

An Interview with

**Leo Drey**

at his home in St. Louis, Missouri  
by telephone from Columbia, Missouri

**12 March 1998**

interviewed by Will Sarvis



Oral History Program  
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**[tape meter, 000. Begin side one, tape one of one. Begin interview.]**

WS: This is Will Sarvis calling back for Mr. Drey. The tape is rolling. Let's see, the first thing I wanted to ask you -- having gone to these papers, something I didn't find too much in writing is this intimation that Senator [Stuart] Symington had pressured Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman into not backing that Forest Service Bill. I just wondered how you'd come to that conclusion.

LD: *[Thoughtful pause]* Well, I have no first-hand knowledge of it. I mentioned that Symington had pressured Congressman [Richard] Ichord.

WS: Right.

LD: And I don't think that Freeman had anything to *do* with it. It was Senator Clinton Anderson [of New Mexico] that was active at the hearings on these bills and all. He in fact came up to me at one hearing and thanked me for my testimony and indicated [that] he thought it made a lot of sense to him, "But," he said, "It's going to be very difficult for this committee..." -- (interior committee or whatever committee he was chairing [that] this hearing was going before) -- "It's going to be very difficult for this committee to go against Senator Symington's wishes. But that was Clinton Anderson, that wasn't Freeman.

WS: Yeah. Well, if I remember the congressional testimony correctly, there was an assistant from the Department of Agriculture that came to testify but Mr. Freeman himself did not come. And then of course, that assistant said they were supporting the Park Service bill, which shocked a lot of people. And didn't help your Forest Service bill cause very much.

LD: Well, my memory is dim. I have no recollection. I do remember clearly Clinton Anderson congratulating me on my testimony, and saying to me [that he] thought he had embarrassed me [by saying that it would be] very difficult [for] his committee to go against the wishes of Senator Symington.

WS: I wonder if you remember in the Van Buren area or in what's now the Mark Twain National Forest, if you heard anything from maybe more the field level Forest Service employees in terms of their rivalry with the Park Service over managing that area? I think I remember in your testimony you had mentioned something about the grumblings of the Forest Service personnel, but of course publicly they wouldn't dare say that or risk losing their jobs. So I kind of guess that maybe in private some of them had expressed some kind of hostility or something. I know having worked for the Forest Service and been around those people there's a long standing rivalry between the two agencies, at least on some occasions.

LD: No, I really can't elaborate on that. I have nothing specific [that] comes to mind anymore.

WS: I have an incidental question for you. I think you mentioned your first son is named Leonard. Was that after Mr. Hall or is that an accident?

LD: Well, I think that there might have been some connection. Really the reason he wasn't named Leo was that there already was Leo, Junior. My father was "Big Leo" and I was "Little Leo." My wife thought having Leo the Second or something was just too much, so we kind of compromised on Leonard. At that time I think maybe the fact that we knew

him might have influenced [it] a little bit, but it was just more being similar to Leo but not Leo.

WS: So he wasn't really the namesake of...?

LD: No, I couldn't go that far.

WS: In terms of Mr. Hall... I haven't been able to find this out yet, but I wonder if you had any idea of what his educational background was? Was that in the Natural Sciences or was it in Journalism or something?

LD: No, I really can't help you on that. I don't know. I could ask my wife if she knows. She might well remember that. Should I?

WS: Sure, if you could. That'd be helpful.

LD: [Yells to his wife, words indistinct.]

I think that she heard me. We'll find out in a minute.

WS: Yeah, I hadn't come across it in his writings. And of course, he describes himself as a naturalist, but I just wondered if he'd studied biology or botany or what.

**[tape meter, 050]**

His paper collection's at Rolla, and in the description they didn't mention actually what his degree was in.

LD: Let me get her.

[Sound of telephone receiver being set down, indistinct distant words.]

Ask Kay that question please, she's right here.

WS: Okay.

KD: Hi.

WS: Hi, Mrs. Drey.

KD: Yes.

WS: I was just wondering if you might remember what Mr. Leonard Hall's educational background was?

KD: No, but his sister-in-law, Alice Hall, is still alive. She maybe would know.

WS: Okay.

KD: Tom Hall taught biology at Washington University. I had him as a teacher. I was there for two years. Thomas S. [Hall.]

**[Mrs. Drey leaves to look up the address, and Mr. Drey takes over telephone. Incidental conversation omitted, tape meter 065-070]**

WS: And Thomas S. Hall was his brother?

LD: Yes. He was at Washington University, and he was dean of the liberal arts college or something.

