



An Interview with Tom Snellgrove  
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**0:00:05.0 James Wall:** Could you tell me when and where you were born?

**0:00:07.2 Tom Snellgrove:** I was born in Centerville, Louisiana, which is the south end of the Atchafalaya Basin. I was raised for a year and a half in Bayou Chene, and we moved from the middle of the Atchafalaya Swamp to "dry land" [chuckle].

**0:00:30.8 James Wall:** So, you've still got some of the accent, but not quite the super thick Cajun accent. So, you must have not been from that far south.

**0:00:41.5 Tom Snellgrove:** I have no French blood. I go back to a group that still meets once a year for people who were raised in Bayou Chene, which meant "Oak Bayou."

**0:00:56.6 James Wall:** Wow. And tell me about your parents and your family. Were they from Louisiana?

**0:01:00.3 Tom Snellgrove:** Oh, yes, they were. My mom and dad were raised on Bayou Chene. All my siblings all remember living out in them. You're in the middle of the Atchafalaya Swamp but it was dry land and beautiful with big, large, live oaks. And beyond that, as I said, we moved when I was a year and a half out of the swamp, but still lived on the Bayou just south of Baton Rouge.

**0:01:40.0 James Wall:** I see. And was that a little bitty town outside of Baton Rouge, was it?

**0:01:45.0 Tom Snellgrove:** We were ten miles out of the little town. We lived down the Bayou.

**0:01:50.3 James Wall:** Wow. [chuckle] So, what do people do in that area to make ends meet?

**0:01:57.4 Tom Snellgrove:** Many of them worked for—as my dad—for oil companies. Many of them actually ended up working in industrial places in Baton Rouge. And it was interesting that they would carpool because that was like a twenty, thirty-mile drive. But they would carpool. And this was a long time ago before carpools became popular. We would occasionally boat pool going out to my dad's work that I often rode with a different guy on his bateau and that was just a... It was efficient. You saved money, but...

**0:02:39.0 James Wall:** Wow. So, just for the political nerd in me, do you remember Earl Long?

**0:02:46.5 Tom Snellgrove:** Oh, sure.

**0:02:47.7 James Wall:** Okay. Yeah, and the Long family was still, probably at that point, in power or at least had some grip on it, and he was...

**0:02:57.3 Tom Snellgrove:** Correct.

**0:02:58.2 James Wall:** Eccentric, to say the least. But Louisiana has that sort of eccentric, artistic flair to it.

[laughter]

**0:03:04.1 James Wall:** It always has, right?

**0:03:05.9 Tom Snellgrove:** Artistic is [chuckle] one way to...

**0:03:07.0 James Wall:** [chuckle] I guess to call it artistic it would be generous, but eccentric, flamboyant.

**0:03:12.6 Tom Snellgrove:** A guy that I actually [cough] Excuse me. That I played basketball against was James Carville. People might...

**0:03:22.1 James Wall:** The "Ragin' Cajun?"

**0:03:22.7 Tom Snellgrove:** "The economy, stupid." [laughter]

**0:03:24.0 James Wall:** The Ragin' Cajun, James Carville? [recording paused] Alright, so, James Carville, the Ragin' Cajun was in your neck of the woods. And Louisiana, though, the interesting thing, I know it's got a lot of timber, or it's got a fair amount, but you don't think of it when you think of the Forest Service. That's not the first state I would name. Right? So, how did you ever come to know of the Forest Service?

**0:03:50.0 Tom Snellgrove:** Well, I'll go back to my father, my grandfather. Both had worked in the timber industry in the Atchafalaya Swamp. They were logging cypress and tupelo [trees]. And going through high school, I wasn't sure. I was the youngest one graduating, so I was pretty young in high school. I was primarily interested in athletics, to be truthful. But my older brother had decided to go to forestry school at LSU [Louisiana State University]. And I just kind of shrugged and said, "Why not?" My first year of college, I actually ran track. I was a high hurdler at a small school in Louisiana College. And...

**0:04:36.4 James Wall:** Oh. Did you run the...

**0:04:38.3 Tom Snellgrove:** Went to LSU, realized I liked it and I had a bit of an advantage in that I knew plants. My dad, having been out in the swamp so much, I knew the hardwood trees, particularly all the "wrong names" for them. The names they had for them were not the accepted and I happened to like Latin, so I knew the scientific names. And so it was just a natural thing. Got to LSU and thought, "I'm really enjoying this." First time I really started applying myself, and it happened to be a course that I was good at, was dendrology.

