An Interview with Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.

October 25, 2022

Sherwood, OR

NMFSH Accession No. 2021.074.034

0:00:05.2 James Wall: All right. So you were telling me when and where you were born.

0:00:08.5 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Colorado, Denver, Colorado on November 16th, 1933, almost 89 years ago.

0:00:16.6 James Wall: So Denver, Colorado in the '40s and '50s when you were coming of age, what was it like then versus now?

0:00:25.4 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Well, actually we didn't live in Denver. We moved to a little town called Burlington, Colorado, which is near the Colorado/Kansas line where dad was a county agent and mother taught school. So I really grew up during World War II over there in the dust bowl era, the old wheat and Dust Bowl era.

0:00:46.2 James Wall: I see.

0:00:48.0 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I can remember some of the big dust storms rolling across the Kansas plains into Colorado and block up the window so the dust didn't come rolling in. And we actually saw one of the great grasshopper influxes come across that country in the '30s.

0:01:05.0 James Wall: Really? That's weird. I'm probably the only person I know that knows about that locust...

0:01:13.6 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Oh yeah.

0:01:13.7 James Wall: The great locust invasion and grasshopper invasion that was kind of a forgotten natural disaster.

0:01:21.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Yeah. The roads were slick in that little town of Burlington just because of grasshoppers. Yeah.

0:01:26.6 James Wall: And what were your folks names and what did they do?

0:01:27.3 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Dad, the Richard Oliver Woodfin, I'm Richard Oliver Woodfin, Jr. And mother was the Dorothy Irene, her maiden name was Carpenter. And we spent our time in either there or in Ordway, Colorado, which is south near Pueblo, where that grandparent raised watermelon and cantaloupe, which is a great place for a kid to go. And my other grandparents lived in Fort Collins where Colorado A&M or Colorado State University is. And when my dad passed away just short of 102, he was the oldest living alumni from Colorado A&M.

0:02:05.0 James Wall: 102, wow.

0:02:09.7 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Yeah, he's still playing golf at 101, so. [laughter]

0:02:11.9 James Wall: Well, it sounds like you got good genes.

0:02:13.8 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I'm hoping so. [laughter]

0:02:14.3 James Wall: Yeah. So were you a outdoors kid growing up?

0:02:17.8 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I suppose so. When you live in a little town of 3,000 people, you are always outdoor people at those times. And we always raised something on the place, whether it was chickens or later on when we moved to another town, sheep and always had horses. Yeah.

0:02:35.8 James Wall: Wow. So what was the National Forest near you? What was your favorite spot when you were growing up to go to?

0:02:43.1 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Oh my gosh, it was a long ways to Denver, because that's out in the middle of the plains in the Dust Bowl. So my only association with National Forests was to go to Fort Collins, Colorado and then go up the [Cache la] Poudre River which now I guess is the Roosevelt National Forest and go fishing with my grandfather on the Poudre River. So that's really my only early contact with the forestry. And as a kid you liked it, I didn't have anything special going on about being a forester or anything at that time yet.

0:03:14.0 James Wall: So you weren't one of these folks... There's some folks I interview and they know they want to be a forester when they were a kid, or their parents, they're Forest Service brats. But that was not you, you say?

0:03:29.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Well, it happened a little bit later. Dad got transferred to Grand Junction, Colorado, which is near the Utah line as a county agent over there in Mesa County. So now we're right below Grand Mesa National Forest and Uncompahgre and a lot of other National Forests. Yeah, so when you look out the backyard where we lived in Grand Junction, Grand Mesa National Forest, which is 10,000 feet up there and Grand Junction is only about 3,500. There's this giant flat top mountain, actually it's the largest flat top mountain in the world and there's over 280 named lakes on top of that National Forest up there. So that's where dad and I went up and hunted and the family picnicked there. And then I began to think, "This is what I would like to do. I think I'd like to spend time doing this sort of thing."

0:04:18.4 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: The interesting thing is my father, county agent, had a lot of interaction with "ag" people and ranchers. And in those days, which would have been in the forties, there was quite a bit of head knocking between some of the ranchers and the Forest Service at that time on grazing and all the things you can think of. So dad did not encourage me to go into Forest Service, but that changed. I went to school, Fort Collins, graduated from high school in Grand Junction, Colorado, then went to forestry school at Colorado A&M, Fort Collins.

0:04:55.0 James Wall: Colorado A&M, which became Colorado State.

0:04:57.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: State University, you bet, yeah.

0:05:00.8 James Wall: Yeah.

0:05:01.7 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: So we had a forestry club there and sitting around in one of the forestry clubs one time, the speaker that year was [Richard] Dick McArdle, Chief McArdle came to the Forestry Club and he sat with us guys talking about things and McArdle was from Research. He had been a station director. And so I thought, "Huh, Forest Service Research, that's

kind of cool. I think I'll look into that." And so that's how I started my career. First thinking I wanted to go into recreation because the campgrounds and all the neat stuff they did there. And then part way through school I decided this doesn't look too promising. And so I switched over to Forest Products Technology, Wood Technology, Forest Science. So I ended up being a Forester with a Wood Technology degree when I graduated from Colorado State.

0:05:50.9 James Wall: So were you a science kid growing up?

0:05:55.8 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I'm a book person. I read a lot and as my staff would tell you, my nickname was "Twitch" because I'm a Type-A personality and I was always on the move. So that influenced how I did things around home and my interests. And so when it was time to become a Forester, I was going to do that. There's no question about it, so. [laughter]

0:06:24.6 James Wall: Now, Wood Tech at the time must have been fairly new as a subject, or?

0:06:32.6 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: It was, but Wood Science and Technology was really important because at that period of time, for example in the sixties, we'll go back to that later, all of the strength and materials were developed by wood technology. All the: how strong is a board? What can you use it for? Will it span this? Will it reach over that? What's its compression failure, bending failure, all the things that make how you build houses. But also in those days all of these things that we were shipping to overseas to war, the boxes were made of wood. And so there was a lot of Research going on on strength and materials relative to the war industry. So wood technology was a really good deal, and so, big deal in those days. So when I graduated in '55 and I'd had a couple of just fantastic summer jobs.

