aware of this. Well, we closed—

**[End Track 15. Begin Track 16.]**

Chambers: —the office in Timbuktown. Well, why did you close it? Well, economic conditions are such that this is one way we can keep some of the programs. But we're going to close this little regional office because there's better ways to do it. So yeah, I think we've kept abreast with—we stay within budget. And we're not overspending what we get. We predict the budget ahead very carefully. And then we understand what we're going to be getting in the way of income, and away we go. And it's worked really, really pretty well. Really well.

Corrigan: In what areas do you think, you mentioned research. But what areas do you think that Missouri is just spot on it in their conservation efforts? And are there any areas you think that there could be improvements on? I mean, are they great in restoration? I'm just curious to know your thoughts. I know that they're still, recently they've made efforts with, they've just brought in the elk. You talk about the grouse, and that was in the sixties.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: Are there any other—we'll talk a little bit later about the otter restoration. But is that one of their main strengths? Restoration? Is it—

Chambers: If you look at the constitutional amendment that established the conservation department, they said, "The conservation department of Missouri will be responsible for overseeing the fish, forest, and wildlife of the state, and the restoration of those species that used to live here that are gone." And that includes the otter, the ruffed grouse, the giant Canada goose, the paddlefish, the sturgeon. There's another one. And now the otter, river otters. And the elk. That's—those are all critters that used to live here and that have, we and our wasteful ways, however you want to say it, got rid of them. Destroyed their habitat, destroyed them. Poor regulations. And you know, things like that. So part of the program of the department document the constitutional amendment says, hey, folks, this is the way it's going to be. This is why we created it. So it would work like this and so it's in writing. And yeah, the restoration is going to be as follows. Those critters that were gone, bring them back. If research and stuff indicates that they are. Now we're not going to bring, the bears are going to bring themselves back, because they're moving up from Arkansas right now. We have probably five hundred bears in the state as we speak. Black bears. The mountain lion, the cougar, used to be here. They're eventually, they've been working their way eastward. We've had just recently four authentic documentations through dead critters or critter cams of these beasts out there in the woods right now. Of course, let's see, and wolves, the wolves, we'll probably never bring back. Public opinion has a lot to do with these critters that we decide we want to try to bring back. And there's some controversy right now over whether the elk should have been brought back. But I think the department uses its best scientific knowledge to base these ideas that they have.

And they examine the pros and cons of these reintroductions. And then they make it work. And you know, they're good enough at public relations and they can convince a lot of people—not all of them—that these critters can survive in these particular environments. They lived here once. Things have really, really changed since then. But if we can bring back some of them, fine. And that's what the premise is all about. With the ruffed grouse and the giant Canada geese that nest in those tubs. And the paddlefish. You know, when they built Truman Lake, it shut off the migration up their river.

**[End Track 16. Begin Track 17.]**

Chambers: We were up to the sandbars and gravel bars where they used to spawn. So what did the department do? Through a very innovative bunch of biologists, they figured out a way to artificially propagate the paddlefish. And now we raise them in a hatchery and we release them into the Lake of the Ozarks. And we still maintain a paddle fishery which is enjoyed by a lot of people. People catch, go paddle fishing from around the first of April to whenever. [phone interruption] Can you— [pause]

Corrigan: Okay. Hold on one second.

Chambers: Yup. I'm sorry. Sorry for the disturbance.

Corrigan: Nope. Nope, we're fine. So you just mentioned a few things. You mentioned about the paddlefoot—

Chambers: Paddlefish.

Corrigan: I'm sorry, the fish. The restoration. Just some general questions about the environment in Missouri. How are we doing on things in regards to, are we growing and developing too fast? Our streams, are they cleaner? Do we have to worry about water pollution? In general, is the animal population pretty healthy? These are just general topics. But I wonder, you know, you've seen a lot over the last—

Chambers: Yes.

Corrigan: —sixty-five years here, seventy-five years, actually, in Missouri, because you've always been here. Do we have a good balance?

Chambers: Yeah, I think we have an excellent balance. You know, the conservation department and the Conservation Federation of Missouri has been very, very innovative and you mention clean streams. We have a program called the Clean Stream Program, which is a volunteer organization. And I think there's two thousand clean stream units now. And their mission in life is to voluntarily clean the streams. Okay? And it's a program that was invented here in Missouri. It's an innovative thing and it has really, really served the people of Missouri well. And it's volunteer-run. The conservation department gives them some direction but the volunteers do it. And it's because they're dedicated to the fact that they want to have clean streams. You know, water is one of our

most important resources. And it has not really received the attention that it should. But it's going to get a lot more attention in the future, I'll tell you that. Because when you take places like Nebraska, places like that—[phone off the hook noise] That phone's in there doing something dinghy but that's all right. You take where there's so many irrigation wells and stuff lowering the water table. It's going to take its toll. So you know, I can visualize a day here in Missouri where we're going to be rationed for groundwater. Like for my duck lake. I can see ten years from now probably where they'll say, "Okay, Glenn, you've got to make an application for how many gallons of water you're going to pump out of that aquifer that you're in." So you know, I think the department's going to be on the cutting edge of directing that kind of activity and participating in it. And that kind of stuff is what puts us ahead of a lot of the other conservation agencies. That's why they look to us for leadership. You know, the 1/8 of 1 percent, Arkansas passed that and Minnesota passed it. And I think Iowa is about to. So other states are looking at us. And their people are getting fed up enough with the way things are going and saying, "Hey, yeah, that Missouri bunch down there, look what they've done for their people. We can do this, too, if we will decide we want to tax ourselves and have it earmarked for what we want it." The problem is with that, politicians get involved in it and they want to include an umbrella situation, a whole bunch of agencies or whatever. But the premise is good if they will keep it on line and on target.

Corrigan: Now we can't talk about conservation in Missouri without talking about Charlie Schwartz.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: And when you talk about Charlie, you have his wife, Libby.

Chambers: Yes.

Corrigan: I know that you spent a lot of time together in the blinds, too. Could you talk about Charlie Schwartz and his contributions to Missouri conservation?

Chambers: Yeah, Charlie, you know, most people who think of Charlie Schwartz, he was well known because he did monumental prairie chicken work that was done in the state of Missouri back in '39, '40, '41, and published a book in 1944—

**[End Track 17. Begin Track 18.]**

Chambers: —*The Prairie Chicken in Missouri*. Most people think that Charlie did his master's degree on prairie chickens. But he didn't. He did his master's degree on the cottontail rabbit. But Charlie's love for the prairies—and he was hired as a biologist to work for the department and they assigned him to the prairie chicken. So he did that monumental work on, two books, *The Prairie Chicken in Missouri* and then there's another one I have called *The Ecology of the Prairie Chicken in Missouri*. Which are two different things. *The Prairie Chicken in Missouri* is a photographic essay of the prairie chicken the way it was in the 1940s. *The Ecology of the Prairie Chicken in Missouri* was

a University of Missouri study that, where Charlie and Libby actually went out and lived with the prairie chickens and documented their ecology, the nesting, the body weights, the gonad weights, everything that, you know, a good researcher would do, those two did it. So those were two landmark pieces of literature that came out of Charlie's early tenure with the department. As he continued with the department with his artistic ability, along came *The Wild Mammals of Missouri*, which is a classic book that will probably never be excelled in Missouri because he and Libby did such in-depth work. And he was such a wonderful artist that he could put on paper in an artistic form. And Libby could do the writing. And the pair were just an absolute wonderful team. And they made some landmark contributions to the state of Missouri. There's no question about it. Even when 1/8 of 1 percent sales tax came up, the first thing we tried was a one cent per bottle soda pop tax. It was called a penny a pop. And of course the way that our attorneys had written it up, it had some flaws in it. And the bottlers shot it down. And you can understand why. But then, with Charlie's leadership, and Carl Noren's leadership, and the Citizen's Committee for Conservation, which was a group of well-known conservationist type people, formed that Citizens Committee for Conservation. Lee Schaeperkoetter(??) was on it. I had a number of friends that were on that. And they put together a program which passed, the constitutional amendment, that made sure they had all their "t"s crossed and there "i"s dotted. And then they went forth with it. Carried the petitions. You know, I was a petition carrier. And Charlie and Libby were driving forces behind that thing. Behind the scenes, a lot of times. Charlie said, "Okay, Glenn, you're going to make a movie called *Design for Conservation*." Okay. That was my assignment. A film about design for conservation. Forty-seven minute film on what this program was going to do for the people. Then we took that and we went to meetings all over the state. He did the publication *Design for Conservation*, which was the issue of *The Conservationist* that told what this program was going to be all about. And you know, we educated the public with a movie that I made, with the stuff that Charlie was doing on that because of his reputation from having done the prairie chicken work, and for having done *The Wild Mammals of Missouri*. He was in a perfect position to launch as a leader what these programs were about and to get the support of it. So it all kind of just mashed together in a wonderful, wonderful way that produced the 1/8 of 1 percent sales tax. And it's still intact today. The problem, one of the problems with it, it's under attack every year. And that's where the Missouri, Conservation Federation of Missouri comes in. Our goal is to, one of our main goals is to defend the 1/8 of 1 percent. I mean that's, and we have a fund called the Conservation Tax Fund. Where if someone gets stupid and decides no, we're going to do this or that with it, uh-uh. We've got a huge fund where we hire lawyers—

**[End Track 18. Begin Track 19.]**

Chambers: —and just take them to task. Because the people voted for that. And they didn't want it sunsetted. They didn't say, "Oh, now, after ten years, you're going to revote it." We want this thing to be intact. And we fight that every year. Some of the people in the legislature say, "Oh, yeah, we ought to sunset the thing. Vote on it again every ten years." I don't see it that way. I didn't see it that way when I voted on it, and a lot of people didn't see it that way. But these are some things that continually to come up, and it will continue to come up. With economic situation like they are and with the

department taking in millions of dollars, there's greed out there that would like to have, get a finger in the pie. But we're, the Conservation Federation is dedicated to the proposition. And we're going to fight to keep this thing the way the people voted it.

Corrigan: Now because it's a constitutional amendment—

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: —it would take another constitutional amendment to change it.

Chambers: Right. And they keep wanting to go around the corners and figure out ways to chip away at it. But unh-uh. It's a constitutional amendment and that's our authority.

Corrigan: Now where is this, where does it primarily come from, these challenges? Is it politicians? Is it organizations or groups that are trying to chip away at it? Do you see it, I mean, where are your adversaries coming for this?

Chambers: We don't see organizations forming to go after 1/8 of 1 percent. We see the politicians, the greedy politicians that don't like the conservation department because we're doing an elk release. Or because we don't permit hand fishing. Or because this or that or the other. So those guys take the approach well if you don't do it our way, we should get your money. Okay, we'll shackle you at the hoof. We'll just take your funding and you won't be able to do nothing. So that's where our fights come every year in the federation is with these legislators that want to change the law. They want to set, like, the rules for hand fishing. They think that the legislator—that's not the way the constitutional amendment's written. It's not that the legislators can say yes there will be a hand fishing season or whatever else. It's got to be, it's got to be done. And that's our biggest savior. I mean, that's our rock. That's what we cling to and that's what we defend. And that's just the way it is. And, but, you know, it reflects right back to those visionaries that we had back there in the mid-1930s that say hey, we're tired of this other bull crap that has been going on with county commissioners setting seasons and stuff. We've got to have this thing on a solid basis. And that's why it did. People voted it in.

Corrigan: So it's really, it's a partnership. It's definitely the conservation federation working to protect the conservation commission. Because the sales tax money goes to the commission—

Chambers: Yeah, it goes to, yeah, Um-hm.

Corrigan: The federation is a—

Chambers: No, we don't get nothing out of that.

Corrigan: Exactly. It's a nonprofit.

