

**Oral History Interview of
Edward Schwille**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson
April 19, 2016
New Braunfels, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Agriculture Interviews***

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Preferred Citation for this Document:

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Recording Notes:

Original Format: Born Digital Audio

Digitization Details: N/A

Audio Metadata: 96 kHz/ 24 bit WAV file

Further Access Restrictions: N/A

Related Interviews:

Transcription Notes:

Interviewer: Andy Wilkinson

Audio Editor: N/A

Transcription: Savannah Calvert

Editor(s): Katelin Dixon

Transcript Overview:

This interview features Ed Schwille. Scwille discusses working for the Soil Conservation Service, his career as a biologist, and the changes that have occurred in the industry.

Length of Interview: 01:07:35

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Background	5	00:00:00
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Keywords

agriculture, biology, environmental protection, soil conservation

Edward Schwille (ES):

—to March the twenty-ninth, the only thing after March the twenty-ninth is not in this one, but it is in my database. It's already there.

Andy Wilkinson (AW):

Okay. Well and your database is it's in a spreadsheet or a—?

ES:

Spreadsheet.

AW:

Yeah, you can even just email me a copy of the spreadsheet.

ES:

Yeah, I can just email you the whole thing.

AW:

And is it—?

ES:

S-c-h-w-i-l-l-e.

AW:

And I think Bailey pronounced it—

ES:

Sh-willy.

AW:

Oh Sh-willy not Swilly, I think he said—

ES:

Shoe-willy, Sch-willy, Shit-willy. (laughter) Been called several things. Mr. Ed is a whole lot easier.

AW:

(Laughs) Mr. Ed, I like that. And you live in Groesbeck, is that right?

ES:

That's my address. I live seventeen miles from Groesbeck.

AW:

Oh really? What's your mailing address?

ES:

[REDACTED]

AW:

Mr. Ed. Is it Edward?

ES:

Well, it's Edward M., Edward Martin Sr.

AW:

However you want it we'll—that is sometimes if a hundred years from now it's good to know you're the senior and not the junior or the—

ES:

Right.

AW:

What's your date of birth?

ES:

11/12/1934.

AW:

Okay and where?

ES:

Dallas.

AW:

Did you grow up in Dallas?

ES:

Part of it was outside of Denton, and I did go to elementary school and high school, North Dallas, I went to North Dallas.

AW:

In North Dallas?

ES:

High school.

AW:

And so you would've graduated in about nineteen—?

ES:

'64, class of '56, though. So class of '56, graduated in '64.

AW:

(Laughs) Korea?

ES:

No, no, I didn't. I did not.

AW:

So you grew up in town?

ES:

Mmmm.

AW:

No?

ES:

Yes and no, yes, I did but no, I didn't I grew up in my grandparents farm.

AW:

Oh really and where—do they farm in Denton?

ES:

Outside of Denton.

AW:

Because all of my Wilkinson kinfolk are from Denton County. They had a farm just—

ES:

Off of Teasely Lane?

AW:

Yeah, south and east of what's now the interstate.

ES:

Well Corinth—okay—our place was between Corinth and Argyle.

AW:

Ah. Okay.

ES:

So Teasley Lane was the main road out of our road, it was a curvy road at that time.

AW:

Yeah, by the time I came along my grandfather had relocated to Lubbock, but he grew up in Denton County, and there were a whole bunch of them.

ES:

Well, of course, we never knew anybody. I mean it was dirt roads and I had to walk the three miles to Corinth to get ice in my little wagon.

AW:

Yeah, was there any of it left when you got back?

ES:

Oh yeah we wrapped it in my little wagon and—

AW:

So you probably got a block of it.

ES:

We had an ice box; we didn't have a refrigerator.

AW:

Right, so you got a block of ice, right?

ES:

It was block ice, so all I could pull and hold on to my BB gun, and there's no telling how many Indians got while I was—but I did shoot a lot of [inaudible] about that meadowlark.

AW:

Meadowlarks, yeah.

ES:

We had another name for it.

AW:

Yeah my grandfather would pay me for every crow I shot which means I never got any pay, those crows were too tough (laughs).

ES:

Yeah, those were some pretty lean times. I did start elementary school in Paris.

AW:

Oh in Paris?