**0:05:18.7 James Wall:** And was there a professor that took you under his or her wing?

**0:05:23.0 Tom Snellgrove:** Yes, Dr. Hopkins. He immediately started taking me toward the forest products side of forestry. Unfortunately, he passed away, in fact, when my second job out west that I was working in Montana. He came back, he passed away. So, then it was a bit of an issue, me going on, staying in graduate school. But the Profs really worked with me and said, "No, you're doing well, we want you," but I chose not to. They were pushing me to go on to Yale and get a PhD, and I was, to be truthful, I was too practical. I said, "No, I need to go to work." [chuckle] And I'm glad I did because I think at Yale, I would've

ended up with a different background. And as it were, my background, I have a very good background in silviculture and such in forestry. But then having the background in forest products was a great combination. And then when I applied for jobs, I think I had thirteen different offers. Because of that combination, a lot of luck. [laughter]

**0:06:52.1 James Wall:** Wow. So, the Yale path probably would've taken you a more academic direction, and you didn't want to do academia.

**0:07:00.0 Tom Snellgrove:** And not just academia. I did not want to go in, it would've taken me probably to a much more technical side of wood technology rather than forest products technology.

**0:07:11.6 James Wall:** So, different schools that we're just talking about, how different forestry schools sort of have different characters to them. Now, forest products and research, was that something that LSU was known for? What type of funnel...Where would they send most of their graduates?

**0:07:29.3 Tom Snellgrove:** At that time, no. They were known for more for general forestry, but the forest products department...I don't know how else to say, I can only compare it...When I came out west. And in that, my first job, I was just really wondering, because Oregon was, I mean, let's face it, that was a forestry school. But when I got here, what I found out was that my background in the fundamentals of just forest products and silviculture was outstanding. I took no grief from anyone. But when you came to harvesting and logging systems? Next to nothing. [laughter] If you could drive a pulpwood truck out in the woods in Louisiana, you were a logger. [laughter]

**0:08:22.5 James Wall:** Wow. So, tell me about this first job. And I always forget to ask where we are in the chronology. What year did you sort of get that first job? I'm assuming, was it a summer job?

**0:08:35.1 Tom Snellgrove:** The first job was in 1965 on the Cobalt District of the Salmon National Forest.

**0:08:42.1 James Wall:** Wow. Do you remember...

**0:08:45.3 Tom Snellgrove:** And I had never, I had quote, "never seen a mountain before." And I went straight from Louisiana, drove straight out because we didn't have a lot of money in terms of, we were driving a Volkswagen bug, went out there and stopped in Salmon, Idaho, and they said where Cobalt was, and I said, "Oh, no, we won't pay for a motel. We'll drive on out there." I had never driven in the mountains and [laughter], I learned something about thirty miles of mountain road. [laughter]

**0:09:15.8 James Wall:** Wow.

**0:09:18.2 Tom Snellgrove:** Arriving about midnight, [laughter] had no idea where we were. [laughter]

**0:09:21.6 James Wall:** Oh man. This was of course before GPS, you're just probably with a flashlight and a map just hoping that you don't get lost. Because if you get turned around

in Idaho, good luck to you.

**0:09:32.0 Tom Snellgrove:** Yeah. One thing about it, there was nowhere, there was only one road, meandering, gravel road. Once you got into the mountains, that was it.

**0:09:40.4 James Wall:** So, was it, you said "we," was it you and some friends?

**0:09:42.8 Tom Snellgrove:** No, my ex-wife.

**0:09:44.8 James Wall:** Okay. And [chuckle] how did she feel about being driven to rural Idaho?

**0:09:52.3 Tom Snellgrove:** It was an adventure. And we got there, and the District Ranger was Tommy Farr, and his Assistant [Ranger] was Jay Schultz. And they had already set up a tent for us. We got there, get there in the middle of the, literally like eleven o'clock at night, pitch dark and mountains and mountains now all around us, we're down in there. And they had a tent set up with us already, had a bunk, army cots with everything. And it was quite cozy. They had actually a wood stove in that tent.

**0:10:30.0 James Wall:** It's better than a lot of first...[laughter] I'm a connoisseur now of the first place that you ended up living when you got into the Forest Service. And there's some stories out there of rough places where people got stuck. At least, it sounds like you had somebody who cared whether you were comfortable or not.

**0:10:51.7 Tom Snellgrove:** In the first part. But then we were eager to get on the lookout and it was interesting because we had a Volkswagen bug, and that's not exactly a mountain vehicle.

**0:11:03.8 James Wall:** Isn't that a rear-wheel-drive car?

**0:11:07.2 Tom Snellgrove:** I think it was. I think it was. And so, we decided in the, and you could not even get to the lookout until, I think it was close to July, and we decided to give it a go and just started driving back in there on our own. We made it, but by the skin of our teeth. And the first thing we did where there was snow, I had never driven in snow. I figured, "Well, I'll take a run through that little snowbank." Well, jumped up, high-centered the car on the snow. I had no experience, zero experience of anything like that. And so, now we're trying to dig the car out the snow [laughter] And then as I said, we revisited that lookout with my two daughters and, just wonderful to go back after all those years.