Chambers: Yeah. We're a nonprofit, yeah.

Corrigan: But who works in collaboration with that.

Chambers: Right. Right. And that's the way it's been since 1937 when the department was born. E. Sydney Stevens and those guys said, "Okay, we've got to create a conservation commission." It was called the Conservation Restoration Federation is what it was called to begin with. Now it's just the Conservation Federation of Missouri. But when they formed the four-commission program called the Conservation Commission that set the guidelines for the whole thing.

Corrigan: Now those positions are, they're nominated by the governor, correct?

Chambers: They're appointed by the governor.

Corrigan: Appointed, okay.

Chambers: They're on a rotational basis. They're on a number of years and then they're off. I think it's a six-year program now. And they're on as a commissioner. Then the governor appoints new ones. Well it's a plum, there's no question about it. I mean, anyone out there, I'd like to be a conservation commissioner myself. Lots of people would like to be a conservation commissioner because they don't get paid. They're volunteer. But it's a real accomplishment to be appointed with the governor to be a conservation commissioner in Missouri. And we have four of them. So it's a real plum. And so, but you know—

**[End Track 19. Begin Track 20.]**

Chambers: —we've been able through the years in the past, through the federation, to work with the governor and say, "Hey, some of these jokers are not what we need for commissioners." And through our clout we have, we've had, really, I'd say, excellent commissioners through the years. We've had a few that weren't as good as others, but none of them that were completely outcast as far as I'm concerned.

Corrigan: So we've mentioned several people. I know we started talking about Charlie Schwartz and Libby as leaders in this. You've mentioned Stevens, Love, was it Callison?

Chambers: Um-hm.

Corrigan: Are there any other names out there that need to be mentioned? From the beginning there, from the thirties that you can think of or that continue that effort? Are those the main ones?

Chambers: Yeah. Those are the main ones. Albert M. Price, who started the Boone County Bank. And we have Al Price today. Al's father was a shaker and a mover in that whole operation. Oh, there were some early commissioners were in there, like, I can think of their names pretty soon, I can't think of them right off the top of my head. But we've

mentioned, Ed Stegner was the executive director of the Conservation Federation for many, many years. But there's that group of, and I haven't thought of all of them by any means.

Corrigan: Yeah.

Chambers: But there's that hardcore bunch that are responsible for what we've got going today. And that all originated with E. Sydney Stevens, I'd say, was the biggest leader of the whole bunch.

Corrigan: Now you and Charlie both had a different form of art. He was definitely a drawer, a painter, a muralist. And you did paint and draw, too, but primarily photography was your area of expertise.

Chambers: Yeah. Right.

Corrigan: But you were on a lot of the—you were out at the same time together.

Chambers: Oh, yes. Yeah. Yeah.

Corrigan: Documenting. Would Charlie have a sketchbook with him while you were out there? When you would have your camera? Or no?

Chambers: No. Charlie never carried a sketchbook with him. I rarely saw Charlie with a sketchbook in the field. I always saw Charlie with his camera. Charlie would photograph, he was photographing everything. I mean, when I started to know those folks, Charlie would, even though there was color film available, Charlie would shoot everything in black and white for reference. That was his deal, shooting reference material. And he had that magic way of holding a—and he printed everything on black and white. Libby printed it. They developed their own film and had their own darkroom and everything. And processed their black and white film. And Charlie had stacks of manila folders this high. With reference material.

Corrigan: Three feet high.

Chambers: Yeah. With reference material. I mean, he would photograph the bottom of a raccoon's foot, or a skull or whatever. And he had reference material. When he sat down to do *The Wild Mammals of Missouri*, he usually had a photograph for reference. That was his deal was a photographic reference for what he was going to put on paper. He latched on to me when he saw that cover of *The Conservationist* in 1964. He and Libby decided that here's a guy with some talent, we're getting older, we've got a lot of other things we want to do in life. We need *Design for Conservation*. We need this, we need that and the other. Glenn can step in here and take over a role as filmmaker that Charlie was doing. You never, ever took up the role that Libby had because she was the brains of that total operation. I mean, she was the one that kept all the records. I mean, she was absolutely phenomenal. Organized to the nth—

**[End Track 20. Begin Track 21.]**

Chambers: —degree. And I've heard a thousand times Charlie holler, "Libby, where's this? Libby, get that! Libby, do this, that!" (laughs) But what a wonderful, wonderful team that they made. And what an impression they had on the Missouri landscape. And what a legacy they've left for the people of Missouri.

Corrigan: Now switching gears a little bit to actually talk about some of the specific jobs you had.

Chambers: Um-hm.

Corrigan: We've kind of hit on them here and there, but not really talked about. But you started in 1960, '61, as a wildlife area manager at the August A. Busch Memorial Wildlife Management Area. Is that correct?

Chambers: Um-hm. Yes.

Corrigan: That was over by Saint Louis.

Chambers: Yes. That's down at Weldon Spring.

Corrigan: And that was your first job.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: Was that one of the few jobs you had outside of Columbia?

Chambers: That was the only job I ever had outside of Columbia. Yeah, Larry Gale and Ted Shanks hired me as an area manager. And I hadn't finished my dissertation yet. I had to finish my dissertation on the job, my master's degree. They wanted me to go to work for them but I hadn't finished my writing. But I had it 98 percent done. I had to do some, a little bit of editing stuff. And I wanted to publish two papers off of that thesis for *The Journal of Wildlife Management*. So I did that. Anyway, so yeah, while I was still, before I had my degree, they hired me to go down Weldon Spring to manage the August A. Busch Memorial Wildlife Area. And so I was area manager for less than a year. And when I went there, here was the deal. The August A. Busch area, up to that time, had been run, it was operated by the conservation department. But it had been run by primarily the field trial-ers. The dog people. The beagle people. The bird dog people. The retrieving people. Okay? And aside from that, it was a fine fishing area with lots of fishing lakes on it. And, but the dog people had the idea that there should never be, and they had their own selfish interests. But they had the idea that there should never be any hunting on that area. Well that wasn't what Mr. Busch said because he was an avid hunter himself. But it was never put on paper that that was the way it was supposed to be. But they had it in their heads. And they were strong, influential groups. Especially the bird

dog people and the labrador and the retrieving people. Because they used this place as their own personal training grounds for their dogs. They had regular field trial courses for the bird dogs. And they had lots of lakes in which to train their labrador retrievers. And in the labrador world, the national retriever association would have one of their, every year they had a big field trial to determine the best labrador retriever in the United States or in North America. And they'd have it on the east coast and at the Busch area and then on west coast. Busch area east coast. So they were locked in. And Mr. John Olin was one of the powers that be. And of course his trainer, Cotton Pershall, who trained King Buck, who's one of the, who's one of the most famous labrador retrievers that ever came down the pike, but Mr. Olin, his trainer would come from over in Godfrey, Illinois, over at Nilo Farm to the Busch area to train, because that's where they're going to run the national. Well, you know, he lives by it. If you're going to run the national in the Busch area, let's set up tests out here for these dogs so that when these folks come in, you know, I've been training here all—

**[End Track 21. Begin Track 22.]**

Chambers: —year for the last five years. So it was kind of a buddy buddy type deal with the beagle people, the bird dog, which is the English setters and the English pointers, and the labrador retriever people, which included the Chesapeakes and labs, both yellow and black. So that was kind of, that was kind of the deal with the Busch area. But one, Mr. Gale, when Mr. Shanks hired me, they said, “Glenn, that's got to change. This has got to be a public use area. We're getting plenty of public use on the fishing. But we're not getting any, essentially any public use in the way of hunting on the area because of field dog people are so much in control.” And the area manager at that time was Willard Barbie. And they wined and dined him. So it was kind of out of control. So they said, “Glenn, you're going to go in and straighten this thing out.” Mike Molowsky(??) had been the area manager there just before me. And so he, Mike moved, they promoted him into the central office as an assistant director. So they put me down there in Mike's place. Well, Mike had already kind of set the stage for this, but they said, “Glenn, you're going to be the guy under the gun. And as soon as you get these seasons implemented, we're going to get you out of there.” Okay? Fine. So they wanted to implement an archery deer season, a rabbit season, where you can shoot shotguns to shoot rabbits, and a shotgun season to shoot squirrels. They weren't worried about shooting quail or ducks or anything else. They wanted archery deer, rabbit and squirrel. Well when that news started breaking out that the boy biologist from Columbia's going to come down here and he's going to open this thing up to hunting, which Mr. Busch didn't want any hunting or he would have said so, well they come, absolutely come unglued. And so, but my mission was to see that we could get those three things implemented. And Mr. Gale told me, he said, “Whenever you accomplish that, you're out of there.” And I was under a lot of heat. Because you know, George Carson, who was, that's when the *Globe Democrat* was going, and he was one of the editors of that thing. And you know, that was an influential paper in St. Louis. And old George came out and he said, “I want to ride in your jeep and see what you're going to be talking about.” So I said, “Come on out. I'll take you around in my jeep and I'll show you the rabbit routes that we're running. We're establishing baseline data to determine what our rabbit population is.” So I, every morning I'd, in the spring of the

year and the early summer, I'd put out what we called a dew board, which was a little board about that long, about that wide and about that thick. And half of it was painted with a special paint that would bubble up when condensation hit it. And I had those dew boards out and I was running rabbit census. And we're collecting information to get ready to see if we had enough rabbits to hunt and blah, blah, blah. And I was a trained biologist at that time. Not any experience, but I'd been through the courses. And so old George Carson says, "I want to come out and see, see what you're talking about here." He said, "We don't think there's going to be any hunting out here." "Okay. Come on out and I'll show you what I'm doing." So I did. I took him around. He came out one morning. And we were in the rabbit route, counting rabbits. And I took the information off the dew boards. And that all ties back in with the number of rabbits that are on the roadside in the morning is how much dew there is in the grass. So those are indices that we use for that. Anyway, so then he went back in the paper and wrote about this boy biologist – me – out here going to do all these magnificent changes and introduce the hunting season. Boy, those birddog people came down on me. The labrador people came down, the beagle hound folks came down on me. Said, "Yeah, we're going to get—

**[End Track 22. Begin Track 23.]**

Chambers: —your job. We're going to go in there, we're going to go talk to the director and talk to Larry Gale. And we're going to get you fired if you're going to do all this." Okay. That's fine. Try it. (laughs) And so we barged ahead. And sure enough, the commission approved the first archery season, the first rabbit season we had and the first squirrel season. And then Larry Gale did just as he had told me he would do. He said, "Okay, Glenn, we'll move you into Columbia to be a research biologist." And they hired someone to take my place down there.

Corrigan: So you knew going into it that it was going to be a short term.

Chambers: I knew going into it what my mission was. They had explained that. I wasn't just an employee going to be there for several years. We had a game plan. They had a game plan. I was part of it. (laughs)

Corrigan: And then you came back to Columbia and you were a research biologist for the Missouri Department of Conservation from '61 through '79.

Chambers: Yeah. Essentially. Yeah. But along in there, about the, oh, sometime, well, when in 1964 when I published that picture of that grouse, Charlie got his eye on me. And starting in the early '70s, he started talking to the director of the conservation department, who at that time was Carl Noren. He said, "Carl, if we're going to be doing this design for conservation thing in 1976," he says, "I'm going to need someone to help Libby do these movies."

Corrigan: And I have down from, from, starting in 1971 through 1979. So coinciding with the research biologist job that you also became a cinematographer.

Chambers: Yeah. Right. Right.

Corrigan: Is that the date, I have '71 as—

Chambers: Yeah, cinematographer, that's the classic name for a film maker.

Corrigan: Is that the right date, though, 1971?

Chambers: Yeah, let's see. Yeah, that would be about right.

Corrigan: Okay.