**[Mrs. Drey returns.]**

KD: It's Mary Hall. As I said, I just don't know about Len's education. I think he went to Soldan High School.

WS: Yeah, I thought he'd gone to maybe University of Wisconsin, but I'm not sure. I wondered if he'd studied any of the natural sciences.

KD: Yeah, biology or something?

WS: Yeah.

KD: I don't know, but I do know that his brother... His wife was a dancer on Broadway, I



think. Jenny. But that's the only sort of clue I can give you, unless the [St. Louis] *Post-Dispatch* morgue or the [St. Louis] *Globe* morgue... Because he went from the *Post* to the *Globe*. The *Globe*, you know, now is at Mercantile Library.

WS: Right. Yeah, [I] might be able to find it through there.

KD: Yes, since he was on both of their staffs. Have you looked at *Stars Upstream* to see if it says?<sup>1</sup>

WS: Well, that was the first place I looked in.

KD: It didn't say?

WS: Yeah, it doesn't really allude to the formal education. They've got a description of his paper collection in Rolla, and that does not include that [information] either. Well, I can find out. I don't want to put you to any more trouble. I just thought that I would ask just in case you have might known.

**[Small amount of incidental conversation omitted, tape meter 090-093. Mr. Drey then returns to the telephone.]**

WS: Okay, another question that I had pertained to this Current and Eleven Point Rivers Association. Now, I get the idea that was more of a local based group as opposed to the Ozark Rivers Association. That seemed to be more of a St. Louis landowners area group. Would that be correct?

LD: That's correct as far as the Ozark Rivers Association. I'm really not familiar with the Eleven Point Association.

WS: CEPRA is the acronym for that. I think Shannon County has the most active chapter. Do

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<sup>1</sup> *Stars Upstream: Life Along an Ozark River* by Leonard Hall. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

you remember that? It was there as an eight-county organization, and then I'm guessing that there was a main chapter that kind of spoke up.

**[tape meter, 100]**

Reverend Vincent Bucher. He was involved with that.

LD: Well, Bucher was extremely active and concerned. [CEPRA] used a lot of the rural residents there, but I don't know anything about that organization. I just don't know a thing about it.

WS: Oh, is that right? I found quite a bit correspondence in your files from that group.

LD: Well, I (chuckling) don't remember.

WS: Well, it started out as quite diverse, really, and I guess Mr. Hall and some of those people like Coleman McSpadden were initially interested, but then split off. I don't know if you remember Freeman Hughes...

LD: Oh, I remember Freeman Hughes very well.

WS: I found some letters where apparently he was supporting a leadership role for you within the group, but then he got disgusted with the group (chuckling) and left himself. And said that he might help you, but he wouldn't do it through the association.

LD: I just don't remember that association at all. I remember the people -- Cokie McSpadden and all -- but I do not remember that organization. It's just out of my mind.

WS: Okay. I wonder if in later years -- we were talking about these scenic easements, and of course I found a lot of material on that -- maybe you could elaborate. You'd mentioned something like you didn't really care for the way the Park Service had actually

implemented those scenic easements.

LD: Well, yes, that's true. That was put in in the final version of the bill. It was enacted forbidding them at their discretion to go that route, utilizing scenic easements. But in practice when it came right down to it, they did not offer those to the farmers. They offered it to the people with developed property. So if a person already had a cabin already established and was there enjoying, why, he was offered a scenic easement, thereby perpetuating the intrusive development. In some cases they offered life tenancy or something like that. In other cases, they offered a scenic easement. Appropriately, it should have been offered to the person with some pastoral pursuits, you know. Raising crops or cattle or whatever.

WS: Yeah, I found one letter from Mr. Davis Biggs to George Hartzog -- this 1967 -- and he intimated that there was a potential for a lawsuit against the Park Service because of misuse of scenic easements. I don't know if you recall if anybody ever filed a lawsuit against them on those grounds or not.

LD: I don't remember one way or the other. Yeah, that Davis Biggs is a fellow I tried to invite to meet you, too.

WS: Oh, he's still around?

LD: Yeah, I'm eighty-one, and he must be, oh, eighty-five or eighty-six at least. In failing health I guess, [and] his son didn't think he'd be up to it.

WS: Oh, I thought [it was] Congressman Curtis that you were talking about that day. But Davis Biggs was in the same law firm with him, correct?

LD: Yeah, well, Dave Biggs was the one who influenced [U.S. Representative] Tom Curtis to introduce the legislation which he and I drafted.