[laughter]

**0:12:00.5 James Wall:** I want to talk about that later. Don't let me forget that.

**0:12:03.0 Tom Snellgrove:** Okay.

**0:12:04.3 James Wall:** But so, the lookout itself though, is an experience that has a powerful effect on people. How long were you in that lookout?

**0:12:12.8 Tom Snellgrove:** Through the summer. And my wife and I stayed in the log cabin and each morning, between six and seven o'clock, one of us would climb up in the tower. And basically, you stayed there till seven or...and in the mountains I had never experienced that it didn't get dark till eleven o'clock at night. So, you were basically in that tower. It was roughly inside the tower was six by six and it had a wooden stool with ceramic insulators on it and a thin rubber mat. And when the storm would come through, that's what you got on [chuckle] because you wanted to be up there. If there were lightning strikes, you wanted to be the, "KD-O7: This is NF-10 with a 411." [laughter]

**0:13:20.2 James Wall:** Wow. Did you ever get bored up there?

**0:13:25.0 Tom Snellgrove:** To some degree, but you could read a book, and I read, I like to read. And we would trade out. Seldom would both of us be up there. And it was legit for my wife to tend the tower, and I could go down, maybe catch a few trout. And just amazing when you were in that type of mountainous terrain that the people that would come there and gold mine, they could pan gold. They could get a claim. And all of this was so unique to me. [laughter]

**0:14:00.9 James Wall:** Were you sold at that point? On the Forest Service?

**0:14:04.1 Tom Snellgrove:** I was with the one guy Stan Foy, the guy that to me was Mr. Pulaski. He taught me so much about mountain roads, working in the mountains, that I just still am utterly amazed. [laughter]

**0:14:23.9 James Wall:** Well, tell me about Stan. So, he was a true wilderness guy, he really knew his way around the forest?

**0:14:31.0 Tom Snellgrove:** He knew the mountains. [chuckle]

**0:14:33.8 James Wall:** Wow. So, he sort of inducted you in a way?

**0:14:38.1 Tom Snellgrove:** Definitely. And I had never really considered that I would go to work for the government, and here he is, a government employee, taught me to drive on mountain roads, just how to maneuver, how to carry an axe when you are walking on a steep slope. How do you carry an axe so you, if you fall, you don't... Just numerous things.

**0:15:02.4 James Wall:** Wow. A lot of things you can take with you.

**0:15:05.4 Tom Snellgrove:** Oh, yeah, I have.

**0:15:05.9 James Wall:** Whether you decided to work in the Forest Service or not from that point on, you knew a lot more about the wilderness. That's interesting.

**0:15:12.3 Tom Snellgrove:** But it was such a metamorphosis for me to change from thinking of even considering working for the government to seeing something like that and say, "My, this..." [chuckle] Anyway.

**0:15:24.3 James Wall:** Yeah, people always go to Idaho or Montana or somewhere around there for their first summer job, and it's intoxicating for a lot of people. And I think they

always try to get back there. So, was this a couple summers that you worked before you got into your permanent appointment?

**0:15:41.4 Tom Snellgrove:** That was the first summer, then I went ahead and was completing my undergraduate degree. Then when I first got into graduate school, we had an opportunity to work in Bozeman, Montana. Worked in the Silviculture Lodgepole Pine Project. And so, now is my first taste of real research. But by this stage I was in graduate school, just starting graduate school.

**0:16:08.7 James Wall:** And what was the nature of that project in Bozeman?

**0:16:12.0 Tom Snellgrove:** It was a silviculture of Lodgepole pine. And basically, they were trying to decide, they referred to them as, "initial spacing." So, they would set up plots with various spacings and if you are knowledgeable about Lodgepole pine, it's a fire species. So, it typically comes in after a fire, and it just comes in almost like a lawn. And the question is: can you do something to thin it early enough that would be efficient to do? And they had various techniques; they ranged from mechanical thinning to chemical thinning. And I participated, was the Project Leader there, pretty much turned that over. I had the study plan, but I was just to carry out what they wanted on these various plots all the way from there down into Utah.