ES:

At First Ward Elementary School which is not there anymore, and lived on Cherry Street and Austin Street at that time.

AW:

So you were born during the Depression and getting out of—or getting into school about the time it was sort of coming to a close, but the Dust Bowl was still, you know, the drought was—

ES:

I was still very of it, yes sir.

AW:

Yeah, yeah, so you probably remember what that was like.

ES:

A little bit. People don't understand wearing feed sack underwear and feed sack shirts, that's a—

AW:

Yeah, and flour sack dresses.

ES:

Yeah flour sacks too. Mine were always out of chicken feed sacks. Yep, you're right.

AW:

So when you got out of high school, how did you wind up getting into SCS?

ES:

How did I wind up getting into SCS? That's a good thing. I worked for Pfizer Pharmaceuticals animal health, in '64, '65, I got laid off of an operation. I got laid off when I was in Oklahoma City or Edmond, Oklahoma. Drove to Temple and made an application there. I was fired, as I said, and so I moved my family to College Station, and I went back to school, that's when I got out in '64. So then a year and a half with Pfizer, and that was a cut throat operation anyway—

AW:

It's a tough business, isn't it?

ES:

Charles Pfizer Company. It's a well-known company, but they handle animal pharmaceuticals, still take Lipitor, I don't know if you know Lipitor that's a Pfizer product. Coty is another Pfizer product, the perfumes and—anyway they're a big operation—best thing that ever happened to me. They hired me, and said I could go to work on October 1965 in Brady, Texas.

AW:

The heart of Texas.

ES:

It is there close to the river in McCulloch County. From there I went to Coleman, Texas.

AW:

That's not too far.

ES:

Then went to Coleman to Rising Star, twinkle city, and from there, I was the soil conservationist in Brady, Coleman, and Rising Star. I went to Liberty as a biologist.

AW:

Is that what your degree was in?

ES:

Wildlife management.

AW:

Wildlife management?

ES:

Yes sir. I was part of the Southeast Texas RCD, Resource Conservation Development, project in Southeast Texas and my responsibility there was for, to the RCD with wildlife and recreation project measures of which we put in for ten different ones, and ten different ones were accepted over ten million dollars' worth. Sea Rim State Park, Sea Rim National Wildlife Refuge, Trinity River Authority Park, what is the other one? Dick Dowling State Park with Parks and Wildlife was with the Sea Rim Wildlife Area and water exchange pass and Martin Dye State Park, and all of those were project measures that were funded by RCD along with the state and federal agencies. So from there I went to—let's see from there I went to Vernon—at Liberty, excuse me I'll back up a little bit, at Liberty I worked what was known then as the, not just the RCD area I worked as a biologist in what was Area 22 at that time, and it extended from Rosenberg to Louisiana, Beaumont, and Port Arthur—

AW:

Wow. That's a lot of territory.

ES:

That was just that one. In the RCD area Polk, Jasper, Newton counties, Polk County, Harris County, Chambers County, Arden County, Jefferson County—that was my first time. Then when I went to Vernon, the areas at that time were Gainesville, Denton, Stephenville, Vernon, Corsicana. So there was thirty-three counties as the biologist on area staff. I was headquartered in Vernon, but I worked the rest of those as a biologist on area staff of each one of those particular counties. So I was a representative of an area conservationist, but my discipline was a biologist's discipline. From there they started closing Denton, Corsicana, Gainesville areas, and then did them some revamping, and I moved to Terrell and out of Terrell, which picked up the Denton, Gainesville, and part of the Corsicana area, and then I traveled all the way to Mount Pleasant to the Louisiana state line, and up again to thirty-three counties. So that was my first—well each move I got a different responsibility that's how I ended up in Marion Porter's area staff, but I worked the other areas under that particular AC. From there I went to the state biologist in Colorado.

AW:

Really. Where was that headquarters?

ES:

At Denver.

AW:

Denver, when was that?

ES:

'88, and from there that was the whole state, responsibility for the—well starting in '85 they started HEL determinations, highly erodible lands and wetlands, began in '85, they began in '85, and they were in full swing by '88, and most of the national pressure on wetlands was beginning in '88 and '90, and especially in Colorado, were lands that individuals had thought was not wetlands but were playa lake, even though they weren't holding water they were still playa lake designated.