0:07:23.6 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: And then I got to a job up in Rapid City, South Dakota with the Rocky Mountain Experiment Station. They had a new lab up there at Rapid City. And so went up there and I'll come back to my summer jobs 'cause I would like to talk about those for a minute or two. So my first summer job was with the Bureau of Land Management in the Blue Mountains of Colorado, surveying bug-killed Engelmann spruce. So I lived up there all summer long in one of those little sheep herder trailers that they pulled around with a truck and I surveyed and inventoried dead spruce that summer. Then next year I worked for the Colorado State Forest Service up at Fraser, Colorado just doing all kinds of jobs and stuff like that. And the next summer... And they had an experimental project called Wyssen Skyline. [laughter] They were looking at being able to log without doing roads in those days, and so.

0:08:33.8 James Wall: Now the bud, you said it was the budworm that was eating this tree in Colorado?

0:08:39.4 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: It was not the budworm, it was the bark beetles, it was invading the Engelmann spruce in western Colorado. And the Bureau of Land Management had us inventorying, actually I just cruised timber all summer long. Typical Forest Service cruising of timber to get the... How much live and dead there was and working by myself. It was a good summer. And then on the summer at Colorado we repaired phone lines. We did all kinds of stuff for the state of Colorado Forest Service up at Fraser, Colorado. But the job I really liked was that one the summer with the Fraser Experimental Forest out of Fort Collins where it's about, we're working up about 9,000 feet. And the experimental system was a logging system that put the power unit. And we took it up from 6,000 feet to about 9,000 feet through the woods, pulling itself up with

winches and cables so that it was designed to do that.

0:09:40.3 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: It actually came from Switzerland. Jakob Wyssen developed it. And so there were three of us students, one actually... I'm the only one surviving. Charlie Newland, who just passed away, Forest Service, you may know that name. And so anyway, we ran that system all summer long on experimental logging. And so we just set chokers, we logged, we would skid the logs down and just a great logging system for that summer. And when the summer's over, running around at 9,000 feet, we were really in good shape. And the exciting thing to me was I got to top my first tree, climbing up one big tree up about eighty, ninety feet Engelmann Spruce to make a spar tree, an intermediate spar tree to support the line. Topping that tree and riding that back and forth as it went down. That was pretty cool. 'Cause I liked climbing. I always liked climbing. So that was a good summer.

0:10:41.6 James Wall: So at that point you were in it for your career?

0:10:45.0 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I had made up my mind.

0:10:47.6 James Wall: You were committed to the idea.

0:10:49.6 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I was gonna go into Research. So the next year when I graduated, I got a job offer from the Rocky Mountain Station to go to Rapid City, South Dakota as a young wood technologist.

0:11:00.9 James Wall: I didn't know that South Dakota qualified as a Rocky Mountain region.

0:11:06.1 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: It was at that time. In those days there were a lot more experiment stations than there are now. As you know some have been combined and changed territories. And...

0:11:17.8 James Wall: So the Rapid City was the big Research station at that time?

0:11:21.6 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: No, it was not the headquarters of the station, that was still in Fort Collins. It was just a lab up there. But it...

0:11:31.1 James Wall: So what was it like as a young man moving to Rapid City, South Dakota? Was it a nice place to be?

0:11:36.8 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: In '56 it was still pretty wild. It was still a pretty wild town. We just were brand new up there and what their interest was, because Nekoosa Edwards in Wisconsin was interested in buying pulpwood out of the Black Hills. And so they wanted some Research done there. And Senator Mundt was a senator from South Dakota, and I believe he was a Chairman of the Appropriation Committee. So what happened was he wanted a new lab building, and there was a little four-story square building on the campus there in South Dakota and Rapid City that was built with steel narrow windows for possible Indian attacks. That's how old this building was. So in the July, in the summer of July, the senator walked up all those steps to our office and he was a guy who was perspiring easily, let's put it that way. [chuckle]

0:12:33.1 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: And, so what happened was, James, there was a million

dollars going to go to build the new fire lab in Missoula, there where you are. He carved a hundred thousand dollars out of that fire lab money to go to Rapid City to build our new building. And the fire lab was built with $900,000 and we got a new lab with a hundred thousand dollars up there. [laughter]

0:12:54.8 James Wall: Wow.

0:12:57.6 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: So I spent until about 1960 there, decided I needed to get a master's degree, went to University of Washington, got another degree in Wood Science.

0:13:08.0 James Wall: Why Washington?

0:13:09.6 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Well, I got a scholarship to University of Washington. That's the reason during that time.

0:13:15.8 James Wall: Who did you work with there?

0:13:19.3 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Dr. Bryant. Ben Bryant, he's no longer alive. And Dr. Erickson, those were the two professors in Wood Forest Products that were there. And so while that was happening we had rented our house to a person who said he was a doctor in Rapid City, got a phone call from a friend who said, "Your house burned last night." The short story is we found out the guy was a phony. He got a bunch of furniture on free and he set our house on fire with gasoline and it kind of ["poof" sound] pushed all the walls out. So here we are, poor students going to school. And so my wife flew back there to take care of that. And we finally got that all ironed out and got it repaired and the house sold. But in the interim, I got an offer to go to Forest Products Lab at Madison, Wisconsin to go to a lab. And so I took that and in '61 transferred to Madison and spent '61 to March of '64 back there.

0:14:20.2 James Wall: Well, was it a nice change to go from rough and tumble South Dakota to a cool little college town?

0:14:28.2 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Yeah. Cool little college town, yeah. Forest Products Lab, if you were a Wood Technologist in the Forest Service at that time, that was the Mecca to be working at. There was so much Research going on there.

0:14:39.5 James Wall: Was it paired with University of Wisconsin?

0:14:42.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: It's not connected with it. It's on the campus right nearby and the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation is right nearby. So it's a headquarters, there's a lot of Research going on and the lab is big. There were hundreds and hundreds of people working at the lab at that time. Everything from pulp and paper. They had their own sawmill. They had a small pulp mill. If you haven't been there it's worth the time.

0:15:11.8 James Wall: So in the sixties or at the time when you were getting to Madison, what was the biggest goal of wood science at the time? Obviously, you wanna squeeze every... Figure out what you can do with wood, the quality of it. What can you gain from it? But was there something specific you were working on?