WS: Right. Well, I got the feeling that you had written that and gotten Mr. Biggs to put it in legal-type of language.

LD: Well, we collaborated. I don't know. It was my ideas more or less, and he did as you say -- put it in legal form. Got Tom to introduce it.

WS: Yeah. Well, my last question -- I did track down the fencing law, which is still in effect right now apparently.

**[tape meter, 150]**

It was passed in 1963. But the only way they could get it passed... It was actually two legislators from north Missouri that got it passed, Ron Belt and Fred Stutler. And given the resistance of some of the Ozark county people, county representatives, they got the law passed with a county option. So at that point it was up to each individual county to vote it in or not. I wondered if you have any idea if some of those counties -- Shannon or Carter -- how they responded to that?

LD: Well, they all ended up having it.

WS: Is that right?

LD: Yeah.

WS: They do now, then?

LD: They have it.

WS: I'll be darned. I couldn't find anything in the newspapers when the law was passed. It

seemed to be a non-event as far as local coverage went. But I had gotten the idea that some of those counties had adopted it, I just didn't know when.

LD: Well, I can't elaborate on it, but I know that we don't have open range in those [counties] -- Shannon, Reynolds, Carter, the heart of the Ozarks -- anymore, which has made a tremendous difference in the incidents of forest fires. They're greatly reduced, because most of the fires were set to make the grass grow green early in the spring and have a little something out there for the livestock.

WS: Yeah, I kind of wondered if maybe the local sentiment may have turned against open range as just part of the greater context of the federal agencies involved. Of course, there was a lot of criticism of open range among Park Service proponents. I mean, they kind of used that to advocate their cause to some degree, that the local people were destroying the area and therefore could not be trusted to take care of it. That kind of thing.

LD: Well, I think there's something to that. Now, I cannot authoritatively state that the counties individually every one of them down there acted. I know that there isn't anymore open range. I *believe* that it was something that you could sue someone about if his livestock was on your property. I'm still inclined to believe that, but I'm not absolutely *positive* of it. And it is, I think, something a lot of us have worked on to get them to think of timber area -- trees -- as a crop, and if you kept the fire out and the grandmawers away and so on and so forth, [you'd] eventually have something of economic value.

WS: Yeah. Some of those people in north Missouri told me that one of the problems they had:

somebody did not have livestock and their neighbor's livestock was on their land, and [if] they didn't want them there, they would plant some kind of poisonous plant to make the livestock sick. (chuckling) That was sort of a strategy to force them to build a fence.

LD: Oh, yeah?

WS: Did you ever hear of that in the Ozarks?

LD: I can *believe* it, but no, I'm not aware of it.

Well, I'm sorry that you had to call me about that Louis Green thing, and I *particularly* wanted to let you know about the possibility of [the] U.S. Forest Service building small lakes, or families back from the river, and hiking trails and all that new recreational opportunity instead of focusing on the people pressure on the river strips.

WS: Yeah, I found that really quite early in your correspondence, that you really differentiated between the upper reaches and the lower reaches of the rivers, and were advocating more of the traditional Forest Service recreation of dispersed visitation. That kind of thing, and the smaller lakes.

LD: Right. Well, you know, you hear an awful lot nowadays about carrying capacity, but we were talking about carrying capacity then, and I don't know many others that were.

**[tape meter, 200]**

What was the carrying capacity of the river without changing the quality of the recreational experience and something like that. Then again going back, Will, to this scenic easements and all, the cabin owner who got life tenancy, that could be passed on to others. Also that was, I think, unfortunate.

WS: Well, it amazed me that not only the scenic easements but in one letter from Mr. Sig [Sigurd] Olson -- he'd written about trying to designate the area as a... Let's see, what did he call it? It was similar to a designation they had in England -- National Trust Land. And that just amazed me. A lot of these ideas just seemed ahead of their time. They were very innovative but they were not widespread. Most people have more of a dogmatic view of what to do.

LD: Well, it was pioneering legislation. A lot of interesting ideas discussed at the time. I did tell you that anecdote about seagulls and skinny dipping?

WS: (Laughing) Right! Yeah, that was great. That's about as illustrative as you can get in terms of what changed.<sup>2</sup>

LD: Well, if there's anything else I can do for you, let me know.

WS: Okay, thank you very much.

**[tape meter, 221. End of side one, tape one of one. End of interview.]**

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<sup>2</sup> Apparently this anecdote was not recorded on tape in this or any other of the interviews with Mr. Drey contained within the Missouri Environment Oral History Collection, C3966.