AW:

Most of that in the east part of the state?

ES:

No not—yes for the playas—but for the west part of the state it dealt with your senior and junior water rights, and I was—here it is, I'm not trying to brag on it, well I'm not intending to, my duty responsibility as the biologist, I was the wetland specialist and I was the repairing coordinator, I was the recreation specialist, and I was the cultural resource coordinator.

AW:

That's a lot of—

ES:

As well as the biologist, okay.

AW:

Do you need a cough drop?

ES:

No sir, I have a chew in my mouth.

AW:

Oh good for you.

ES:

I chew, been doing it since I was a button, and they can say what they want to if you're going to have cancer genes, you're going to have cancer genes.

AW:

Well, you've made it quite a ways.

ES:

Why should I change now?

AW:

Right.

ES:

So in Colorado that was my job responsibilities and that was considerably more than—because in the western part of the state, you had the cultural resources in the building of irrigation ditches.

AW:

Now talk a little bit about cultural resources and irrigation ditches how—

ES:

Okay how did that—

AW:

Yeah I would think a cultural—

ES:

They put the ditches in in areas that had cultural resource backgrounds.

AW:

Yeah so there was a chance of artifacts and—

ES:

You had to always survey those areas.

AW:

Yeah, so you were doing the surveys before the ditches went in.

ES:

I was doing—for the ditches that went in or ponds or lakes. Most of them were ponds, they called them lakes, but they were ponds. They were less than two surface acres water holding, but where the wetland part came in was when those ditches leaked downstream, downhill, that corps of engineers and the Fish and Wildlife Service and primarily EPA had no one to—EPA people are stupid—I'm sorry, they were stupid people. They did not understand the direction of water movement in the soil, so the guidelines said under wetlands to have hydrology, you had to have soils, and you had to have hydrophytic vegetation, those three things. But you build a ditch that's

not on hydric soils and water breaks out below that, then that is a wetland. No, no ladies, no ladies no, that is not a wetland. It is a wet area, yes, but it is not wetland, it will grow vegetation, it does have hydrology because the water is coming from that ditch above it, therefore it is not a wetland it is a wet area. So then you got BLM ditches that would break out a mile below the BLM water courses, and then they want to call those wetlands. Well no, those weren't wetlands, but then you get in the potato growing area, or in Alamosa and down in that area, the ground is naturally a wetland, I mean water comes to the surface. So what're they doing? They're trying to get the water off of it so they can grow potatoes, and they can grow barley for Coors primarily. So you get into these kinds of—we had to augment, then we had to develop other areas as wetlands to offset the farming operations in others.

AW:

I bought ten acres in the San Luis valley, one time, my father-in-law bought some, and we had held out great hopes that Coors was going to start growing hops but they never did.

ES:

Yeah, no, but you know where the sand hills are, there was an alligator operation that I was involved in—

AW:

Yeah, because they had that hot water that—

ES:

They had water temperatures, groundwater temperatures at seventy degrees you got all males and at less than seventy you got females. I mean it was quite an operation okay, I was involved in that kind of stuff but my name is not on a lot of stuff. A lot of mine is just strictly on sight investigations and not any—it was never any actual, working with landowners, whatever they did, that was on them through suggestions. So I know I'm rambling a little bit—

AW:

No, no, this is very interesting.

ES:

And so from Colorado, I answered a job vacancy announcement with the poultry industry.

AW:

How long were you in Colorado?

ES:

It's hard to say, '88 early. Left in '92, that's four years, '92 to '95 is really four years, not three because of dates. So I was on the Washington staff for four years. I really want equivalent dates, it's difficult—so then I was poultry liaison with, and this is how it started out, and I didn't know it at the time, I had started A&M as a poultry major and ended up as a wildlife major, and I just out of kicks, I turned in, and the guy, Don Dalton was his name, it was a four organization, consortium.

AW:

A trade association?