0:15:29.3 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Two things, and it would answer your question. One is, at that time they were looking around the United States and timber sizes were changing quite a bit. And the American Society for Testing Materials that sets the standards of strength for select lumber right on down to all the grades of lumber was recognizing that timber types in the woods were changing. We were cutting smaller trees. We didn't have as many big trees with lots of clear wood, bigger knots and more knots. So they developed what's called the National Log and Tree Grade Program, the National Log and Tree Grade Program. And I was assigned to work on that. And so we began to make studies back there, 'cause we were more in the hardwood country, studies on: What's the recovery? What are you going to get out of a particular log relative to the product? And so that's what the big assignment was at that time, National Log and Tree Grade program. And so I worked on several kinds of studies like that at the lab during that time.

0:16:33.2 James Wall: And so how do you establish that particular conclusion? I mean, assuming you're taking samples from different forests, right? And then take me through the process for the layman.

0:16:44.5 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Okay. Yeah. There's two people you will be interviewing. One is Gene Pong, the other is Tom Snellgrove. And they are in this same mode. So they might even add to this story for you. So if you want to know what is a particular log, you can just look at any one of these trees out here, there's different size branches on those trees. So what we would do if we're talking about, say ponderosa pine, we want to do some log and tree grade studies on ponderosa pine. We would go into the woods and we would pick a sample of a hundred to a hundred-and-fifty trees, all sizes, all conditions. And we would mark those trees. We would have them logged. And when the tree is on the ground we'd mark them, so we knew this log came from this tree and this position in the tree. The logs then were taken to a sawmill at some point in time and laid out in the sawmill yard.

0:17:38.7 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: And we would have staff from say the local forest who would... We'd do what's called diagramming every single log. Now you'd have a sixteen-foot log or thirty-two quadrants. And we would mark every knot, every size of that knot by quadrants on that log. So now we knew what the outside of the log looked like. And of course this is before a lot of computer work. So we're looking at a lot of hand work. So we would have, some of the people you've probably have already interviewed, worked on "Mill Recovery Studies". That's what they were called. And so then when that log went through the mill we knew its number and every piece of lumber that came out of that we knew where it came from in that log. So when we were all through here's these logs all stacked together, I could tell you what the value of lumber that came out of that log, that log, that log. Then you begin to relate that in Research to the size of the knots to other defects that you have on the tree. And so then you could put a value on it. Now you're a sawmill owner, you're gonna buy a million, couple million board feet.

0:18:46.0 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: So what's that worth? The Forest Service would have done a cruise through the timber to tell you how much grade one logs, grade two, or whatever the grading system was. And then you could say, "Okay, I could bid this much for this log." I'm another lumberman and I say, "I think you're wrong. I'm going to raise your bid on a million board feet by a nickel or whatever." And so that information became the process for selling timber for the Forest Service. At the same time, we're developing maybe a new set of log grades to redefine what the best looking log looks like. And so we could do that with plywood too. We got it down so we could actually tell you that that piece of green veneer or dry veneer that came out of a log, what its grade

was and where it was in the tree.

0:19:33.8 James Wall: Wow.

0:19:35.3 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: That's what Mill Recovery Studies and Log and Tree Grade Program developed.

0:19:38.2 James Wall: When I interviewed Gene, your old buddy, he was talking about the big battle that he had waged with Louisiana Pacific and that they were always claiming that the Forest Service was cheating them and that they weren't. And he described a outrageously complicated, labor intensive process that he went through to prove them wrong. And it sounded kind of similar to what you were saying, like grading every piece of wood, tracking that log. So you were doing similar work.

0:20:12.7 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: It's identical. Once I got transferred out here to the Northwest, the first five years we worked under a project leader, Paul Lane, and we ran studies. Our work territory was from Fairbanks to Alamagordo, New Mexico, to the Black Hills. That's all Western softwood. So we were running studies on every Western softwood species in the Western United States. So under Paul Lane and [Tom] Snellgrove and [Gene] Pong and other people, and I was on the staff. Well when Paul retired, I got the project leader job. So Snellgrove and Pong both worked on my staff doing exactly what Pong described. And I imagine what Snellgrove will describe, though he will take you a little further into some of the work that he had probably related to recovery of dead timber. As you know, there's lots of dead timber.

0:21:04.0 James Wall: So, was there always an adversarial relationship with the sawmill owners and the companies and the Forest Service?

0:21:11.3 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I guess. Probably always their intensity is going to vary. Certainly Gene is right about that. We had some really hard times with a couple of interesting companies like that.

0:21:25.3 James Wall: Okay. I see.

0:21:25.4 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Yeah.

0:21:26.6 James Wall: So, how do you then progress from there? So does that study, that essential category of the study then take up the whole career? Or is that a through line?

0:21:39.0 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: The Timber Quality Research Project and the Log and Tree Grade Program continued on. Snellgrove took my job after I retired and it began to change a little bit with the spotted owl and the great reduction of harvesting of timber out here in the Northwest. It went from billions of board feet down to just fractions of that, as you know, during the spotted owl era. So that effort pretty well tailed down. And I think it's to this day and age you probably will not find mill recovery studies taking place anywhere. When I was at Madison Lab, one of the people there had the assignment to develop the recovery from real small timber. How much can you get out of, say, a six or seven-inch log? And how do you optimize it when you have it in the sawmill to get the most you can out of that log? And so that was ongoing and became computerized so that now many of the small mills are completely computerized. That computer looks at that log, knows how

to position it so it can get two 2x4's into 1x2 or whatever. All of that stuff kind of worked together. It was all part of the same effort.

0:22:46.7 James Wall: And so, how long were you at Madison?

0:22:49.0 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I was only there three-and-a-half years.

0:22:51.5 James Wall: I see. And then you moved to...

0:22:53.3 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Came out here, I got assigned out here under Paul Lane, in his project of the National Log and Tree Grade Program. I worked, that would be '64. I don't remember the exact year that Paul retired and I became project leader, but say it was probably in the early '70s. I don't remember the exact date that happened.

0:23:11.5 James Wall: How long had he been with the outfit?

0:23:14.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Have I?

0:23:16.2 James Wall: No, Paul.

0:23:17.6 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Oh, Paul...

0:23:19.1 James Wall: He must've been an old timer.