Chambers: Yeah. And so Charlie convinced, without much to do, that I should join the motion picture team. And Bill Crawford was my supervisor. And Bill went along with the piece, he said, "Yeah," he said, "I can hire someone to be a biologist, but you guys aren't going to find anyone else that can do what Glenn can do for you." So he was very open minded and supportive of that. And Bill Crawford, he was my supervisor as a research biologist. Okay? So I, you know, I gradually, Charlie tried for a couple of years. "Glenn, would you be interested in making movies?" And you know, I looked at all that heavy equipment they carried around all the time. I looked at all those big old tripods and that motion picture camera up on there. "Man, Charlie, I don't know." I said, "I kind of like this little still camera and the little bitty tripod and the photography blind. I know how to work that type thing." But he said, "Yeah, Glenn, but," he said, "we need you to do this." he said, "Would you take this movie camera and just try to shoot some stuff?" I said, "Well, I don't know nothing about that movie camera." He said, "I'll show you all you need to know. How to turn it off and how to turn it on and how to put film in it." He said, "That's the three things you need to know about that movie camera, and that's simple." "Okay." So I took the dumb thing and I, you know, I shot some, mostly flowers and rabbits and stuff like that, just for them to look at. I mean, I'm not doing a production. He's just seeing if I could pull it off. (laughs) So I did. And he got it back and he said, "Yeah," he said, "yeah, we're going to talk to Bill Crawford and see if you can go half-time in movies and half-time in biology." So I was working on the pheasant research program at that time. We were at a place where it could be interrupted pretty easy without disrupting the whole research program. So that transition worked pretty nice, thanks to Bill's generosity in permitting me to go over, and thanks to the director's support for having me join Charlie and Lib. And so the first, Charlie said, "Well, I'll do you a challenge." He said, "There's never ever been a wild turkey motion picture made, ever. And we would like to have a motion picture about wild turkeys." And so I started that. And that was a three or four-year project. And I started on a half-time basis building footage for the first turkey picture that was ever made, called *Return of the Wild Turkey*. And it was a classic, and still is today.

**[End Track 23. Begin Track 24.]**

Chambers: And they were overwhelmed with how well it turned out and the good footage I got them and all that. So then, about that time, the need for *Design for*

*Conservation* came along. And Charlie said, “Glenn, I want you and Libby to figure out this motion picture. Joel Vance is going to write the narrative script for it. You and Libby develop the shooting script and let me take a look at it.” But he said, “I’m going to be busy with Carl Noren and the Citizens Committee for Conservation and with Ed Stegner,” who was, at that time the executive vice president of the Conservation Federation. He said, “I’m going to be busy with these folks.” So he said, “You and Libby. But here’s your mission to get this film done. Because we’re going to need it when we start promoting this carrying petition.” So I started working on that. It turned out to be like a 47-minute film called *Design for Conservation*. And it told, I used it, Libby and I edited it. Libby primarily edited it. But we used a lot of stuff that they had from previous motion pictures they made about rabbits and about mallard ducks and whatever. But I shot a lot of stuff, fisheries stuff that we were going to need for it, and forestry stuff they were going to need for it, to give a nice balance of the stuff. And we made the picture. So we had several copies of it made. And I know Ed Stegner and I, Ed had set up a meeting in Canton, Missouri. And we’d go up there, take the thing, a bunch of petitions, and go up, show that, carry one of these heavy projectors and a screen with us. Go up, set it up in the school auditorium and say, “Here’s what we’re about, folks. We’re going to try to get this design for conservation.” And you know, it was an all-out joint effort of cooperation of the media with us. And the citizens committee promoting this thing. And we made it fly. It did really well. And Charlie and Libby were major movers and shakers in that deal. Especially Charlie with his influence with the director. He was a well-respected person. And Charlie usually didn't take no for an answer.

Corrigan: Did you pick up the film with ease?

Chambers: I did. It was, the transition—I’ve never transitioned completely—but I had the two. Charlie says, “Now, Glenn,” he said, “you’ve got to get one thing straight right off.” He said, “I’ve been in this business a long, long time.” And he said, “You cannot do movies and still pictures at the same time. You’re either going to have to decide you’re going to do movies, or you’re going to have to decide you’re going to do still pictures. And when you go to that photography blind, you’re not taking still cameras and movie cameras. You’re going to take the movie camera because you’re making a film about wild turkeys and we want to document that.” Well you know most of the time, or ninety-five percent of the time, I would take the movie camera because that was my mission. But on occasion, if I had something special, like a wild turkey on the nest or something and she was going to hatch, why, I’d go on another day, another time, after I figured I had enough film in the can to show what I wanted to show, I’d take my still camera and go back another day and film with my still camera and that stuff. But yeah, I went into the movie business with the idea, and Charlie said right away, he said, “Glenn, you know enough about composition and enough about—you’re artistic and you know these critters. You’re a biologist. You understand what their life history’s all about.” And he said, “You know, you’re not going to have any problem at all.” And I didn’t. I had no problem at all transition. The loading the camera with the film, and putting the black cloth over your head and loading that dumb thing in the photography blind. Taking that roll out, sealing it up and putting it in the gadget bag. That was no big deal. But looking

through the lens of that motion picture camera was just like looking through the lens of my single-lens reflex Leica.

**[End Track 24. Begin Track 25.]**

Corrigan: Well I would assume that a lot of—you would run into the same kinds of things. Water, rain was bad. You'd still have to worry about lighting.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: You'd still have to worry about, you'd still be carrying equipment, different equipment, but you'd still be carrying equipment.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: So I would think a lot of the things, although very different formats, you had to deal with the same types of challenges.

Chambers: Sure. Yeah. The challenges were the same. Number one, to get closer. Number one, know your subject. Number two, get close to it. And number three, film it. Okay? (laughs) Any one of those. Yeah.

Corrigan: I wrote down that you did films on, you did the wild turkeys. You did some things on forest furbearers, bald eagles, fishing.

Chambers: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Corrigan: And I know you did one about the otters.

Chambers: Right.

Corrigan: Can you just talk about that process? Because it seems like, were each of those movies, were these multi-year projects?

Chambers: Yeah. I had, one time I had five movies going on at the same time. Because some of the stuff you're going to be shooting seasonal. Some of the stuff you're going to be shooting, it depends on the behavior of the critters that you're trying to photograph. And so, rather than just having one entity out there to work on, you had three or four. And I think right there at the end, just before I retired, I was working on five films at the same time. Of which I brought all into fruition. I was producing a feature length film every year. And boy, listen, you've got your work cut out for you. Because I was having to do, Charlie and Libby had retired. I was having to do all the editing, all the sound. Laying the music tracks. Writing narration. I did not record, I was not the narrator. We picked professional voices for that. But the whole ball of wax was my baby. But back when Charlie and Libby and I were working together, it was primarily, I was the cinematographer. Libby was the sound recordist. And doing the writing and script

adjusting and that kind of stuff. And that was three parts of the team. Charlie was not—he would go when we made the trout movie and stuff like that, we’d go, we made the Canada goose motion picture, we went to Hudson Bay and lived up there. That was the three of us. But probably half of the project that we worked on it was Libby and I. And the other half, it was the three of us. I traveled all over the state with them, all through Canada and up in the Arctic. It was a real experience. Living and dealing with them. Yeah, it was pretty awesome.

Corrigan: Could you talk about the success of some of the films?

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: Like you had said, there had not been a wild turkey film.

Chambers: Right.

Corrigan: There had not been a river otter film.

Chambers: Right.

Corrigan: There had not been these films before. Were they—and these films went beyond Missouri. These films were—did you see the films like your photography, also? That it was an art form but it was also educational?

Chambers: Um-hm. Exactly. Yeah. Yeah.

Corrigan: Is that how you went into it? That this was an educational film?

Chambers: We tried to make—when Charlie and I would sit down and try to figure out what film we were going to work on next, and we didn’t have to take direction from the director. I mean, he just said, “You guys know what you’re doing. You do it. We’ll support you financially.” And so Charlie would say, “Okay. We need to make, we need to enlighten the people of Missouri about the Canada goose.” And so we’d make a Canada goose film. We needed to enlighten the people of Missouri about the mourning dove. So *The Story of the Mourning Dove*. The mallard duck. *This Is The Mallard*. Bobwhite quail. *Bobwhite through the Year*. Those are movies that Charlie and Libby did. And it won world something or other in Italy. The biggie. They’ve got the big certificate hanging in the conservation department foyer down there. But anyway, these pictures that we produced, because we were all three biologists. We all understood what these critters were all about. And we absolutely wowed the people with the stuff we showed them. I mean, where else are you going to see a baby—

**[End Track 25. Begin Track 26.]**

Chambers: —wild turkey hatching out of an egg, that’s not in an incubator. I mean, we’re going to show you right there in the wild where it happened. So that gained us a lot

of respect. That gained us a lot of attention when we, “When are you going to come out with another movie? What’s it going to be?” And we had enough of them in the hopper that we say, “Well, we’re going to have the Canada goose picture produced. We ought to be able to release it probably next year.” Well the first thing that happened, then, some wanted to get overjoyous and they’d schedule a premier showing somewhere. And we weren’t ready for a premiere showing. We’re doing sound recording and editing. And we hadn’t even selected the music yet. That got to be a real harangue. But it was fun. It pushed us to keep these things going and keep them on schedule. However, Libby was keeping us on schedule whether we liked it or not. But it was a lot of fun. But these motion pictures gained us worldwide fame. Acclaim. Just with the ones that I did after they retired. Won numerous Emmy awards and stuff like that. And that was because, number one, I was dedicated to what was going on. I was not bragging, but I was good at it. I could show what I wanted to show. I knew the subject. I knew the biology of it, knew what the behavior was going to be. And how to get out there and get after it and show stuff that people were really, really interested in seeing that they wouldn’t see otherwise. And to me, this was a great satisfaction because I could bring these things to the screen that you will never experience. That you would, no way you’d experience a wild turkey hatching on the fourth day of July at 100 degrees in a tent. And I’m stripped down to just my skivvies. Those are the kind of extremes that you went through. And same way in the cold weather, making an eagle motion picture. Twenty below zero and I’m out there photographing dumb eagles diving into the Mississippi River, catching fish. So, so, back to your question. Those motion pictures did gain us a lot of national and international notoriety. Yeah, these were the cinematographers in the Missouri Department of Conservation. In those days, we’re the leaders. There wasn’t, there’s a bunch of cinematographers now and they’re all really, really good. They’ve got good equipment. They’re shooting everything on tape. Most of them shoot on tape now rather than film, because film got so expensive.

Corrigan: Now did I read that you, was it you won four TV Emmys?

Chambers: Um-hm.

Corrigan: Okay. How was, what I’m curious to know about, what was the set-up so you produced these films. But did the department have a—how are they disseminating these films? How were, you said people were wowed by these. How were people, Missourians, and how were they getting this film? Was it shown in schools? Was it shown on PBS? I’m just curious to know, did they have that in place to say, “We’ve made this great film and now we’ve got to get it out to the people.”

Chambers: Yeah. Right. Well, we had to call the public affairs department. And we had educational, what we call educational assistants scattered throughout the state. One in about every county. And once we’d make a film, we’d have copies of it made. Back when the turkey picture was made, we didn’t have much connection with television. It was primarily take a film and a projector and an educational assistant, and they’d take it to the schools. But that’s how we got our notoriety was from providing this ground-based educational material through the walk-in system, walk in to the school. “What movie are

you going to bring next time?” “Well, we’ll bring *Forest for the Future*,” or we’ll bring whatever. But up until fairly recently, just before I retired, TV was not a big part of it. It was primarily go and show. And it worked. Worked really well.

Corrigan: And so these schools could have these, I’m assuming these people are coming in free of charge to show this, to educate these kids.

Chambers: Sure. Yeah. Right. Uh-huh.