ES:

No sir, not really, it wasn't a trade organization as such. NRCS paid my salary, and they paid my benefits—my annual leave, sick leave. Tennessee Valley Authority provided me with secretarial help and office space and use of their printing operations. The third thing was EPA put fifteen thousand dollars into it, and the fourth entity was Southeastern Poultry and Egg Association, and the primary job was in fact promoting waste manage—proper waste management with the industry nationwide. So I'd go to California one time and Vermont another, I mean Florida to Washington, I mean I just—during those times, I'd meet with the NRCS offices, I'd go into every one of them to go into their state, then I might meet with their local state poultry federations and then sometimes hold a trade show discussing waste management, and that's poultry waste management in the form of dead birds and litter management, proper. Some bought it '92, '93, they were beginning to know it by '94 because of the state agencies were then becoming more in tuned with proper waste management. Therefore, it was taking some of the pressure off of Southeastern Poultry and Egg Association to promote within their organization the absolute need for doing it now voluntarily through NRCS instead of being done by permit action.

AW:

Right.

ES:

Now does that fit with what you understand? I was trying to be the go between of NRCS specifications and Southeastern Poultry and Egg Association need to have their people understand, and they're an international organization, they have just changed their name to United Poultry and Egg Association, but they did that after I left in '95, in August of '95. That's why I'm saying it could be four years on one end and three and a half on the other, but both of them winded up four, and now it's predominantly state entity, like in Texas you would have a Texas Council of Environmental Quality. It took over some of that business then all of a sudden a state soil and water conservation districts, then from a voluntary side, provided additional funds

to a poultry operation like into a dead bird composter or incinerators to safely dispose of dead birds. Through Arkansas, through Tyson's—man I've been in a bunch of them and I had developed a rapport that I was asked back. After I left, that rapport kind of went to pot, I know the reasons I'm not going to explain them but it went to pot Southeastern pulled out, and would no longer fund, Tennessee Valley Authority pulled out, and EPA had already lowered their fifteen thousand down to five. So NRCS then was hung with a whole lot of extra dollars that they didn't want to spend, so basically it defunded, I mean it basically was defunded about six months after I left. So call it what you want.

AW:

And when you left were you retiring or did you go to—?

ES:

I took a buyout, and my father-in-law had cancer and he lived at Groesbeck, and then after that becomes another story, Andy. So I took the buyout in '95, and I left in August of '95, September, to take him back and forth to Temple to VA Hospital, he had cancer. Anyway, then I let Mike Bogart, who is here, was the district conservationist there in Groesbeck, come in and help us with our watershed work. Okay I'll do that. That was twenty-one years ago, eighteen years ago. I'm still working for the Soil and Water Conservation District.

AW:

(Laughter) Even though you're retired.

ES:

I retired from SCS, but due to present day programs with NRCS, they're not the same as what I grew up in.

AW:

Yeah, but talk about the difference.

ES:

In one word or two?

AW:

However many you want.

ES:

It'd be one or two. NRCS today is program driven. If it's not us obtaining an application for a contractual or with an individual, they don't have time for it. The computer has caused NRCS to do as little of fieldwork as possible, and then if you want to really get with it, Andy, the

individuals that they're hiring now are fresh out of school, they have no real agriculture backgrounds. They don't know how to talk to farmers or ranchers. I'm going to be upfront with you the way I see it, they're too in tune to the computer driving. If it's not in the computer then it's not factual.

AW:

Yeah, it doesn't exist.

ES:

And experience offsets a lot of what's factual, or perceived in books when we put it that-a-way, and the standards and specifications are not utilized as guidelines, they're used as specifics, and you can't do that with an entity of agriculture. It has too many variables in it and weather being on,e and so to me that is where the change is. I feel like personally the computer is phasing out, USDA and RCA, there was fifteen hundred employees when I started to work in '65, and there's six hundred now. So when you take that few of individuals, they don't have the time to spend with the landowners, and so what is happening, more and more is taken up by the Forest Service because they're getting their money, they're hiring people, and I'm not begrudging, but they're doing the same thing. Parks and Wildlife department now, Texas Parks and Wildlife department has field biologists on site to discuss working with landowners and developing wildlife habitat and food plots and brush control operations. Well, that's what SCS was known for back in the seventies and eighties, and as the farm bills kept coming around and we got away from highly erodible determinations and wetland determinations, then there was nowhere else to go so they picked them up. I'm being as honest with you as I know how to be without getting verbally upset, but it's a political—it became more political in the nineties, for agriculture, than it was prior.

AW:

And more political in what way?