0:23:19.2 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Yeah, Paul was... He had probably a thirty-five year career, just like a lot of us during that era of time did. And he came from back east and then got assigned out here and retired. And then like Snellgrove and Pong and others in that project, we continued to work and travel around the mills in the Western United States. You can't beat a better job than that [chuckle]. Gene Pong and I like to remember sitting on the wharf at Petersburg, Alaska, where you could buy a twenty-five pound bag of already cooked Alaska shrimp, sit there and drink beer and eat shrimp and throw the shells away. [laughter]

0:24:00.7 James Wall: Wow. Yeah. That sounds like a pretty good job.

0:24:02.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: When we were in Alaska on some of the studies, like the big Sitka spruce studies of recovery of sawmills, we have to have a rifle. Every two people had to have a rifle with them. So I could, in those days, I could get on an airplane here in Portland with my 30-06, the bolt would be out of the rifle, walk up the counter, show them that the bolt's out, take it, get on the airplane and give it to at that time, the stewardess, flight attendant today, she'd set it in the coat closet. And I got off the airport in Juneau one time, I'm walking off with my rifle on the shoulder and there's the governor of Alaska walking around with a rifle on his shoulder. He was going hunting, but we had to have a rifle in the woods with us because of the brown bear and grizzly.

0:24:50.7 James Wall: Probably you couldn't get away with that today.

0:24:52.3 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Well, they still have rifles. But, Yeah, but you travel differently.

[laughter]

0:24:55.6 James Wall: Usually, you wouldn't be able to use it as a carry on.

0:25:00.8 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: No.

0:25:00.9 James Wall: Wow. So as you're traveling around, you're going to the specific mill.

0:25:05.6 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Yes.

0:25:06.0 James Wall: I'm thinking through it. And you're then, what, you're teaching them how to maximize their lumber or you're conducting sample studies of...

0:25:14.2 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: We're conducting, putting those hundred and a hundred-and-fifty trees and all the logs through the sawmill to help to get to production. It involves, if we're talking sawmills, the Western Wood Products Association, or the WWPA, the lumber-grading people cooperated with us. The mill people certainly had to cooperate because we might put fifteen to twenty Forest Service employees in the mill with lumber cranes to mark the lumber or whatever. Definitely low-tech science. And I guess you'd call it applied science at its best. We did some other things that were a little less applied and more technical, but I like to think of it as a working science. What we did, what got applied really quickly.

0:25:58.6 James Wall: Yeah. It wasn't some theoretical stuff.

0:26:02.6 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Not much. Not like a lot of wood technologists, where you're working on wood chemistry or some of those other areas, you know.

0:26:07.6 James Wall: I think Research is the forgotten arm of the Forest Service because you just hear Research if you're a layman and you're like, "Oh, well, I don't know. I couldn't possibly know."

0:26:20.6 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Yeah.

0:26:21.5 James Wall: But yeah, it seems like it's applied. It's straightforward.

0:26:24.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: You probably recognize this, probably less than ten percent of the Forest Service employees are Research. They're a lot smaller number.

0:26:30.0 James Wall: What was it like in the agency as a whole being in that small sliver? Because some people in Research that I've interviewed on this trip, they would notice when they went to conventions and things like that, some folks didn't consider them to be true Forest Service or they didn't even sort of give them that level of respect. How did you find yourself to be greeted by other members of the agency who were outside of Research?

0:26:57.8 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: We were kind of insulated from that effect. It is true and it still goes on today. In a whole career, you will hear people say, "Well, Research, yeah, but you know you're in the lab, you're not part of the woods." But there's a lot of scientists in the Corvallis Forest Products Lab Research Group. They're out in the field, whether they're pathologists or

entomologists, they're out in the field. So there is some on-ground recognition by the on-ground National Forest System people that there is Research going on. But what happened in this area of my career, we had such involvement with the National Forest System. First, we had to go to a ranger district to select those logs. They had to make a timber sale of our trees specifically to the mill we wanted to work with. The mill had to agree to buy that. So over the years, because we had such a good relationship, I've always been really comfortable with being with National Forest System people. As you remember, down at Tahoe, where we both were for the reunion, there were very few of us on that Research side. But personally I know a lot of people on the NFS [National Forest System] side, while others do not.

0:28:14.3 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Here's an example of how isolated some scientists are from NFS. Madison, Wisconsin, Forest Products Lab. We had a field tour for the chemists. There's a lot of chemists who are working at the lab on wood chemistry related to all kinds of things that come out of the silos. So we took them up to a National Forest. We took them up on a field trip. So I'm out in the woods talking about knots and what we do in the log recovery studies. And that, you know, "Here's a branch and you cut the tree down and then you cut that log into boards and there's a knot hole." I'll never forget this chemist said, "That's where knots come from. They're branches." So, talk about being insulated. I thought, "Yeah, there's a good example." [laughter]

0:29:05.4 James Wall: Wow. So yeah, there are, so there are folks in the Research who are sort of siloed and in their own little scientific worlds.

0:29:15.1 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Good word, siloed.

0:29:15.2 James Wall: Yeah.

0:29:15.7 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Good word, yeah.

0:29:17.0 James Wall: Who runs the Research arm of the Forest Service? I'm assuming there's a Director of Research for every region.

0:29:26.3 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Yes. Just like State and Private, National Forest System, Research has an Associate Chief who's responsible for that particular area. Then you go down in Research, you go down to a Station Director. That's like a Regional Forester. Then you go down to a National Forest System that might be a Project Leader or a Program Manager or a Deputy Station Director, depending on how they do it. And you get clear down in our generic way of looking at job levels, the District Ranger who's responsible for a particular Ranger District on a National Forest is comparable to a Project Leader in Research. So that's how the system has worked to keep equity in career advancement.

0:30:17.8 James Wall: So, as you climb the ladder, is it sort of the same thing where you start out in Research and you work your way up to Research to the management level? Or do they bring management in from other parts of NFS and places like that? Or like, in other words, was your boss also a scientist?

0:30:35.1 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Yes.

0:30:36.5 James Wall: Understood what was at stake?

0:30:39.4 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: In that period of time, in my career period of time, almost always you had that situation happening. Today, there's more visibility of bringing in people who don't have the science background. But in Research, we didn't have to take a transfer if we didn't want to. In National Forest System's side, if you don't want to get transferred to another ranger district and you do that two or three times, your career's really been dampened. In Research, because a lot of studies are long-term, they're not just a today's study and gone tomorrow, they may be five or ten years. And scientists like to stay and follow their work. So, most scientists in Research do not have the kind of record of five, ten, fifteen moves that the families in the National Forest System had. And that creates a big difference. You've seen how close some of these families are that lived on the XYZ Ranger District together. They still talk about raising their kids and everything. And they, like Andy Mason, they bump into each other all over the United States. Research missed that. And that's the disconnect from feeling like you're really part of the Forest Service. Because you're in a lab.