Corrigan: That was throughout Missouri.

Chambers: Yeah. Educational, these educational assistants, that was their mission. Taking slide shows or taking—

**[End Track 26. Begin Track 27.]**

Chambers: —in this case a motion picture and them big old heavy projectors and a screen. And a projection table and go to a school and show the kids. Or service groups, or state fairs. You know, we had all kind of outlets for it. Service clubs. We were everywhere. It was free to them. All they had to do was ask for it and here we go. Schedule it and go for it.

Corrigan: And you and Charlie and Libby, and you didn’t have to do that yourself. You were able to focus on the film, the films—

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: —all those in production. Where you had the rest of the conservation department to get those out to the people.

Chambers: Right. But, occasionally, and more than occasionally, someone would say okay now, we’d like for the guy that made this film come and talk to us. Bring the film and show us and tell about how it was made. So I had a number of those. And those were usually evening affairs. Yeah. And Charlie and Libby, same way. The name recognition was out there. So your next question, well, if these guys are so good, let’s see who they are and what they look like. (laughs) So it was fun. And a lot of fun trips. Especially when we were doing *Design for Conservation* with Stegner. And we were all over the state. And man, that film, that 47-minute film, was that big in the film can. That big around, I think. (laughs) And man, we’d take that baby and we were going everywhere. Yeah.

Corrigan: And that, most of the other films it was doing a specific subject matter.

Chambers: Yes. Yeah.

Corrigan: Now that film it was, this is Missouri.

Chambers: This is what the conservation department is going to do for you, if this 1/8 of 1 percent sales tax passes.

Corrigan: So it was different than the other films.

Chambers: Oh, yeah. A lot different. It was a lot different. Yeah. We were specific. We made a film on, I made one on rivers and streams. I made one on otter restoration. I made one on, called *Back to the Wild*, which was a restoration of the seven major species of the otter and the giant Canada goose and the paddlefish and the sturgeon and the ruffed grouse and the deer. The whole movie devoted that, and that was one of them that really was an Emmy winning motion picture. It was a good one. And I did that one after Charlie and Libby retired. But yeah, we'd direct, Charlie and I would say, "What needs some attention?" "Well, the Canada goose needs attention." "Well, let's make a goose picture." And we went and talked to the director. "Yeah, go ahead. You guys know what you're doing. Budget for it and away you go. If you have to go to the Arctic and live up there all summer, go for it." And so we looked at things like different critters. Like the rabbit and the dove and the quail and the ducks and the geese and the forest and the streams. And any number. And the eagle. And you can look at that list of films we made, and they're all directed at a subject. Primarily at a subject. Some of them were all inclusive, you know, a lot of stuff was like the otters. Part of it was otter restoration program. Part of the otter story was the streams of Missouri and part of it was the furbearer aspect of it. So we got three, three movies out of that.

Corrigan: Same thing, I imagine, with like the forests.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: There's a lot that's covered on that one subject matter, but you're getting a lot of different things in there.

Chambers: Yeah. Right. We made a movie called *More Than Trees*, which was the forest picture. Because the forest is more than trees. And then when I made one, *Forest for the Future*. And *A Prairie is Forever*. Yeah, right on down the line. Every place that we saw that something needed our attention, well the way to breach that is to make a movie about it and get it out there so people can see it and understand it. Then they're with your program.

Corrigan: So the conservation department, it was a full circle operation. Because it was taking the science, the research, to figure out where the problems were. How you're going to fix these problems, you're going to educate these people. How you're going to do that. You're going to do your film and photography and articles.

Chambers: Sure. Sure.

Corrigan: And so they really were a full circle operation to—

Chambers: Yeah, it was.

Corrigan: Because I guess it would be easy to say we're just going to restore this animal. But to really do that, you're going to have to have research and education, and you're going to inform the public.

Chambers: Right, you've got—

**[End Track 27. Begin Track 28.]**

Chambers: It's all in one ball of wax, and you've got to do the whole show.

Corrigan: And you're going to have to show the public, you're going to have to show the public visually. They're going to have to read about it. You're going to have to have the support networks. So it really had to be, as it seems, it really had to be just everything. It had to be every aspect to actually make this stuff work.

Chambers: Yeah. Exactly.

Corrigan: Did you have, before I move on quick, did you, was there any one film that you really enjoyed the most? Making the most?

Chambers: Probably the Canada goose picture. Because it took us into the Arctic, places where I'd never been. And we lived up there in summertime, where the geese nest. And then we'd follow them back to Missouri in the fall. Yeah, that was a fun, fun motion picture to make. Equally as fun to make, though, was the wild turkey motion picture. Because no one had ever done a motion picture on wild turkeys. So the wild turkey film was fun to do because I was plowing new ground all the time. And the stuff that I was showing people hadn't seen before because there weren't that many turkeys around at that time.

Corrigan: And then, let's see. Then I have, in 1979 through '84, you served as the regional director of Ducks Unlimited.

Chambers: Um-hm.

Corrigan: And then from '84 to '88, you were their corporate photographer.

Chambers: Yeah, from, yeah—

Corrigan: Is that right, '84 to '88 I have—

Chambers: No, let's see. From '79 to '89, I worked for Ducks Unlimited. Ten years.

Corrigan: '89, okay.

Chambers: '79 to '89. So the first five years, I was regional director. Is that what it shows?

Corrigan: Yup.

Chambers: Okay. Then the next four years, I was the photographer for the magazine.

Corrigan: And was that based in Columbia here?

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: You were still based in Columbia.

Chambers: Yeah, my office was, our headquarters was in Chicago. But I was based in Columbia.

Corrigan: And then a part of your job was also to fundraise for—

Chambers: Yeah. When I was regional director, that was fundraising. When I was corporate wildlife photographer, that was photography only. I didn't have to worry about fundraising.

Corrigan: And had you retired from the department of conservation at that time?

Chambers: No. When Charlie and Libby retired, then I had an offer from Ducks Unlimited to go to work for them. And Dale Whitesell who was our executive director, he said, "Glenn, would you consider going to work for Ducks Unlimited as a fundraiser?" Because I was good at fundraising. He said, "I'll double your salary from what you're making right now." I said, "Well, that sounds pretty good." I said, "Am I going to have to move?" He said, "Nope. You're going to live right in Columbia."

Corrigan: Was this the—who'd you say? The director of Ducks Unlimited?

Chambers: Yeah. The executive director Ducks Unlimited. Dale Whitesell was his name.

Corrigan: Okay. And then what was your photography like for them? Was it very specific assignments for the magazine?

Chambers: No. It was just general film files with good waterfowl pictures. That's what I did. I traveled all over North America. I was into Alaska and up in the Arctic and down to Mexico. And all over the place. I did have some specific assignments to do. But pretty much I was on my own to do what needed to be done.

Corrigan: So all waterfowl, though?

Chambers: Yeah. Um-hm. Um-hm. I'm going to go to the bathroom. You need a break?  
[pause]

Corrigan: Okay. So we took just a brief moment there. But anyways, we were talking about Ducks Unlimited. Corporate photographer. You were documenting all waterfowl. You were all over North America. And fundraising, too. That was the beginning part of that.

Chambers: Right. Yup. Let me just tell you that story, okay?

Corrigan: Yeah. Yeah.

Chambers: Okay. I was a cinematographer for the conservation department working with Charlie and Lib. And Charlie and Libby retired and I continued on. And, but Dale Whitesell came to me and wanted to know if I would work for Ducks Unlimited as a fundraiser. And he said, "Glenn," he said, "I'll double your salary. I don't even know what you're making, but I'll double it." And I said, "Let me think about it a little bit." So I decided to jump from Missouri Department of Conservation to Ducks Unlimited. And here's what he told me.

**[End Track 28. Begin Track 29.]**

Chambers: He said, "I want you to continue in your photography venue," but he says, "here's the deal." He said, "I'm going to put you in charge of fundraising in Missouri, and you've got the whole state." But he said, "When you reach, when you reach an annual fundraising level of a million bucks," he said, "I'm going to promote you to corporate wildlife photographer." He said, "That's on your timeframe. However, if you want it to last ten years, take ten years. If you want it to last two years, all you've got to do is get the state up to a million bucks and we're going with it." So that was my promise from him. And when it happened, he did promote me immediately to the DU photographer. And I did that until 1990, 1979.

Corrigan: '89?

Chambers: '89, yeah. 1989.

Corrigan: And then I have you, you return back to the Missouri Department of Conservation from 1989 through, I have down 1995.

Chambers: Yeah, came back, that's right. Yeah.

Corrigan: Served as the motion picture specialist.

Chambers: That's right. Yeah.

Corrigan: So how did that change come about?

Chambers: Jerry Presley, Jerry Presley talked to me. He said, “Glenn,” he said, “we need some really good in-depth wildlife motion pictures. We’ve got some things we need that’s not been covered while you and Charlie have been gone. Some of it has, but your type stuff, we’ve not been doing much of it. And we need some of that.” And he said, “Would you consider coming back and working for the Missouri Department of Conservation?” Well it just happened that the executive vice president of Ducks Unlimited retired and the new one was coming on. And he said, “In my reorganizational plan,” he said “all DU, all DU staff that aren’t raising money are going to be headquartered out of Chicago.” And I said, “all but me.” (laughs) And so I resigned Ducks Unlimited. Came right in, took the job that Jerry Presley said they needed me for, which was my old job in making wildlife motion pictures. So I picked it up from there. And they had a whole group of pictures that they wanted made. And before I retired, I completed every one of them for them. And some of them were, won television Emmys. Yeah.

Corrigan: Were any of those the ones that we talked about?

Chambers: Yeah. *Back to the Wild* was. And *Glenn and His Geese* won a television Emmy. That was when I imprinted the geese and had them flying alongside my boat, along beside my four-wheelers and stuff. Yeah, those were landmark films. Yeah. Yeah, we talked about them.

Corrigan: Okay. And then in 1995, is that when you started Paddlefoot Productions?

Chambers: Oh, let’s see. Probably, maybe a little bit before that. Paddlefoot, yeah, it probably was at that time because see I retired from the conservation department. And Presley says, “Glenn, you can go, but the otters have got to stay.” And I said, “What’s that mean?” He said, we want a contract with you to continue to do the otter programs that I’d been doing for the department for a short period of time. And he said, “We need you to continue that public relations program for the otters because they’re very controversial. And the way people understand about otters is you taking these otters to the schools and the public meetings and different venues and tell them what’s going on.” Anyway, at that time, when I was still working for the department, they asked me to do three movies with otters in them. One of them was the otter restoration program, which was part of *Back to the Wild*. Another one was *Rivers and Streams*, of which the otter was an intricate part of because of river ecology. Another was *The Furbearers of Missouri*, because the otter is a furbearer. So those were the three films that they assigned me to do that had otters in them. So I said, “Hey, we don’t have very many otters in the state.” That’s just when the otter program was getting going—

**[End Track 29. Begin Track 30.]**

Chambers: —and the releases.

Corrigan: This was in the ‘90s?

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay.

Chambers: So they said if you—and I said to them, “Well, if you want me to make motion pictures about otters,” I said, “I’ve got to have a captive otter that I can get the nice close-up stuff underwater and all the things that otter do. If you want some really, really top-flight otter pictures that are going to really tell the story.” So they said, “Okay, we’ll give you the permit. The only person in Missouri to have a permit to keep an otter in captivity. And we will grant that to you. But you’ve got to provide your own otters. We’re not going to buy an otter for you.” So I paid a thousand bucks for Paddlefoot. That’s where Paddlefoot Productions comes in. But this was before I formed Paddlefoot Productions, Incorporated.

Corrigan: Yeah, I have Paddlefoot was 1992. And then Paddlefoot Production ’95.

Chambers: Yeah. Um-hm.