ES:

In all ways, more politically appointees running the operation instead of people that were familiar with the operation. USDA has—I'm getting over into something else that's really probably—USDA has the, what do you call it? Entitlement program for lunch rooms and such as this which is really not a USDA effort. It is more agencies within USDA get more money than say NRCS and ASCS which is now called Farm Service Agency, yet they have all the money they can pour out by the drought program that NRCS would love to have to work with landowners on the ground, and a lack of personnel has come about by politically individuals being put into a position of trying to, I think downgrade the NRCS, I think if you look at the downgrade of personnel.

AW:

Yeah, it's a third of what it was.

ES:

What is was, and just because we're always having need of agronomist, we always have need of range conservationist, we always have a need for a wetland specialist, and we always have need of a soil scientist even though the whole state has been pretty well mapped. There's always a need for onsite mapping because the soils maps were generalized soils maps, they were not specific soils, maps so when you was talking about what is a wetland, to be determined the soil scientist has to be part of it, not just an engineer, and not just a biologist.

AW:

I know the county I live in the soil changes a lot from one side to the other.

ES:

Where do you live?

AW:

Lubbock.

ES:

Okay all right, I never worked out in there specifically. I did range site inventories throughout Lubbock and Amarillo areas, but yes, I feel like that your older heads are worn out. I'm being honest with you, the older ones that—because they see that the time they spent with landowners was their information, their experience paid off. As new individuals come in that don't know their ass from a hole in the ground then they don't know how to work with landowners where we used to, I mean help a guy set a drill or where we helped them really design a waterway. Now the engineers are saying a critical area is now going to be a waterway—wait a minute, wait a minute you've got an area out there that needs to be manipulated to reduce it eroding more, you don't design a waterway to do that. But some of the NRCS engineers today are causing that, and the ones that do a good job are not the ones in the step above, therefore, the one a step above has jurisdiction, and boy some of the things that I see even after twenty years, the old time engineers were good guys. They were hard-nosed, but they were good and they tried to figure out a way to get around a problem rather than trying to, not reduce it, but increase it, increase the problem. So now as a district employee I get to do some of the old time planning with landowners and we got more new landowners that are urbanized individuals, and they're wanting to know what they can do. They don't necessarily need a contract, I'm sorry the program oriented activities is done away with just on the ground, "Hey let's look at your problem. Let's see if we can't figure out a way to get around it and then save you for the least amount of money. Yes it's going to cost you, you've got a problem. Now let's see how we can do it." Pond management, they don't do pond

management; only extension service does pond management anymore. What? Man, we sold fish out of soil conservation district offices all of the time and there's still a couple of old fish producers that I'm in still in touch with, and they'll ask me questions, how to do something. What I did, experience wise, thirty years ago, forty years ago. Yeah, extension service, A&M extension service yep, they're now doing any more on ground, one on one individual work. When it used to be only in meetings now it's one on one in the field that NRCS people used to do. I know I'm digressing just a bit—

AW:

No, no this is good.

ES:

But the seventies and eighties, we had ten biologists in the state; three of which was in the state office here, and seven were field biologists like me traveling more than one area of thirty or more counties. I was primarily in the north central and northeast, and there was another one in Lubbock, and another one was over outside of Nacogdoches, another one was down in the hill country, and another one was on down in the lower valley. And each one of us did essentially the same thing, then as three of us retired, two—no maybe four, five, two off of state staff which left one, and then I left the state, Zemon [?] left the state, the one in Lubbock died, but they didn't replace any of us. So there went that work with the field offices that we did. We weren't on—I wasn't, and I'll speak for myself specifically, I was not a snitch, and some of the ACs wanted to know who was doing what wrong—

AW:

You mean the producers or the agents?

ES:

Area conservationists.

AW:

Yeah ACs.