0:31:57.0 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: And many times, some scientists probably have ten percent of their connection is with the National Forest System. And the other eighty or ninety percent might be with the university scientists. So you're right on that. You had that down right.

0:32:14.4 James Wall: Wow. Yeah, I guess that's something I didn't consider is that there is that bond of the constant moving because the people in NFS were always moving. Their "family-family" was not even as big of a bond as their actual...

0:32:29.4 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: True. True.

0:32:30.5 James Wall: Forest Service family in a lot of places. So you finished the rest of your career in the Portland Research Station, is that right?

0:32:41.0 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Yeah, basically, yes. As your careers change and opportunities come along, I got offered to be a Deputy Director in charge of Outreach and Information Transfer. I went to another deputy job where I was worrying about the budget. And then I was also writing line items for the Forest Service budget. I spent a lot of time under station director [Charlie] Philpot, who just lives above me about a mile from here, going to Washington, DC in December and sitting down with a senator or a representative or their staff and explaining why we want this $60,000 or this $100,000 to go to this particular scientist to work on this issue. And so that, during the budget period. So I did a lot of writing of budget items. And then the last three years, I got the job of Deputy Station Director, which was really, that was a cool job. It was fun to be a Deputy Director.

0:33:39.4 James Wall: What percentage of the Forest Service budget is cut out for Research?

0:33:44.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I don't know that answer today, but I would say we were probably sitting at ten percent. A lot of the money that Research got came from the National Forest System. For example, some of the money that's been used on thinning and these kinds of things, there were opportunities for Research to draw chunks of that money out. And we certainly took advantage of it. For example, I had the Wood Energy Program for a while, trying to use wood as an energy source. And Bonneville Power was a great partner in that. And we received, my work unit received hundreds of thousands of dollars over the period of time for working with Bonneville,

trying to increase or get use of logs, timber as a wood source.

0:34:39.5 James Wall: So, is there cross pollination there between, like is Louisiana Pacific, and Bonneville, these private corporations, were they subsidizing any research within the Forest Service?

0:34:53.3 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I don't think so. I may be wrong. Weyerhaeuser had a pretty strong research program, of their own. Louisiana Pacific, which, of course, is changed now. Simpson Timber Company up in Washington. These folks, they put a lot of money into research at universities, but I don't remember getting any money through them for our projects. Now, some of these, what should I say, the more basic research— pathology, entomology—they may have supported something through the university, like at Corvallis, Oregon State University, which has a forestry program. And we have a big lab, a very big lab there. They may have been some competent... I do not know.

0:35:46.4 James Wall: So were there people who started in the Forest Service and then got poached by private industry or, you know, could you make a lot more money, in other words, doing research at Weyerhaeuser? I'm assuming you probably could. Right?

0:36:01.1 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I would think.

0:36:03.5 James Wall: At Weyerhaeuser and Louisiana Pacific. Did you know people who made that switch?

0:36:05.5 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Very few made that switch. There's something about having a connect to your own research. In the Forest Service you could find a research item or project if it was of enough interest to the National Forest System, to the land. You could quite often sell a need to do that. And I don't know if it worked that well, whether it worked that well or not in private industry.

0:36:31.9 James Wall: Alright. So outside of these wood quality studies that you were doing, what other projects took up your time over the years?

0:36:42.4 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: In work?

0:36:42.4 James Wall: Mm-hmm.

0:36:46.3 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Well, I had Fire Research for a while and the Fire Research Team, that was back in the '80s when they were doing a lot of slash burning. And the Forest Service was getting criticized for people coming from New Jersey or wherever and coming out to be able to see Mount Hood. But you couldn't see it because there was so much smoke. In fact, if we were looking at a clear day, you would be able to see Mount Hood off in the distance between a couple of big fir trees off in the distance there. So if you would come out to see the beautiful Northwest and it's all smoked in. So we had a project where the scientists at that time, most of them were out of Seattle, were trying to figure out how do you minimize the amount of smoke and particulate that comes from flash fires? Can you build the pile differently? Can you burn differently? Is there a better wind time to burn? And so that was interesting to do that, too. During the Wood Energy Program, I had a staff, I had a scientist, George Sampson, who was in Fairbanks because we had a

lab up there. And we were interested in how about using some of these massive areas of small black or white spruce in Alaska off there, you know, just little tiny guys.

0:38:05.0 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: How about just using some of those for firewood? So it was a pretty gross project that somebody wanted done and we were, the station was asked to do it. So my staff, so we selected twenty acres of small timber, a little tree, seven, eight inches, maybe thirty feet tall. Who knows how old they were. And two giant crawler tractors.

0:38:30.2 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: And a logging chain about 200 feet long, anchor chain from a ship. It's on the ground and these two big tractors hooked to it, started across the flat ground of the southeast of Alaska up there out of Fairbanks. And it's called chaining. They knocked down everything. We did that on twenty acres to see if that's a way you could produce, yeah, it's gross. To see if you could produce wood easily to have a power plant up there. So anyway, that came to naught.

0:39:08.0 James Wall: Tell me more about this Wood Energy Program. What general years was this being pitched?

0:39:14.5 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: During the energy crisis in the '70s. That sort of thing.

0:39:18.5 James Wall: I was about to guess, during the Carter and Reagan years. So the idea, the general idea is that we can use wood in the same way we use coal and nuclear and all these other forms of energy to supplement factories or an industry?

0:39:39.1 **Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.:** Have a small power plant that would produce five, ten, fifteen megawatts. There's a garbage burning plant down here at Brooks, Oregon that I think produces five or 10 megawatts of power. There's a wood burning plant out of Colville, Washington, up near where you're going to head up to Wenatchee, that uses wood things. So another way is you've got all this dead timber sitting around in the woods. Nothing's happening to it. It's falling down. How about if we burn it and produce power?

0:40:05.5 James Wall: Yeah, I mean, I could see that. But if the minute you start really cutting wood to then use it as an energy source, you're having to discount the amount of energy it takes to cut all that wood down versus the amount of energy, the piddling amount of energy you might squeeze out of it in a plant, right?