Corrigan: So this was a—

Chambers: This was a transition.

Corrigan: This was a work in progress and a continuation.

Chambers: Yeah. Um-hm.

Corrigan: But when they gave you the assignment from the beginning, was the, when they said to make these films about otters, was that, was it their intention we’re going to restore these? At that time?

Chambers: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. See, the otter restoration program began in 1982 to ’92. Ten year program of reintroduction. And so my responsibility was going to be to tell the people of Missouri this otter story. Okay? The conservation story about otters. Because from 1982 till the time that I came on, otters were already getting some bad names out there. And so when they wanted these films made about otters, I said, “Well, the first thing I’ve got to have is an otter, an imprinted otter, that I can take in the river and turn loose and it will follow me around with my underwater camera and stuff and I can get those really good pictures you want.” So they said, “Okay, but you’re going to have to buy your own otter.” And I said, “That’s okay. I’ll buy my own otter.” So I went down to Leroy Sauvain(??) who at that time was down in Theriot, Louisiana, way out in the marsh. And he, Leroy is the person we bought, traded otters. It was a three-way deal. We trapped wild turkeys in Missouri and sent them to Kentucky. And Kentucky paid Leroy Sauvain(??) 600 dollars apiece for otters. And we brought 850 of them to Missouri. So—

Corrigan: So that’s how the restoration started.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: Was the trade.

Chambers: Yeah. Right. The trade of wild turkeys for otters, essentially.

Corrigan: Okay. It started with 800, right around 800 otters?

Chambers: Yes, 800 and, yeah, something. I'd have to get the numbers out and look.

Corrigan: That's okay. What was the otter population, though, at the time before restoration?

Chambers: Probably less than 50 otters in the state. They had been depleted by habitat destruction. By over-trapping. So they were essentially gone.

Corrigan: So the otters were—that restoration program's going on. But you needed to imprint this otter. So you spent a thousand dollars on Paddlefoot.

Chambers: Yup. I bought Paddlefoot from Leroy. And a year later I bought another otter we called Baby Foot. So we had the two.

Corrigan: And these are males or females?

Chambers: These are both females, okay? And so we had Paddlefoot and Baby. And they were imprinted to me. I got them when they were four days old. So they had never seen their mother. They had never heard their mother. They had smelled their mother, but their eyes were shut when I got them. And we imprinted them to Jeanie and myself, and also to some of our kids that were going to be helping me do the otter restoration story in schools and stuff. And so then I had those otters while I worked for the conservation department. And lo and behold, one of the gals down at the nature center, down at the Runge Nature Center, asked me—she doesn't work at the department anymore, she moved out to Oregon. But Lisa said, "Would you bring Paddlefoot down and let us bring some Girl Scouts in here in the Runge Nature Center and let them see Paddlefoot?" Paddlefoot was about this long at that time. She was just a baby. And so—

**[End Track 30. Begin Track 31.]**

Chambers: I said, "Yeah, I'll bring her down." And they took pictures of it. It's in, I've got it in the archives down there. Anyway, Paddlefoot made such a hit with those kids. And Lisa told people in the department, said, "Wow, you ought to come over and see Glenn when he brings this otter into these auditoriums. And these kids see it and they're absolutely wowed with it." So then the controversy begin to swell with the otters. They were beginning to get in people's farm ponds. And they were beginning to get in the catfish ponds in the bootheel. So I had been doing these otter programs in conjunction

with my regular job at the conservation department, regular job of filmmaking. I'd work with filmmaking in the daytime and do otter programs at night. So I was doing double duty again. So, anyway, I got ready to retire. And Jerry Presley said, "Glenn," he said, "you can go, but the otters have got to stay. How are we going to make that work?" I said, "Well, the best thing for me to do is to form a corporation to where I'll have, where you people are paying me by a contract to do your otter work." So I formed Paddlefoot Productions, Inc. And the premise of that was that the money that was generated in the, well, it gave me a format in which to do all my, have all my bookkeeping and everything done. Williams Keepers does all my bookkeeping and stuff for me, and still do, with my two corporations. And would give me a reasonable way, instead of writing the checks to Glenn D. Chambers, write the checks to Paddlefoot Productions, Inc. And then I can hire kids to help me. I can pay FICA, I can pay for the insurance and all that. So that's what we did. We formed a corporation. Then I had the entity set up to where I could hire people and take money from the department, put it in this account. And I could pay all the bills out of that. And that was why Paddlefoot Productions was formed. And it's still in effect today. We did otter programs for 13 years. We traveled over 800,000 miles, saw well over a million people. Including most of the kids.

Corrigan: Was that the emphasis, children?

Chambers: Um-hm.

Corrigan: Education?

Chambers: Yeah, education. Yeah. It was an educational program. It was a deal where I could take these, where I could take otters, it eventually came down to three generations of them. We had Paddlefoot and Baby. And then we had Little Paddles and Baby Face and then we had Splash and Slide. And there's Splash and Slide asleep outside. So we had three generations of the otters. And we did that for 13 years. And the premise was that the schools could call me. And I had permission to schedule what schools we were going to go to. And then I had to report to the department where I'm going and get their approval to go and then go. And it worked out. We worked five states to start with. We went to Minnesota. We went to every state surrounding us. Minnesota and Kansas. We went clear down to Oklahoma. We did Illinois, Iowa. We did those five states. And then finally it got to be such a huge, overwhelming success that I said, "Hey, we're going to have to cut this down to doing just Missouri only. I'm tired of traveling interstate." So we boiled it down to where I would just do the schools in Missouri. Schools and civic groups and like the NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) and the SCS (Soil Conservation Service), those entities that were conservation-related, I'd do programs for them. And it was all paid for by the conservation department, who underwrote the contract for me to deliver the program, cover the mileage, cover the salaries for the kids that were helping me and that kind of stuff.

Corrigan: So it wasn't just Missouri focus at the beginning.

Chambers: No, uh-uh.

Corrigan: Why was that? Was it because the restoration of otters needed to take place in a further region?

Chambers: Well, it was partly my doing.

**[End Track 31. Begin Track 32.]**

Chambers: —because people, you know, would call, well, like the Northwest Sports Show in Minneapolis, two hundred and fifty thousand people come through that thing. And they call me up, you know, we were doing television uplinks. National Geographic was watching what was going on. All these sports shows were watching what was going on. And of course, immediately you're in the limelight and they want to, can you come here, can you come there, can you do a film on this, can you do a film on that. So it was an overwhelming thing. And we went to that Northwest Sports Show in Minneapolis. And we were up there eleven days. We took Paddlefoot and Baby up there with us. We rented one of those, I don't know whether you saw them when the department had them, but those big fish tanks. They're an 18-wheeler with a tank about that wide on it. About 30 feet long. More than that, 40 feet long.

Corrigan: Okay.

Chambers: Anyway, we rented one of those things and had it brought into the auditorium. And that's where we put the otters in and let them swim and whatever. And so, but we spent eleven straight days up there, two hundred and fifty thousand people came through there. We did uplinks every night out of the aquarium. And to the six o'clock news folks. And it was a real hit. But we decided after that, we're going to scale down. We can't do this. We went to Ducks Unlimited something or other in Oklahoma, a big art show they had down there. We put on a program. We did stuff with Outdoor Riders Association of America. But we finally just boiled it down, Jeanie and I said, here's the way it's got to be. Only the schools in Missouri. And that other part was part of our own making. We said yeah, we'll go do your own thing. Check with the department. Yeah, they said if you want to go, go. You don't have anything scheduled for us. Take off. Your otters. You've got all the equipment. Go for it. So that's kind of how that worked.

Corrigan: Okay. And when did you scale down to just Missouri? About when was that?

Chambers: I'd say that was probably, we probably did those out of state things, probably, after I retired, probably for three years. Then, then we pulled in our feelers and stayed within the state boundary. And that was fine with the department. They didn't care. As long as we delivered, we stayed within our budget and delivered our program to the schools and to whoever else, we were good.

Corrigan: Now you had, you said the first two were females.

Chambers: Um-hm.

Corrigan: What were Little Paddles and Baby Face?

Chambers: Little Paddles and Baby Face were, again, females. And then we got Splash and Slide, which were both males.

Corrigan: Could you talk a little bit about, I'm curious to know, maybe the discussion you had with your wife when you said, you know, we're here in Columbia, Missouri, in town. I'd like to raise otters here. How was that adjustment, having otters in and outside your home? I know mostly, were they out back?

Chambers: The thing of it is, my wife had been accustomed to me having animals in captivity to do films with. We had 26 species of different critters in my filmmaking career. We had Arctic foxes. We had grey fox, red fox, coyotes, opossums, skunks. You name it and we had it. Rattlesnakes, copperheads, tarantula spiders. We had the whole menagerie, depending on what film I was working on and what particular species I needed to get close-up shots of. And we had badgers and vultures and hawks. We had, you know, the whole menagerie, the whole nine yards. And so introducing an otter to a wife that had seen all these other critters and had a lot of them in our home, and Canada geese when we did the Canada goose imprint thing, it was no shocker to her. She said, well, just another animal. But it was more than another animal. Because these guys are so endearing to you that it's just, nothing can take their place. They just, they just work their way into your heart. And so it was nothing major when we brought one baby otter home. And then the next year we bought another one to go with that one. So then we had two. Well then when those, one of those got so aggressive with me that we had to give it to a, give him to a zoo up in Minnesota. Then we had to get another—

**[End Track 32. Begin Track 33.]**

Chambers: —set of babies. So when we saw that those weren't going to work, I went down and bought two more otters from Leroy and Diane. So we had Little Paddles and Baby Face coming on. Well then when Baby Face got goofy with Jeanie and bit her there in the throat, could have killed her, we had to donate those to a zoo. Then we had to look for someone to replace them. So by that time I began to get the idea that the females were too aggressive to deal with. Maybe we better get some boys and see how they work. And come to turn out they were a lot better than those females. For reasons unknown. But that's just the way the females were. So anyway, so that was the three generations of otters. And we did that for thirteen years. Like I said, we traveled over eight hundred thousand miles and saw over a million people, most of them kids. And most of them in schools here in Missouri.

Corrigan: Now all those animals you mentioned, all those species—

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: Did you keep them all, were you always here, I guess, in this house?

Chambers: No. We've lived at three different houses here in town. But when I was working for the conservation department, when we had this menagerie, we had an experimental area south of town with regular, with designed pens to keep all these critters in. So we weren't housing them here. We had the Arctic foxes at home. We had red foxes where we lived. We had some quail where we lived. Otters, of course. Rattlesnakes and copperheads and tarantulas, they were all in the home. But most of these things like badgers and coyotes and red fox and grey fox that stuff was all in confinement down at the conservation's Green Research Area down near Ashland. So that's where the compound headquarters was for keeping the animals that I had films going for right at the time.

Corrigan: Okay. That was my question. I didn't know if they were all, you had them in captivity, I just didn't, I didn't think you had them all here.

Chambers: No. Uh-uh.

Corrigan: That makes sense. So you were finding that the females were getting aggressive after a few years. More aggressive.

Chambers: Yes.

Corrigan: And then you would trade them out. But then you didn't find that with the males.

Chambers: No. Uh-uh. The males, you know, Dr. McBain at Sea World, he's the veterinarian in charge of all the veterinarians at all the Sea Worlds. He lives in San Diego. And when I first got the otters, I talked to Leroy Sauvain(??), who was the trapper that trapped otters for the conservation department's restoration, 845 of them is what he trapped for us. Anyway, but Leroy said, "If you want a real good, other than me," Leroy said, "other than me", and he's a Cajun, he said, "if you want a good, reliable resource about otters," he said, "you ought to talk to Dr. McBain in San Diego. He's in charge of all the Sea Worlds." And he said, "I've sold otters to all the Sea Worlds." So he said, "McBain knows who I am." And he said, "Just tell him I said to call." And so I established a good relationship with Dr. McBain and his staff in other Sea Worlds. They got so they would call me about questions that they had about their otters. If their otter began to have problems, call Glenn, see what he thinks. How should we correct this? So right away, I was establishing myself as an otter authority, because I had otters in my home, living with me. So that's kind of how that developed. So Dr. McBain, and then Dr. Chris Bellows down at Sea World San Diego or wherever, no, Sea World in Florida.