ES:

The AC's, they were being driven—the ACs were being driven by the state office but some of them were powerful enough that they ran their areas as a little kingdom, and it was done their way and no other way. So what I'm trying to tippy-toe around, and I'm trying to tippy-toe around a lot of it, is that I can say I had some of the best area conservationists to work for, I know some others that did not. It's the same way when I was with the poultry industry consortium, it was called Poultry and Water Quality Consortium, that was the name of it, the group. We in some instances the state conservationists did not agree with waste management,

that they did not have a waste management problem with their poultry industry in their state when it was pointed out to them from a water quality standpoint and from actual work on the ground. Same way with area conservationists, sometimes little individual states, the engineers thought one thing and the biologists in each of the states in the water quality specialists in each of the states thought something different. But guess who wins, you know? I'm not naming them, I ain't about to name them to you, Andy, I'm sorry, but that's what you pick up all the way across this country. I can pick Chesapeake Bay because Chesapeake Bay had a specific problem, and they were addressing that specific problem in the Chesapeake Bay in Del Marva area in Maryland and New Jersey. They recognized their problems but others throughout the nation did not, and they didn't think they had problems back there, then. And then when the state agencies got involved and started permitting actions, then the state conservationists then knew that, hey they had a problem that they needed to address. It was known back there then, so you do it now, you don't have the area conservationist anymore, you have a zone manager now who is an assistant state conservationist, and within that zone they're too big for the zone manager to get around to see what the problems are. So he has to depend upon on his own personnel and some of them don't tell him what's going on. Likewise, nobody in the field wants to tell him because they know exactly where the problem comes from, where the concern comes from. So NRCS has done it to themselves, I can look back because of my twenty years of being retired and seeing how it's looked now. I wouldn't work for the NRCS in any way shape or form now.

AW:

Henry, earlier in the afternoon mentioned the difference between, and kind of pegged it for the 1985 Farm Act, that what the ACs and the field people did with producers and landowners was assistance and afterwards it was more adversarial. Is that a fair way to—?

ES:

That is a fair, and maybe that's a more polite way to say it, Henry's that way. Henry's more polite, I'm—I know I'm tippy toeing, okay, and that's to keep from saying some things because I don't—but by truth there has been a total change in NRCS since the eighties, the latter part of the eighties, and even though I was in Colorado for those '88 to '92 period, it was still the same problem of people understanding HEL determinations and wetland determinations and the Farm Bill did not allow for experience to answer it. So therefore like I said the standards and specs that are set up, we knew them as guidelines. Today it's specifically, and that's because of the newer individuals in the D.C. positions that they don't know how to vary from that standard of specification because they don't have the experience behind them to understand that you don't have to build a fence exactly like it's saying and turn it down which becomes adversarial to the producer and the producer says, "If I'm going to have to do that crap, I've been building fences for a lot longer than you've been around, and then if life expectancy of that fence is ten years, that fence out there will live longer than you will." I mean and that becomes the adversarial part, okay, and I know it under fences specifically. Now when you're talking about ponds, that's one

thing, ponds are engineering they're specific. But growing grass, that's not specific I mean—what plants to put out there, not just Bermuda grass. You want to know where the wildlife habitat went, went part of the way by Bermuda grass, the lack of seed producing plants and cover producing plants. But the young people see Bermuda grass as a reason for making big dollars first and not doing proper stocking management. They think with Bermuda grass they can run more animals than they can on their native condition. Well on their native conditions you rotate them, you move them, and that's what we used to do, but now they don't have the size of operations to do that. So what do they do? They plant Bermuda grass, where there's a quail habitat (imitates noise), pheasant habitat (imitates noise). Their habitat is getting narrowed every day because somewhere between three and five thousand acres per day is going out of what would be turned rural habitat and where you can't grow them in urbanized areas. So that's just in Texas, I mean that's not—nationwide does the same thing, so therefore the management intensity has driven [sic] the high fences. Well, then they're going to hire a biologist to operate them and that's what some of this group does now as retirees—

AW:

Is consult for that?

ES:

They consult high fence areas and some of them are beautiful.

AW:

And for the recording here, what is a high fence area?

ES:

A high fence area is a basically a deer fence, a deer proof—

AW:

To keep them on one side instead of the other.

ES:

Yes.

AW:

Keep them in or keep them out.

ES:

Yeah, and it can be done both ways, and some of them here are managers, good managers, and they're doing a great job. But it's all behind a high fence, and nowadays in this state there's almost a high fence joining a high fence.

AW:

I know it. We saw a bunch on the way down today. It's kind of hard to think about a high fence and the concept of wildlife.