0:40:24.4 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: That's right.

0:40:24.9 James Wall: Is that what was the end of it?

0:40:28.0 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Well that's probably what killed it. You know, killed the whole idea of having massive wood energy programs. Because that was a fiasco idea that...

0:40:37.1 James Wall: Who proposed that?

0:40:38.7 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: The State of Alaska wanted to try it. So that's how it started. So we were asked to do it. So we took on the assignment and it did not take long to realize, well, first all the critters that came out of there flushed out. It was messy.

0:40:52.8 James Wall: I'm sure the wildlife folks, biologists must've had a fit looking at this.

0:41:00.0 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: It was a disaster. [chuckle] There are other disasters. You ever heard of the heliostat? The Heliostat Program started back in New Jersey. Piasecki was one of the pioneers of double rotor helicopters like Sikorsky. Piasecki was a brilliant helicopter design person. He got the idea of using a balloon with a helicopter on each four corners to come out, to come from where the Hindenburg burned, the same site. I've been in that site and in the building there. So he talked a congressman or a senator into getting the Navy to carving out money from the Navy's budget, which came to the Forest Service to do a Heliostat program. So Piasecki had one of the big old blips. He was going to build a frame to hang a helicopter on each corner, fly that sucker clear across the United States, come up to the Wind River Experimental Forest up in Wenatchee, up just across over by Mount Adams over there, and do logging so you didn't have to build roads. Well, guess which project got charged, because at that time, I had responsibility for the Wind River Experimental Forest. My assignment at that time was also at Experimental Forest, was to find a site where he could log.

0:42:42.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: So it came clear from the chief's office because it came down through the Secretary of Agriculture that we're going to do this. So we went back there one time...

0:42:53.5 James Wall: What year was this?

0:42:55.6 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Oh, let's see.

0:42:55.6 James Wall: General? Ballpark.

0:42:58.2 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Oh, it must have been the late '80s I think it was. No, or maybe early '80s. I don't remember the exact date. I'd asked Dave Stack if he has any of the tapes. I've got one of the three tapes of what I'll talk to you about a little later of the actual trial flight. So I had an engineer, Mike Lambert, and I've been trying to locate Mike because I don't know where he is now. After he left, Mike Lambert and others on my staff, we flew back to the New Jersey Hindenburg site and went into the building and met with Piasecki and his engineers. I'll never forget Mike Lambert, who was in his own right an engineer. We walked in and there's all these people working at a desk like engineers do. And we met with Piasecki and he's talking about this. And there's the blimp sitting in the big Hindenburg same music thing and pipes all around there.

0:43:52.1 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: And Mike said to me, "Dick, that's just irrigation aluminum." That is not Air Force. That is not air-grade aluminum. And I look at some of the pieces of paper that these people are writing on. They don't have any idea what they're doing. They're not engineers. So we carefully passed this on. But the powers, nobody stopped it. So they built the thing. They built the aluminum, the frame and all the thing, hung the helicopter on it. One helicopter had a pilot in it to control all the others. They took the thing off. It flew, I don't know, a few hundred yards. All came apart, killed the pilot. And I have one of the three known, I own one of the three known videos of that. And I haven't given it up to Dave Stack yet because I want to make sure that sucker's protected. There's a yellow jacket. Be careful where you put your hand here. He's on this thing here. Okay. Anyway, that's the heliostat story. Interesting time in my career too.

0:44:56.5 James Wall: So the idea was that you're going to have four helicopters. What's the

balloon for?

0:45:00.2 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Lift.

0:45:05.6 James Wall: And they're just going to go into a forest that has no roads and...

0:45:08.5 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Drop down from the balloon, something to pick up logs, fly the logs someplace and you don't have to... Yes. You're shaking your head right.

0:45:17.8 James Wall: [laughter] That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard of.

0:45:20.3 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Oh, we all shook our head. But the point is, it came down the pipeline that we did this.

0:45:28.2 James Wall: So, was that the dumbest idea, the biggest fail?

0:45:33.1 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: That was a dumb one, but it was the most outrageous. [laughter]

0:45:35.6 James Wall: So that was a politician leaning on the Forest Service essentially to try this idea. So the Forest Service likes to say, it's not political, but obviously, that's not accurate. Like there are times in which politicians can get things done.

0:45:54.5 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Well, you went through the Spotted Owl era, you've heard about that, talk about politics.

0:46:00.6 James Wall: So, how often would that happen in your career where you would basically get an idea and you say, "Well, where'd this idea come from?" "Oh, the governor of so and so really wants to try this out."

0:46:12.4 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I can't speak for other disciplines, other disciplines being entomology, right on down to all the other disciplines. But in the products era, because we were dealing with private industry all the time, that's who we worked with, it probably happened. I don't have any numbers, six times, one time, but there's two or three, like chaining logs and chaining down trees in Fairbanks and this tree. Now that logging system, that Wyssen Skyline Crane, that had merit. That was the one that when I was a student, I worked on as a student, that had merit.

0:46:48.0 James Wall: Remind me, what was that?

0:46:50.4 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Okay, what I talked about in Fraser, Colorado, my summer jobs, the Wyssen Skyline system, which is the logging system with the cable, the normal cable line, that had merit. These other two, they were adventures. James, they were just plain adventures. [chuckle]

0:47:08.5 James Wall: The anchor one, was that just because somebody said we have a ship anchor in Fairbanks with a huge chain attached to it, ready to go, that might work, right? Or was there some scientific merit behind the idea that a huge anchor could knock down trees with less...

0:47:28.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: It's not an anchor, it's just a big chain pulled by two giant crawler tractors. I think there was a lot of interest at that time with the energy crisis about using wood for power and less coal, less oil. Along that era, we had the giant wreck of an oil tanker up there in Southeast, in Alaska. A lot of the guys up there got involved in that cleanup mess and the damage. So, I don't know, I think that's the world of politics and research. Sometimes they're married, sometimes they're divorced. [chuckle]

0:48:10.5 James Wall: So those were the biggest failures. What were the biggest successes over your tenure over the last fifty, sixty years of the research? What can we point to as the, here's the thing that we really changed quite a bit?

0:48:28.1 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I think we made a contribution in what the mills expect out of timber as they buy millions and millions of board feet and lumber and being able to more accurately predict what they're going to make as a product yield. So, product yield to me, that was a great time. And the Forest Service, we were strongly supported by that, by industry because we'd go in there and take over a mill for three or four days. And so it was good at that time.