Corrigan: Orlando.

Chambers: Orlando, yup. And also one over in Texas. San Antonio? Probably. See, I've been in touch with all those folks. And I still visit with them, in fact. Chris Bellows called

about a year ago and he said, “Glenn, we’ve got this problem with this otter. What would you do?” So he explained it to me and I said, “Well, here’s how I’d handle it.” So anyway, so back and forth. It’s been a good relationship.

Corrigan: One question I have about, since you mentioned the veterinarian at Sea World, how were you able to take care of—

**[End Track 33. Begin Track 34.]**

Corrigan: Did you have enough veterinary resources here to address all these different animals? Or no?

Chambers: Yeah. Plenty of resource to address all the animals except beavers, which we had pet beavers in our own home right here. And otters. The beavers, no one knows anything about. The vets over here, the vets at St. Louis. There was a, my veterinary, my otter veterinarian right now is Dr. Bill Wright. He’s at the Howdershell Animal Clinic in Saint Louis. And he got his DVM here. And he worked with otters in the zoo setting for Dr. Boever(??) who is now director for the Saint Louis Zoo. And anyway, so Dr. Wright’s accustomed to dealing with otters. And he has done everything veterinarian-wise that’s ever been done to any of our otters. He castrated these two males when they were little tiny guys. He, I call it over-ectomized, he spayed, you’d call it spayed, he spayed the four females that we had. And he’s my go-to guy for otters because he’s dealt with them in a zoo setting. He’s grown up with every otter we’ve ever had, so that’s where we go. I don’t take otters over here. They don’t understand otters. The first thing, if you walk in there with an otter, the first thing they’d do is grab that Charles Schwartz book off the shelf and look under there for river otters and see what they’re all about. That’s how bad it is.

Corrigan: So you have to go to St. Louis for that care.

Chambers: Yeah. And I wouldn’t trust anyone else with my otters anyway. Because Dr. Wright knows otters. He knows my otters, he knows me, he knows how I feel about them. So that’s the way it works.

Corrigan: But all the rest of the animals, you could find some—

Chambers: Oh, yeah.

Corrigan: Except for beavers. Either at the university or—

Chambers: Sure. And most of those animals, no longer than I had them in captivity, they didn’t require a whole lot of veterinary attention. I don’t think we ever had a veterinarian attend anything. You know, we’d give rabies shots and stuff like that to the coyotes and the foxes so I didn’t get rabie-bit. But as far as if something got wrong with one of them, those critters we had in captivity maybe two years then we’d turn them back loose in the wild. Or donate them to a zoo. I’ve donated swift foxes to, stuff that other zoos didn’t

have that I had. When I'd finish with them I'd donate them to a zoo so they'd have a good place to live.

Corrigan: Okay. Kind of a big question here, but was it hard to get across to people that these river otters were worth protecting and that they were worth restoring? I mean, did people make the connection easily? Like okay, I saw a show at a school, I saw a show in Minnesota or wherever, but that these need protecting, that they need resources? Was that connection easy to make with people?

Chambers: The connection was, there's a certain, there was a wide division in the populace out there concerning these otters. There was one cohort out there that absolutely thinks it's the biggest mistake the conservation department ever made was to turn them loose. There was other otter loving people out there, even trapper types, that said these are the greatest animals. They used to be here. We ought to have them back in our environment. And people would ask me, why did you release these suckers in Missouri? Well, first of all, I would refer right back to that constitutional amendment we talked about a while ago. The fish and wildlife of the state are the responsibility of the conservation department, and the restoration of the species that lived here, including the river otter. So there's our basis for being able to reintroduce them, regardless of what people think. The reintroduction program started in 1982 and went to 1992. Ten years. During that ten-year program, we released 845 river otters in thirty-five counties in forty-three locations in those counties.

**[End Track 34. Begin Track 35.]**

Chambers: And every place we thought an otter had a chance to live in Missouri, we put one there. And I tell you, it didn't take long but what they did, one of the things they do best, and that's have baby otters. And the first people we heard from were the catfish farmers in the bootheel. We released them in '82, and by 1984, 1985, those people were ringing the walls off of Jefferson City, saying why in the world did you people bring these animals down here? That was the last stronghold of otters in the state anyway, was in the bootheel, in the swamps down there. But boy, listen, they took off in the bootheel. And it wasn't long until they were starting to cause major problems. Then the otters got into the, release some down in Texas County. And they got in the streams where the small-mouth bass. And those small-mouth bass fishermen started seeing their numbers of fish going down. So they came unglued. And they were in our hair. And so that was about the time that I told our director, who at that time was Jerry Conley, I said, "Jerry, what you need to do is to let me take these otters and go around to these hot spot places," now we're talking about community centers, we're talking about night meetings with county commissioners and people that are adamantly opposed to these animals being on the landscape. And I said, "You also should establish an otter advisory committee, which would be composed of stakeholders in the local area. Farmers, fishermen, county commissioners, whoever." And I said, "We should have that otter advisory committee. And they should be meeting. Because if you don't do that, there's going to be a huge uprising in Missouri and a backlash about this otter restoration program." But I said, well he said, "Can you take these otters and go talk to those folks?" And I said, "Yes, no

problem. We do it in schools all the time. We'll just include them in our circulation." So we did that. And Jerry called me one day, he said, "Glenn," he said, "I've got the biggie for you." He said, "There's been so much complaint originally down in Texas County," he said, "I'm going to send you and Jeanie and the otters down there. And we're setting up a meeting for you to meet at the fairgrounds with the people of Texas County." They had three conservation agents there to help with side arms on. Because I mean, these are the folks that are up and at arms about the introduction of the otters. Because number one, they're eating the fish out of their ponds, they're eating the fish out of their streams. And they said, the locals down there said, "This can't be." So anyway, Jeanie and I went down. And we took, at that time it was, I think it was probably Paddlefoot, no, it was Paddles, it was Little Paddles and Baby Face. We took them to the Texas County Fairgrounds in Houston, down at Houston, Missouri. And we did a program. And before we got out of there, we had those people laughing about those goofy otters. They were running around chasing each other, jumping in and out of the tank. So we created a lot of goodwill with the programs that we did. And that's just one case of a really, place where we made a major impact where people were really, really adamantly opposed to the otters. But you know, through our efforts of all those schools we went to and all those trips we took and all those kids we saw, it was pretty, pretty remarkable. And the educational impact that you had on it, it was immeasurable. We still get calls, I still get calls, "Could you come do an otter program for us?" And I said, "No, we canceled our contract with the conservation department. After thirteen years, we were getting weary of it and the otters were getting weary of it." It finally got so that otter there, the last two years that we did otter programs, he carried the whole show by—

**[End Track 35. Begin Track 36.]**

Chambers: —himself. Because that little otter that's outside, it's smaller than him. He got to getting carsick, hauling him. And finally he decided unh-uh, I'm not going anymore. And you'd reach down to pick him up and put him in the car, he'll bite you. He says, unh-uh. I'm through with it. (laughs) So the big boy there, he carried the whole show. Yup.

Corrigan: Now was it hard to, I mean, you had a show and they did certain things.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: Are otters easy to train?

Chambers: Well, there wasn't too much training to do for these. The training involved getting them gentle enough that we could open the door outside, let them in the house, pick them up. We had a custom-made otter trailer. We had a Suburban. I'd buy two brand new Suburbans every year when we were on this otter circuit. So we had a white Suburban and a white otter trailer. Paddlefoot Productions on the side of it. We were our own corporation out doing otter programs. You know, people would pass us on the highway and they'd see that otter trailer and they'd pick up the cell phone. "What's this Paddlefoot Productions all about?" So it was a major, you know, we went through the

three generations of otters. And these two were the last. But this guy here at the end, he had to carry the show by himself. Because that other one got sick and wouldn't go with us anymore. And then we canceled the contract. The department started, when the financial crush began to hit, well, they started squeezing down on, these guys, it costs me 400 dollars a month right now to feed one otter. A hundred dollars a week.

Corrigan: Right, right now.

Chambers: Today.

Corrigan: And what is, since you brought it up, what does he eat?

Chambers: He eats 90 percent fat-free ground sirloin, shredded carrots, cod liver, mink meal, egg, and did I say cod liver oil?

Corrigan: Yeah.

Chambers: Okay. Tomato juice. That's six components. And it looks like meatloaf when we feed it to him. I feed it to him raw.

Corrigan: Are you mixing it all together then?

Chambers: Uh-hm. Uh-hm.

Corrigan: And then feeding it to him raw.

Chambers: Uh-hm.

Corrigan: And how much does he typically eat in a day?

Chambers: Well, let me get you, this one eats, this one out here eats ten ounces in the morning and ten ounces in the afternoon, the evening. That big one there, he ate just over a pound in the morning and a pound in the afternoon, a pound in the evening. So it was costing me 800 bucks a month when that one was still alive, out of my pocket. It now costs me 400 dollars a month out of my pocket to feed just one.

Corrigan: And did this one—this is Splash, right?

Chambers: Yeah, that's Splash.

Corrigan: Did you get the two at the same time? Did he pass away for some—

Chambers: When we were doing the National Geographic show, *Otter Chaos*, that was a five-year contract with National Geographic television to do a program for them about the river otters and about the river otter restoration program in Missouri and about what Jeanie and I were doing. How we took the otters to the schools and stuff like that. He was

born in captivity. I bought two pregnant females that were wild-trapped from Leroy. And brought them to this place down at Ashland where we kept these wild critters for the show. And we had eighteen otters down there at one time when I was doing the National Geographic show. Anyway, this one and that one were born of different mothers, but nearly the same time. Three days apart. And so we took them from their mother when they were four days old and raised both of them just like we did the ones I went down and got from Leroy and Dianne and raised them, imprinted them and raised them right here in the house. We started them right in there in Jeanie's office when they were little bitty guys. So yeah, they were, we got them through the females that we bought for the National Geographic show. Their siblings, we turned them and their mothers loose when the National Geographic show was over. This was my agreement with them that—

**[End Track 36. Begin Track 37.]**

Chambers: —I'm going to buy these wild-trapped mothers. They're going to be pregnant. We're going to have the babies. I'm going to imprint two of them to continue to do the otter programs for the conservation department. And we're going to release the mothers and their litter back into the wild. And that's what we did.

Corrigan: Now did, because how long ago did he pass away?

Chambers: It was two and a half years. He was eleven years old, almost eleven years old when he died.

Corrigan: And how long do they live in captivity?

Chambers: Oh, Dr. McBain called me, it hadn't been too many months ago and was talking to me about otter, they were having some kind of a problem with an otter at Sea World. And he said, "By the way, Glenn, how old are your otters now?" And I said, "Well, Doc," at that time they were twelve. I said, "They're twelve years old." He said, "Are you sitting down?" I said yeah. He said, "We had one pass away recently and he was nineteen." So they can live another, he could live another five or six years.

Corrigan: So how old is the one outside?

Chambers: Thirteen.

Corrigan: Thirteen.

Chambers: Yeah. And this one was about ten and a half when he died.

Corrigan: He just died of natural causes?