ES:

Well, they still have to be managed within that high fence, and they still need the food plots within that high fence. But the consultant part of it is that they can do a better job of providing the food plots and not just a block of an area that's designated for a food plot. They can make a random—designs so to speak and still meet with livestock operations at the same time, and that's what we did do that's not being done now in the service. I'm talking about in the service now; they don't have the time, or take the time, or get the experience to talk about it to a producer. Producer inspecting really got it more on the ball than some of our employees in NRCS, especially out on the cultivated areas the farmers are a lot more sharper and do a better job and want to do a better job of soil erosion protection than some of our own people and I say, our own people is I'm an SCSer not an NRCSer. Andy, that's—

AW:

That's very interesting.

ES:

Well, you're going to be able to take all of this in advisement them and compare yours with Monte, and you're going to come up with a semblance of what is thought, and I don't mind telling you some of it, and some of it I'm not going to tell you. Yes, there was some good times and bad times, but I worked in the good times. When an AC allowed me to have a five horse power up board motor, a two hundred foot gillnet, a twenty gauge shotgun, beaver traps in my car. That was unheard of in some locations, and yet it was the tools that I used with field offices to get them to understand how to manage a body of water for fish, or the programs sitting up fish collection data sizes where I used the gillnets to show landowners how they were overstocked in one species and understocked in another. The beaver traps were these—I gave instructions to, believe it or not, trapping organizations of trapping beaver and working with that giardia lamblia. I'm just breezing with you now a little bit of history. There's one that's here that we did things with specifically a technician here.

AW:

Spell giardia for the—

ES:

Giardia Lamblia is the same thing in World War II that was called GIs, you know what the GI's were the drizzly shifts. Well that's giardia lamblia that's where GI came from, and it was actually the protozoan animal that defeated Napoleon was because of—

AW:

Yeah, and I think it defeated me once or twice when I went vacationing in Mexico (laughter).

ES:

It can very well be that. I've had it twice, three times, but explaining how the beaver transmits that organism, that protozoan parasite, and I thoroughly loved my job as a biologist. I mean I may have rubbed some people wrong, I one time was told I'm non-conformist. I did not want to conform, I did want to do my job in respect of providing good information to producers and landowners as well as new employees coming on, and I see some new employees in management positions now, I know some, and it's good for me personally to see that happening. Other than that, I've got my only thrills with seeing a producer do what I suggested or he took my suggestions and did it and it worked out for him and I had some bad ones, and they chewed my butt for it and I cost them money, yes, but we left as friends and maybe there was something that I did, but that's where I got my thrill in two places, one was for producers seeing them do what was suggested, and it worked out for them and they were impressed with it. There are still some today that remember that. And then two is employees that I trained and saw where they went and where they ended up, and some of them are retiring now, and some of them are still working and that's good for me. Money? There wasn't any money in it, not until you got—yeah, when I was GS-14, yeah there was money in it. Hell, I had a ticket to any airport I needed to go to, no problem at all, I'd just tell a secretary in TVA, she'd make the arrangements and I'd go, no problem. But the real thing was to see the people on the ground, same thing today. I see them come in the office, we sell them grass seed, they want to know what to plant, they plant it, they, "Oh my god we're thrilled with this, we didn't think we could do it." Hey, I can only tell you through what experience I've got, and it ain't all written in no book.

AW:

Yeah. Tell me this.

ES:

Okay, I'll shut up.

AW:

No, no, no, this is an opportunity to say more. The point that you made about the computer and the specifications versus experience and guidelines. That's not just in soil conservation or range management or wildlife management, it happened in the—and the feel that got me into all of this which is in the arts and writing and music, and you know, the same thing is going on. How does one go about getting the world to pay attention to experience and guidelines and not specifications and computers? What do we need to be doing?

ES:

Yeah, sometimes I wonder if there's not a second thing, you've got experience sitting over here and you've got specifications sitting over here, and those that are working with specifications need to understand to get the experience, to work a specification, then you need to work in the field, don't work in a computer. You've got to get your feet wet, not prop them up on the table, or on the desk, you've got to get out and get muddy. I mean you've just got to get muddy and the only way you do that is get with someone that's got the experience, and those that are using the computer need to spend time in the field or with those that have the experience because you're going to drive a car to get to point A the same way someone else will go to B and get to A, and yet you both trying to arrive at the same thing. It's the same way on our work, the specifications lead you towards an answer, but experience allows you to get there. I guess that's a different way of putting it Andy, but—I'm not the best biologist in the world, okay, I'm going to be the first to tell you that, and I make mistakes. I made a lot of mistakes as a biologist, but the majority of them were not hurtful, but standards and specs, by not following standards and specs.