0:48:53.8 James Wall: I guess that's one of the rare cases of you both have skin in the game because you don't want to over-cut and they don't want to have to over-cut. They want to know what they're getting.

0:49:06.5 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: If I buy this tree and we're going to make 10 bucks off of it or am I going to lose $5? You know, that kind of a thing.

0:49:15.4 James Wall: Did Research or did NFS, whoever is in charge of it, get better at looking at a forest and identifying zones where, "Okay, here's where we should cut, here's where we shouldn't cut, those trees aren't going to give you anything without having to take samples," like, you know, just sort of knowing what's on the Willamette or wherever?

0:49:37.3 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Yeah, I see your point, but you have to think, National Forest Systems have a program of so much harvest they have to do. And, you know, the Senate tells the Forest Service, "Here's the money, you need to produce this much timber." So each National Forest, each Ranger District has a cutting plan and where they're going to cut, how they're going to manage that piece of ground. So I don't think at that point in time when they make the decision in a forest plan that timber quality comes into play. It comes into play when finally we say, "We're going to sell this 52 acres with the 6.9 million board feet on it. And we're going to price it at $60 a thousand board feet." And I, as a mill owner can say, "$69, I could, that's good. I could pay 72 on that." And so we sit, you and I sit across the table with other buyers and we bid on what that timber is going to sell for. So I think we've always felt that, my staff and the crew, we always felt like we made contributions in those areas.

0:50:37.4 James Wall: Before your research came about and your projects, was the Forest Service getting underbid? Like, in other words, like, did the Forest Service not have that information? And so they were selling a lot of timber that probably was a lot more quality at a lower price or, you know, vice versa? How did you, do you think the Forest Service was making probably a better return on timber sales after you became a little bit better at telling them what they could get out of it?

0:51:10.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I think the agency had a better handle on what timber values were worth. As I said earlier in the sixties, they were recognizing that timber sizes were changing. And so, maybe some places, the bid was too high. But industry was not unaware either. I mean, they knew what certain kinds of logs would yield. They didn't have it maybe tweaked real finely, but they certainly knew what they could afford to bid on this million board feet. So they may have been, in some ways been ahead of the Forest Service.

0:51:45.0 James Wall: Yeah. Although it seems like Research at Weyerhaeuser and Research at the Forest Service have two different sets of motivations where, if I were really just a capitalist and I wanted my researchers, basically I would be telling them, I don't care what you do. As long as you look at the same forest as the Forest Service. And if they say it's worth 70 bucks, you tell them it's worth 60. Right? And you come up with a way to justify that scientifically.

0:52:15.8 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Well, certainly the Forest Service is not going to change... The Forest Service is not going to change its value system based on what Weyerhaeuser scientists tell them. But the Weyerhaeuser, they would run their own studies because a lot of their land, a lot of their timber is coming off their own lands as opposed to this many hundreds of little mills that, not little mills, but all size of mills that had to buy National Forest or Bureau of Land Management timber. And the BLM was a partner in all these studies too. Bureau of Land Management was a partner in this. Because they own a lot of timber too. So I think if Weyerhaeuser thinks, or any mill that's buying, that if they think the Forest Service overbid, they just don't bid on the timber unless they're desperate. Unless to keep the mill operating, I got to have logs to keep my mill going.

0:53:11.5 James Wall: Yeah. I mean, well a lot of timber towns are no more now in Oregon and that's the story of Region Six.

0:53:15.6 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: It is. And Region One, Montana, Idaho, same way.

0:53:19.9 James Wall: Yeah. So it's kind of in a lot of ways, not a dying industry, but it's definitely different than it was. What is the state of that research now? You said that this is not necessarily research that's front first and foremost in the outfit.

0:53:37.0 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Yeah. You really have to look hard to find those kinds of studies going on anywhere in Forest Service Research right now.

0:53:40.4 James Wall: Is that because we got to a point where objectively, we sort of figured out how to grade woods so well that we can just efficiently figure that out?

0:53:50.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I think more than knowing how to grade logs, it's more of we're not cutting as much timber and we're cutting smaller timber with lower values.

0:53:57.3 James Wall: I see.

0:54:00.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: We're cutting a lot less timber in this United States as we were used to. Too bad you couldn't catch somebody like Bob Devlin and [Bob] Tokarczyk. These are the people who set the timber sale information in their forest. That's something worth pursuing for them.

0:54:15.5 James Wall: Yeah. Tokarczyk, he's still on the list, tomorrow.

0:54:19.0 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Good.

0:54:19.3 James Wall: So I'll try to ask him about that. So when did you begin to see the light at the end of the career tunnel? You said that most people served about thirty-five years, right? Was that just getting your pension years?

0:54:33.2 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: It became personal to me because my wife and I had this goal of, as I said, of taking pack trips with our own pack stock in every wilderness in the Western United States. So someplace when I was about 55 or someplace, I thought, "I'm going to go to 58 and then we're going to retire." So we did. So I retired on the Fourth of July, 1992. And a week later, we were in the middle of the Bob Marshall Wilderness where I had volunteered to work on a cabin restoration project. And my wife was actually ended up baking bread on a wood, like that wood stove in the house here, for the fire crew. So we spent three or four days doing that. And from there on, my volunteering with the Forest Service on pack trips continued. So I've got thirty years of volunteering and thirty-eight years of career. [chuckle]

0:55:33.4 James Wall: Well, yeah, a lot of good volunteers or good foresters become volunteers. Do you think if you hadn't done Research, you could have been a good Forest Service Packer?

0:55:41.2 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I don't think that would have been my choice. [laughter]

0:55:44.8 James Wall: Because then it would have been a job.

0:55:46.2 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: See, yeah, it would have been a job. And I'd have missed out. You know, I got to go to Oxford, England one time to present a technical paper to the, there's an organization called International Union of Forest Research Organizations, it's called IUFRO. One of my Research papers got selected and I got to go over there and make... You'd have missed that. See, I'd have missed that sort of thing.

0:56:08.5 James Wall: So, '92, you retired, doing a lot of volunteering. Now you're helping with the museum and all this stuff. So, looking back, what's been the best part of working for the Forest Service, you think? What's the thing that you miss the most about the job?