Chambers: No. He had a tooth infection. He had a tooth infection. And so I called Dr. Wright and I said, "We've got, Splash has got a tooth infection." He said, "Well," he said, "I'll send a prescription up." And he said, "Get the swelling down," and then said,

“bring him down here quick as you can after you get the swelling down.” He said, “We’ll have to extract that tooth that’s causing the problem.” And he said, “While you’re doing it,” he said, “you may as well bring them both. Because we need, what you do to one, you might as well do to both of them. Clean their teeth. And if he needs any teeth pulled, we’ll do it. This one, we know is going to have to have some teeth pulled.” So we took them both down there and they put them to sleep. That one recovered and this one didn’t. He didn’t come out from the anesthesia. So he died on the operating table. And they took, I think, four teeth out of him and four or five out of the one downstairs. Yeah, the one that’s outside.

Corrigan: Okay. Now how is the river population of otters now? Today.

Chambers: Okay. Well after the release, the release from ’82 to ’92, by about 1998, the otter numbers had reached what we felt was a peak of about eighteen thousand in the state. And we started out with probably not more than fifteen wild river otters in the state when we made the first release. Well, they went to eighteen thousand. Then we had all the otter complaints. We began a trapping program. And so we tailed off. Then they went down to fifteen thousand. Now today there’s estimates in 2011, otter estimate out there’s about twelve thousand otters. Twelve to thirteen thousand, according to the population models.

Corrigan: Do you think it’s pretty balanced now? Is that about where you think it will stay?

Chambers: I think that’s about where it will stay. But I think, the thing that helped us in the critical time when we were getting so many otter complaints that the Chinese at that time were using otter pelts to make a little beanie that they had to wear in the military. It was part of their regalia. So consequently, our otter pelts from Missouri were going on the world market and were being snagged up by the Chinese for those little beanies they wore on their military uniform. But then they discontinued the use of the otter fur and the price of the furs went from a hundred and forty bucks apiece to about twenty. When they were a hundred and forty bucks apiece, man, the trappers were coming out of the woodwork to catch them. You know, one hundred and fifty dollars for an otter, pretty darn good. But now that the pelt price has dropped off, the trapping effort has dropped off. It’s the same thing in the whole fur market, really. But anyway, they’re still of value, their pelts. An otter pelt will bring you about twenty dollars now. But we have gone down the backside of the days when we were getting a lot of complaints. We don’t—

**[End Track 37. Begin Track 38.]**

Chambers: —know, Jeff, whether the, why people are not complaining as much as they did. Number one, there aren’t as many otters. Number two, the conservation department, through their public awareness program, through their educational program says hey, these otters are destroying your personal property in your farm pond, you can get rid of them any way you want to. You can shoot them, you can trap them, whatever. Snare them. So we don’t know whether one of two things has happened. Either the otter

population is low enough that they're not causing much problem. Or the people who, after this number of years, have accepted them as a problem. And they take it into their own hands and eliminate them. Or number three, they don't call the department and bug us anymore because they said well, they won't, they would just tell us the same thing they've always been telling us. So we don't know which of the three. But it's probably a combination of all of those.

Corrigan: Because after a while, they did open up trapping on them. After the restoration.

Chambers: Yup. After the restoration. And you know, this was one of the things animals rights people came right down our throat with at the beginning with. Said, "The only reason you want to restore these so you could trap them." Well, that wasn't the only reason. The only reason was because the constitution says you're going to do it, if we thought it was a good idea. Anyway, so the trapping was not the reason for the reintroduction. But the animal rights people got off on the wrong foot on that, which caused a lot of trouble, too. Now what was your question?

Corrigan: When was it that, it was after the restoration that they could open up trapping season, right?

Chambers: Yeah. Okay. Yup.

Corrigan: I mean, did that appease some of the people that—

Chambers: Yeah, it did. What we did was we got a population estimate of where the hot spots were for otters like down in Texas County. We knew that around the big metro areas, there weren't very dense otter populations. Around Kansas City, Springfield and St. Louis. So we zoned the state based on population density. So we had a great big zone say from here clear into the Ozarks where you could catch as many as you wanted. Around the metro areas, you could catch two or one. Other place, you could catch five. So we set limits on it based in large, in part, by population density. And that helped, you know, when you open up, open up the Ozarks, or open up Texas County with the otters they had down there and the problem they were causing at 150 bucks a pelt, trappers went from north Missouri, after they had caught their five otters, down to south Missouri to catch an unlimited supply, if they could catch them. So yeah, it worked out well. It was a good strategy on the department's part. Primarily due to our furbearer biologist we had at that time who passed away. David Hamilton. And Dave had his head screwed on right and he was a really, really, really good furbearer biologist. You know, when we released these otters, Jeff, we didn't have a clue the suckers were going to go to farm ponds. We thought they were an animal of the streams. I mean, duh. Water. And otters. We should have known that they were going to go to the farm ponds, but we didn't. And there's five hundred thousand farm ponds in the state of Missouri. And each of them, most all of them are stocked with bass, blue gill and channel cat. The perfect winter buffet for an otter. Now otters in the summertime, right now they're eating crayfish. They're not eating very many fish at all. But when that first ice comes on and many of our species of

crayfish burrow into the mud. When they burrow into the mud, they're no longer available to these guys. So what happens? They switch to an all-fish diet. Ninety percent of their diet in a two-day period will go from crayfish to all fish. That's what caused the problem. So, you know, with the dietary changes in these guys, they switched to an all—

**[End Track 38. Begin Track 39.]**

Corrigan: Okay. We had to switch the tape there a second. But we were talking about the otters. One thing I had a question about was you know, you said they didn't think about the farm ponds. I was curious to know what other interesting facts were learned by you or the conversation department that you didn't know about otters when you started?

Chambers: Right. Well the first thing we learned when all this uproar came, we suspected that an otter in a catfish farmers' pond was going to be trouble. But we didn't know that otters in a clear Missouri stream was going to be a disaster. But a lot of those streams are kind of intermittent. And in the wintertime, the fish, the small-mouthed and large-mouthed bass, will congregate in these bigger, deeper holes of water. And without much cover in there, like root wads and limbs and stuff, these fish are really vulnerable to these guys. And they're an outstanding predator. There is no question. So they just decimate those populations, those small-mouthed and large-mouthed bass. And that's what all the uproar and complaint came about from down in Texas County. Because in the wintertime, when the crawdaddies were in the mud, these guys switch an all-fish diet. And here these fish are crowded together in these deeper pools. And the otters dive in. And the first thing you know, they've eaten, and one of the first things we learned was by examining the fecal material, the scats of these otters, we could tell, we were forced to figure this out, but we finally did. We could pick up an otter scat and we could look at the different kind of scales and we could tell you what kind of a fish it was, we could tell you how old it was, we could tell a whole bunch of things just by the scales that these guys were passing through. Because the scales do not digest. And we found out real quick they like to eat 18-inch small-mouthed bass, the same as people do. (laughter) And that was one of the problems. Yup. So we did learn a lot of things about them. We learned some terrific stuff about the reproductive cycle of them. We learned that these animals, and it's been known that they have, the reproductive process includes a phenomenon known as, let me think now, anyway, it's where the embryo, where the zygote doesn't implant in the uterus until a certain date. And anyway, these animals have that condition. And we learned that in Missouri, the gestation period of them is about 63 days. We learned right away that most of those females, that they become pregnant in the fall. But they don't have babies until the next spring. So they—the zygote floats freely in the uterus. And then about the 20<sup>th</sup> of January, it implants in the uterus wall. And then a baby otter starts forming. And 63 days later, you have a baby otter. That's called delayed implantation. And so we learned that about all our female otters in Missouri implant about the middle of January. And the babies are born 63 days later. So we have pretty good darn idea of when we're going to have the next generation of otters coming on. But we've learned a lot of things about their food habits. Mainly because the conservation department was forced to learn about their food habits because of the destruction of the fish. We learned,

and we had to use new techniques to estimate populations. So there was a number of graduate students that came on from the university—

**[End Track 39. Begin Track 40.]**

Chambers: —through funding through the conservation department to study this. So you know, it has been a learning process for us, for the department, and for the world. Because there's been some really good publications come out in *The Journal of Wildlife Management* and whatever, related to the otter project here in Missouri.

Corrigan: Do you think that will happen, the same kind of process will have to happen with the elk right now? The same kind of educating people, getting the population up, eventually having to open up hunting?

Chambers: I think we've learned an awful lot from the otter program because it was so controversial, it became so controversial. When it started, you know, all looked well and good. Well then we started getting in these areas where they were too dense. So the conservation department has backed off and used this as a model for what not to do. And so consequently, they've got the protocol pretty well set up to keep these animals from wandering from their release area. Yeah, the educational component's going to be like that. You're dealing with an entirely different mammal here. You're dealing with a big ungulate. People can see it. You know, it's attractive. It has a lot of things going for it, despite the fact that a lot of ranchers don't want anything to do with them. Because they will tear down fences. They will destroy crops. However, the place—and they will get out in the road and get run over by a car. And those were the three things that were the biggest inhibitors to plans to reintroduce this animal. But on the other hand, they put them in such a remote area down in the south part of the state. And they have already set up protocol to open the season on them whenever they get to causing a problem, just eliminate them by hunting. And people will pay big money to come in and hunt them. There's no question about that. So we think we're going to be in pretty good shape, thanks to what we've learned from the otters, and thanks to what our bright young biologists have told us about these things. So, yeah, we feel we're on pretty good footing with them.

Corrigan: Do you know what, is there any other species in the works? You've mentioned it will probably never be wolves.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: But is there any other animal that needs restoring here? Or have the main ones been hit?

Chambers: I think we've done the main ones. If you look back at what used to be here and what's gone now. The bears are taking care of themselves. The wolves, we don't think, based on, you know, on what's happened out west with, wolves were endangered and then we de-listed them. And there's been so much problem with livestock producers.

However, it's a completely different setup there than it is here. We have the mountain lion, which was here that's gone now. But we have a lot of these stray males coming in, so that's taking the pressure off of that one. But I don't think the department was ever in the mode to consider releasing the three large predators that were removed back in European settlement time. And that was the wolf and the bear and the mountain lion. I'd never heard any plans. The bears will take care of themselves. The mountain lions, we're going to see them occasionally. But the wolves, leave them where they are. That's my feeling. So I don't know that there's any other critters out there that need our attention for reintroduction. But we'll see how this elk thing goes.

Corrigan: And the elk will be a long-term—

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: It's just starting, so we have to think—

Chambers: Give it several years.

Corrigan: Two to five years, ten years. And then they're going to, it will probably happen with the river otters, too. There will be a peak, and then they'll kind of work them—

Chambers: Yeah. Yeah. We think that's probably the way it will be. But time will tell and we'll just see how it plays out.

Corrigan: One last question about the otters, and then, was it 2000 you made the National Geographic's *Otter Chaos* film?

Chambers: Yeah, that was the year. We started in 1995, when I retired from the conservation department. National Geographic had seen the uplink from probably one of the, maybe one of the six o'clock shows we did when we were in Minneapolis. Or we did an uplink that was broadcast all over the department—

**[End Track 40. Begin Track 41.]**

Chambers: —did on some of my otter stuff that went to all the southeastern states. And either one of those two things National Geographic picked up on it and contacted us. Wanted to know if we would do an otter program for their, for their television, National Geographic television. So we entered into a five-year contract with them. And it was a perfect fit because this was a story about an otter restoration program which had never been undertaken in the United States. A major aquatic predator. Something that was very attractive. It's a poster child, otters are. So it fit the mix and the match for doing a show. And they wanted to tie into it the thing about Jeannie and I with the education. The conservation department with the restoration. So it kind of was one neat little package. And yeah, we started in '95. Completed, released the film, we did the premiere showing in April of 2000. So it was five years in the making.

Corrigan: I have to think that when National Geographic does something like that, they really can get the message out. They have such a large audience.

Chambers: Yeah. Right.