Engineering is a separate entity, you can't do that, and soils you can't do that, you can't change what the soils will lead you do. When you are doing it at RUSLE [**Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation**] RUSLE, those were pretty well set, but they were really another gyration of what was done years before of class one, two, three, four soils. I mean they didn't change, they were—but they worded them different to make them come out. I was not the best person in—the coursework, the one where you figure potentials and ratios. What the heck was that? I wasn't good at it, you give me the answer, and I'll figure out how I got to the answer but don't give me a bunch of figures out here and expect me to get to the same answer you got. Probability, the law of probability, because that's what it is, it's the law of probability. You probably will get there, but anyway, no, I'm trying to take your question really—when you're talking soils and vegetation and water, you're talking about three separate things to arrive at an answer that you want but may not get. Now I don't know how to place it, but now when you're talking about using engineering specifically guidelines become standards and specs, and that's what is met.

AW:

You know, when we get done with this, I'll tell you about a book, a civil engineering book, that says exactly the opposite that the experience can't be done away with by the calculations, pretty interesting.

ES:

Well, it's the same thing.

AW:

Yeah, that's what I mean, saying the same thing that you're saying.

ES:

Away from that, when I say the extension service is taking over the pond management, aspects of pond management, whether they're ten acres and less in size or ten acres and more, us biologists that were here, that were in the business here for the state for NRCS or SCS, not NRCS, we'd hold different demonstrations, different get-togethers, meetings, and now the extension service does it, but they're saying the same words but in a different manner, and it's the same thing. They were able to take through their abilities of information and use of technology and all of this to flower up the same thing we were doing forty years ago in the field and make it sound like it's something new, and it's not, it's not new. It's just a different way of wording it. Time's up, (laughter) but you're right, experiences can't be done by calculations, and that's true. You can't experience these—and we've lost it, NRCS today has lost it, okay, and the old heads don't like what's going on and they're getting out right, wrong or indifferent. Your bell is going off.

AW:

Oh no, that's not my bell that was—although Bailey told us there was something going on at five thirty, is that right? Supposed to. And I'm going to take this break just for a minute to say, because I forgot to say at the beginning, this is Andy Wilkinson with Ed Schville, Mr. Ed, and it's the nineteenth of April 2016, we're in New Braunfels at the SCS, NRCS—do you call this—?

ES:

Retirees Reunion.

AW:

Retirees reunion, yeah okay. I meant to do that at the beginning, but I got so interested in listening to you talk, I forgot all about it so.

ES:

Well, now I'm not that good of a talker okay.

AW:

No, it's very interesting.

ES:

I enjoyed my time, that's the first thing I can tell you, I enjoyed my time. Yeah, you always had the bell curve that took, you had highs and lows. Every time I moved it was a high, but I got there it was a low, so you know you had to look at everything as it's got it's good points and it's bad points, but you work with your bad points and let the good points take care of themselves.

AW:

I like that, that's a good way to put it.

ES:

It was hard for me sometimes to explain that to my wife. She didn't like Denver, Colorado, at all.

AW:

Well, I was up there six years in the seventies, and I really did like it.

ES:

Oh I enjoyed it. I enjoyed working the state. But I was gone a lot, and then when we went to Chattanooga, Tennessee, she wanted to stay there, she enjoyed there.

AW:

That's a pretty town.

ES:

We lived at Ooltewah so—

AW:

I don't know it well enough to know—

ES:

It's between Chattanooga and Cleveland, but it's off the beaten path. We raised rabbits, show rabbits, and we took them from here to Colorado to Tennessee, so we had show rabbits. So we'd go everywhere with it and show rabbits.

AW:

I bet you didn't have any show rabbits in Denton County did you?

ES:

No sir. Jackrabbits were the ones we had.

AW:

Yeah, but we had some cotton tails out there.

ES:

Most of ours were just jack rabbits in a peanut field.

AW:

Well listen, thank you very much for taking the time. I'm going to end it right here and I would like to get you to sign one of our releases that says people can listen to this a hundred years from now or whenever. So thanks Ed.

ES:

You're welcome.

End of Recording



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