0:56:27.5 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Probably just the great people I interacted with and traveled with. They're still dear friends as you observed with Pong and you'll find out with Snellgrove. We became all just really close because we spent so much time together. And James, I had one of those jobs, I swear, there wasn't a day in my life I didn't like going to work, going forward, because it was so darn much fun. Think about a work territory, Fairbanks to Alamagordo, New Mexico, to the Black Hills. That's a travel job. [laughter]

0:57:00.2 James Wall: That's a good part of the country to see.

0:57:00.8 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Yeah.

0:57:01.7 James Wall: They didn't have you going around to, you know, flat land parts of the country.

0:57:07.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Not very often. [chuckle]

0:57:09.3 James Wall: So was there one mentor that sticks out to where, you know, this is the person that kept you on the path and you might have gone in a different direction, that shaped your philosophy?

0:57:22.0 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Great question. I like that question. And I'm happy to answer that because it makes me think about it. There are three. One was Dr. Ben Bryant when I worked on my master's degree at the University of Washington. He was a student's professor. I mean, he was so solid in his relationships and he encouraged me and helped me. I talked about that fire and loss there. He helped me find some money to be able to get that year done. He was a great person. As a student, I had... A name jumped out of my head. I'll come back to it. He was Ed Kotok. He was a wood technologist at the Rocky Mountain Station. And he was our boss on that job at the Wyssen Skyline logging. He told me, he said, "Dick, you're going to have 25,000 ideas in your life of things you could do, write them down." So I started that. I put a notebook by my bed in the middle of the night I'd think, "Oh, that's an idea." And I'd write it down. Sometimes I couldn't even read what I wrote in the morning. But one of those ideas ended up being a... I formed a corporation out of it.

0:58:36.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: And I'll show you that when we're finished. I'll talk about what that was, give you a sample of it. So, Ed Kotok. And the last one would be Link Miller. Link Miller was the deputy. He was Assistant Station Director for the Rocky Mountain Station. And Link's solid advice, along with Harold Mitchell, my boss at Forest Products Lab, all were encouraging, encouraging, encouraging and said, "Never, never, never, never fail to take advantage of opportunities." And so those four people, they were good for me.

0:59:13.5 James Wall: Okay. Flip that question. Is there somebody that you mentored that means a lot to you? Because one of the things about the Forest Service is that somebody said once that the Forest Service is one of the rare agencies where you groom somebody to take your job. And there's not a lot of animosity about it, because you want to make sure that when you leave your job, that somebody comes in and they do it just as well, probably better than you did. You know?

0:59:46.0 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Absolutely, better.

0:59:48.3 James Wall: Is there anybody that came up after you that you think about?

0:59:48.7 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Two people. You met one today, sitting right here. [Cindy Miner] She worked for me, I hired her, worked for me. She has a great background. And she ended up having my jobs. The other one, who you're going to interview on Saturday, is Tom Snellgrove. If I thought I might have mentored anybody or did a little bit of mentoring, whatever that means, that would be him. Then there's a technician, Dale Wireman, who would have been a good interview. I wish I'd included Dale in this week. Dale never dressed nicely. And I, you know, in those days, if you went to the office, you wore a sport coat and a tie.

1:00:29.1 **Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.:** And so I would always give Dale a hard time about how he dressed. So when I retired and we had a great retirement party, Dale came with a suit and tie. And he said, "Dick, this is for you." [chuckle] So, maybe Snellgrove and Wireman, maybe I influenced their lives a little tiny bit.

1:00:48.0 James Wall: I see. A question I always ask is if you could go back in time to when you were first starting out in the Forest Service, knowing what you know now and give yourself a piece of advice.

1:01:02.6 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Relative to my...

1:01:02.9 James Wall: And say, "Dick, here's what you want to know... "

1:01:05.4 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Relative to my job?

1:01:07.1 James Wall: Relative to how to make it in your chosen field. And you say you need to know this and don't do what you're thinking. What would that be?

1:01:17.4 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I probably would like to have had a stint in the Washington office. I turned down three of them. And in fact, when I go back there on details, I always wore cowboy boots. I wanted them to know I belonged in the West. I think that would have been a good point for my career. But the thing is, there's no guarantee you could come back to the West. You might get transferred to New England or on a station up there or someplace else. And that was not going to happen to Dick Woodfin.

1:01:48.6 James Wall: So, Research, because in NFS, if you want to be a [Forest] Supervisor, you go to DC, or you have to go to DC. I mean, there are a few people who have not had to do that. But by and large, that's the thing. Is that the same with Research, where if you want to go up, you had to go to DC?

1:02:02.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: No, no. Now, if you want to get to be a Station Director, if that was one of your goals, then that would be yes. But I got, I was Deputy Station Director, got to be Deputy Director. Did you ever interview Philpot? Was he a person you interviewed?

1:02:18.4 James Wall: No, because I think he had had about three interviews.

1:02:21.1 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Charlie lives above me here, about a mile.

1:02:24.6 James Wall: You got just your whole staff. You keep them close.

[laughter]

1:02:29.2 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: He was my boss. He has a fabulous career, but he's been interviewed. And there's a document, a printed document that I think the Forest History Association Society has that certainly should be attached to whatever you're pulling together as interviews.

1:02:44.2 James Wall: Okay.

1:02:48.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: So anyway, good person.

1:02:53.4 James Wall: All right.

1:02:54.6 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: That's about it.

1:02:56.3 James Wall: Last question. Oh, well, I always ask favorite district, but, you know, with Research, it's not as big of a question. But what was your favorite station? I'm assuming maybe Portland, but maybe it was somewhere else?

1:03:05.9 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: Well, only really only have three. I have the Rapid City and the lab and here. And they're all so different. I couldn't pick.

1:03:12.2 James Wall: Yeah. Yeah.

1:03:17.4 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: It was a great career, James, just a great career. I'm still excited about it. It's thirty years ago. [chuckle]

1:03:23.5 James Wall: It sounds like it. Well, last question is, always, what does the Forest Service mean to you? You know, now that you're on the other side of it, you can look back at it as an agency, a force in your life. You know, what do you feel about it when you think about the Forest Service?

1:03:38.6 Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.: I'm proud to have been a Forest Service employee, yeah. To me, people say, "Oh, you work for the government." I said, "No, I work for the Forest Service." It felt differently. I don't know that people today can say that.