Corrigan: I wondered if that was kind of, I mean, that was a whole other market and population to learn about that.

Chambers: Right. It was broadcast around the world. You know, they did it in, I think, three different languages. And I know, one night on New Year's Eve, Jeanie and I were here at home. And some of our friends called from China. And I don't know what time of the night or day it was over there. But they were watching *Otter Chaos*. And yeah, Geographic told us it's going to be a worldwide distribution, and it was. But yeah, the message got out. And that was one of the main focal points of the film in the first place was to help educate people what was going on.

Corrigan: Great. Really, the only kind of questions I have left a little bit is just a little bit to talk about your family. Your wife's name is Jeannie?

Chambers: Um-hm.

Corrigan: And she's a nurse? Is that correct?

Chambers: Yeah. She's a nurse over at the hospital.

Corrigan: And then how many children do you have? And what are their names?

Chambers: We have, let's see, we have, Jeannie and I have both been divorced and we remarried. Okay? So she has two boys on her side and I have two boys on my side. So let's see, we have Russ and Lindell with me. And Bob and Matt on her side. So we have, we have—

Corrigan: Four boys.

Chambers: Yeah. The four boys. Yeah. Then we have several grandchildren. My son Russ had two grandchildren, Chelsie and Little Russ, who is bigger than you and I both. And then my son in Ohio, we have one granddaughter, Lindsay. And then Jeannie's son Bob is not married. He works at the farm up north Missouri, on the farm. And Matt, who lives in Des Moines, has two daughters. Sarah, Sarah-Bay and oh, I'll think of her name in a minute.<sup>1</sup> Okay. So that's kind of the family deal.

Corrigan: And do any of them enjoy the outdoors?

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<sup>1</sup> Samantha.

Chambers: Yeah. They all, all of them enjoy the outdoors. But you know, it was interesting you asked, because you know when our boys were growing up, Jim, who passed away right after he got his Ph.D., but Jim and Russ and Lindell, you know, Jim, he was a real intellect. That boy never ever made a B. He made only A's when he was in school. And he had a Ph.D. in music. He went to Julliard and several places like that, and end up at the Cincinnati Music Conservatory. Anyway, but Jim was the classic one to say, "Dad, how come you're in such a big hurry to make this movie?"

**[End Track 41. Begin Track 42.]**

Chambers: He said, "When you get it done, you're just going to start another one." (laughs) But you know, of our boys that grew up in the family with me being a filmmaker, none of them, they all like the outdoors, they all liked to camp. They got their Eagle and all that good stuff. But as far as wanting to pursue what I'm doing, they said no part of it. (laughs) So it's been kind of interesting.

Corrigan: I didn't know if any of them had a menagerie of animals.

Chambers: No, they don't. Let's see. In Ohio they've got a pet dog and two horses. Well, that's a menagerie. (laughs) And then Russ and Tina, they have two dogs. They have a labrador retriever because we do a lot of duck hunting. And they have a little house dog. But no one took on the menagerie or the things that dad was going to do.

Corrigan: And you've got a granddaughter that likes to take pictures, right?

Chambers: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Chelsie. And she's a good photographer. And I'll, probably one of these days when they come out with a new model of Canon 25 megapixels or whatever, Chelsie will probably inherit the bodies of these. Because the lenses she got, they're all interchangeable.

Corrigan: Well and you said you needed a second back-up, but you probably didn't need a third, so—

Chambers: Yeah. The third one will go to Chels. (laughs)

Corrigan: There you go. Your third back-up will become a nice camera for your granddaughter.

Chambers: Yeah. That's the way it looks. Yeah.

Corrigan: I was going to ask you just a little bit about retirement. How do you spend your time these days? You still have one otter, so you're still here. But I read somewhere that you cure your own country hams?

Chambers: Yeah. We cure country hams. We cured ten this year. That was a tradition. You know, I grew up on a farm. We cured country hams at home. And then I went to

high school and that was something Dad did. And I was interested in the girls and cars and sports and farming and all that. And then I kind of got away from it. And then after I got out of graduate school and moved to Columbia, I took back into curing country hams. And cured country hams every year since. And this year, my son and I and Scott Atkins, we cured ten. Ten country hams. Twelve. We got twelve. I took three, Russ took three and Scott took six. So we do the whole nine yards the old Boone County way. And it's pretty neat. And we have country ham breakfasts. Especially at our duck club. We like to entertain hunters that come up. We have, my son Russ and I have duck clubs that are close together. Up in the Dalton Bottoms, up by the Dalton cutoff in Chariton County. And we do a lot of entertaining. And country ham breakfast is kind of a premier way to treat someone. So we use a lot of our country ham up there in having guests and feed them. And we cook in the blind and eat right out there on the spot. And make gravy and biscuits and jelly and scrambled eggs. It's a good morning feast. While the hunt's on.

Corrigan: And then I also read that you carve decoys and you're into sport clay shooting?

Chambers: Yeah. Carve decoys. You know, when I was making the wild turkey motion picture, that's when I got into the decoy carving. Because you know, I'd get in that blind at four o'clock in the morning. Stay in there till four o'clock or five o'clock in the afternoon. And I had a lot of time to sit there and wait for the turkeys to show up. And so I'd whack away at, I did a lot of carving just sitting there waiting. I mean, the turkeys are a half a mile away and they're not going to be here till one o'clock. And you have to get in there before they do so you don't miss something. So, yeah, I did a lot of carving just with a knife. Just carving duck heads while I was waiting for the turkeys to show up. Yeah.

Corrigan: And then you said you're in a duck club.

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: So you're still a hunter.

Chambers: Yeah. Right. Yeah.

Corrigan: Is that primarily ducks?

Chambers: Yup. Waterfowl. Yup, primarily ducks. And we each have, Russ and I each have a duck club. We can see each other's pits from—you know what a hunting pit is. It's an underground, and covered over on the top with dirt. And they're water—

**[End Track 42. Begin Track 43.]**

Chambers: —proof. We have a stove in there for cooking. And electric. You know, they're state of the art. And I can see from his place to my place and vice versa. So we have hunting clubs close together. And we entertain a lot of people. Do a lot of hunting.

Corrigan: Is that near Columbia?

Chambers: It's up near Brunswick is the nearest town. Up in the river bottoms. Brunswick.

Corrigan: Got you.

Chambers: So yeah, that's one of the things I do in my spare time. But you know, photography, still photography, is one of my main passions right now.

Corrigan: How often are you still taking photographs? And are you staying local? Or do you still take trips?

Chambers: Oh I, let's see. I will spend, for the last four years, I spent about, parts of two months out in the Flint Hills of Kansas, photographing greater prairie chickens. I have made an attempt to get photographs of all the prairie and arid land grouse. Which includes—[thumping] What was that?

Corrigan: It's the dog is knocking off the magazines.

Chambers: Oh, okay. Which is the greater sage grouse, the Gunnison sage grouse, the greater prairie chicken, the lesser prairie chicken, the plain sharp-tailed grouse and the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse and the Attwater's prairie chicken. Those seven. Now that's my, that's my concentration group. And I have spent several years photographing each of these birds. And I have big portfolios of each. I do, I advocate for their protection and for their environment. Every place that those birds live is underlain either by coal or oil or natural gas. Or they're situated on a high ridge where wind farms are prevalent. So they've got their problems and someone needs to advocate for them so they aren't swept downstream in this surge for alternative energy and whatever. So that's one of my major emphases right now is trying to help these birds and help people understand that we do need alternative energy sources. But we also need to save a bit of that landscape out there for them. Because they're very, very vulnerable. And they don't tolerate the windmills and the oil wells and all the infrastructure that goes with it. Unh-uh. They don't go there. They just, they give up and die. So we want to keep them from passing out of the landscape.

Corrigan: Are there efforts in Kansas to protect them? Or you're just trying to get that off?

Chambers: Yup. There's efforts in Kansas to protect. There are efforts in all the states to protect them. It's just, it's a real struggle to stay ahead of the developers, you know. Wind farm developers and real estate developers. Mini ranches. Things like that. It all fragments the landscape and fragments the habitat. And that's really, they can't handle that.

Corrigan: Great. Is there anything we didn't cover? We've covered a lot of territory the first interview and now. I'm sure there's stuff we didn't cover. Was there anything else you'd like to add right now?

Chambers: No, not really. You know, it's been a good ride for me. I mean, if I was starting over again right now, and like we said at the beginning, when I was a little boy, I decided what I wanted to do in life. And I set my goals, and I got there. And you know, a lot of kids ask me, "Well, how did you get started? What did you do this? What did you do that?" And my advice to them is decide early in life where you want to go, if you can. I know some of them are disconnected and don't or won't or whatever. But then study hard and set your goals. Set a goal that's achievable and go after it. But you know, it's been a good ride for me because I decided early what I wanted to do. And then I got there. And then I've kind of fanned out into these other opportunities. And I've made a lot, and a lot of friends along the way. There's no question about that. And that's one of the great parts about it is the friendships you develop from going out in the Flint Hills and meeting the ranchers. And going to public meetings and talk to people. That's one thing about having quit the otter programs—

**[End Track 43. Begin Track 44.]**

Chambers: —I miss going and seeing the kids and seeing their eyes light up when we're bringing the otters out and that kind of stuff. I know the otters don't miss it near as much as I do. But it was, those kind of experiences, you know, I'm kind of the socialistic type anyway. I don't have any trouble meeting new people and introducing myself and telling them what I'm all about and asking them what they're all about. So I don't have to overcome that obstacle. That's just natural for me. So it's made my job easier. I mean, I can go to a rancher down there where they're releasing those elk, when it's legal, and say, "Hey, I'd like to come down there and take some pictures of these elk. Do you care?" He may be heck bent against having the elk on the property. But I bet you I can talk him into taking a picture. I can entice him with one of the big pictures that I take and say, "Hey, here I can give you—," and that's what I do with these places where I go and take pictures. Like the Gunnison grouse last month, and the Columbian sharp-tail. I give those people all photographs that I took on their property of the critters that they know and see every day. But they're not going to get out there and take pictures of them. They're not going to spend the kind of time I do in a blind to get that. So yeah, it all kind of feeds in together in one big happy occupation and one big happy life. And yeah, I enjoy it and I'd do the same thing if I had to start over again.

Corrigan: So although you're retired, you're just as busy, it seems.

Chambers: I am, Jeff. I'm just as busy as when I was not retired. The only thing, when I was working, I was more focused on say, like making a film or getting the day to day stuff done. Now I'm on boards like the Boy Scout and the Missouri Prairie Foundation. And Conservation Federation of Missouri, I'm involved in a lot of those things that I like. I like youth. I like conservation. So I've fanned out into being board members of those. And that takes a lot of time and effort and expense. So you know, if I don't like what I'm

doing now, it's my problem. I created it. And if I don't like it, I ought to just start saying no. (laughs) But anyway, that's kind of the deal with me. I'm happy in what I'm doing. And as long as I can, you know, I don't ever visualize myself you know just saying, today I'm not going to do nothing. I've got lots to do. You know, I can be down there doing Lightroom 3 with the pictures I took last week out west. I've got to get some stuff, you can see I've got stuff scattered down here I need to get done with the Prairie Foundation. I've got some things I need to do, some things I need to do over there with my duck club. So I'm diversified. Lots of things to do. There's no need to get depressed. A lot of good things can happen yet in this world.

Corrigan: And you've had your art exhibit up at the historical society now for a couple more weeks.

Chambers: Yep. Yep.

Corrigan: And that's had a great run. And a lot of people have come and seen it.

Chambers: Yeah. It has. And I've got some more people to take to see that. And we had a real good crowd over there yesterday. So yeah, it's been fun. I'd do the same thing again.

Corrigan: Sounds great. Well thank you again. I'm going to shut the recorder off. And I appreciate it.

**[End Interview.]**