**0:17:13.2 James Wall:** What type of chemicals were they working with? Trying to throw at it?

**0:17:17.7 Tom Snellgrove:** It was a very wicked one. A combination of Dalapon. It was three different chemicals, I remember. And you had to be masked up when you sprayed. And one of the things, I remember being in Utah, and as they like to say in Utah, the "High Uintas," up at 9,000 feet, and I went to some of the plots that they had sprayed a couple years before and immediately called them and said, "I don't think this is working. It's killing everything." [laughter]

**0:17:52.7 James Wall:** Wow. This is a topic that I've just recently learned about. We interviewed Pete Owston. Now, this is not the same type of project, but when you talk about chemicals, his first job was...they were—and I'm going to butcher it now—but they were using, injecting Phosphorus-34, I think, I want to say. Radioactive material. The Atomic Energy Commission was contracting with the Forest Service to study something about water absorption or things like that in a tree. And they were injecting radioactive material into the roots of the tree and then trying to see where it went. And I thought to myself, "Well, how many projects were like this where you are working with chemicals where you don't necessarily know what they're going to do, if they're dangerous or not, and things like that?" And so, it sounds like they were throwing some serious chemicals at the problem.

**0:18:46.0 Tom Snellgrove:** Yeah. I don't think... And I say that with some degree of trepidation, I don't think there were any while people—but I think it didn't take long to figure out—this stuff getting in water often, and so on and so forth, this is not good.

**0:19:02.4 James Wall:** Too risky.

**0:19:02.8 Tom Snellgrove:** And I watched the... In my perspective, the Forest Service morph and say, "No, no, no, no. This is not the kind of things we are going to be doing." [laughter]

**0:19:13.7 James Wall:** Wow. But you were there to see them learn that lesson, I guess?

**0:19:15.0 Tom Snellgrove:** Yeah.

**0:19:16.5 James Wall:** Wow. So, Bozeman, Montana, were you taken with the scenery of Bozeman and the landscape and things like that?

**0:19:25.3 Tom Snellgrove:** Absolutely. It was just unbelievably gorgeous. And I am trying to think, what was it though? High Uintas? Is that, I think...

**0:19:34.6 James Wall:** Bozeman's over on the Gallatin, right?

**0:19:37.8 Tom Snellgrove:** Right, right. It was on the Gallatin. But I remember taking a drive, and I was thinking they referred to it as the High Uintas, a beautiful drive from Bozeman over... I honestly can't remember the... All I can remember is how beautiful. [chuckle]

**0:19:56.1 James Wall:** It's so pretty. Yeah. And people have discovered it, but it is definitely pretty. But you were saying that the winters are a little bit rough, not exactly your cup of tea.

**0:20:07.1 Tom Snellgrove:** When they mentioned 41-below, my Cajun blood's...[laughter] none for me, thank you.

**0:20:13.9 James Wall:** Yeah. That side of the Continental Divide, it gets very, very cold. So, those are sort of the first jobs. What was your first permanent posting? You said you had thirteen job offers?

**0:20:26.4 Tom Snellgrove:** From Borden Chemical, because of the background I happened to... And I still say it was largely luck, the background of forestry and forest products, and not the highly technical forest products. It was just a wonderful combination. And from Borden Chemical, right in Baton Rouge, all the way to Honolulu Wood Treating in Hawaii. Just that combination, they were looking for people. But actually, when I was in school, I guess I was the Vice President of the Student Chapter of Society of American Foresters, and I lined up speakers, and the speaker we got came from the Forest Products lab and gave a presentation to us about how critical that the lack of people with that type of background. And I, right there, I decided, "Well, why not go ahead and get a graduate degree in something slightly different?" And it ended up, a lot of it just luck, but...[chuckle]

**0:21:35.0 James Wall:** That's admirable, though. I think a lot of people would've taken the Honolulu job [chuckle]. Yeah, it means something for you to take a government job when you could have taken a lot of other lucrative appointments.

**0:21:50.2 Tom Snellgrove:** And after leaving Montana that summer, we decided to drive on out to Oregon. I had always heard of Oregon, and we drove the Oregon coast and just



thought, "Oh my, this is beautiful."

**0:22:04.0 James Wall:** "Why don't we live here?" Yeah.

**0:22:05.2 Tom Snellgrove:** Yeah. And so, when the job offers came, the one out of Portland, I decided, "You know, why not?" And it fit. The fit for me, the type of research they were doing was just perfect for me.

**0:22:19.1 James Wall:** So, remind me what that job title was? Your first job, permanent job.

**0:22:21.8 Tom Snellgrove:** Well, I was a Forest Products Technologist in a unit that was working. They primarily worked on...how do I put it? Trying to deal with the quality of the timber, the different things they did, what they referred to as "Mill Studies," where they could actually look at the characteristics of a tree and then tell you very close to what that tree was going to produce in any of the lumber, plywood, chips. Those tools were already there, were in place when I got to Portland. But my contribution was good discussion in the carpool when we were talking about applying that tool to standing trees. And an edict had come from the Washington Office that they wanted the units to work on timber salvage. And so, when I looked at it, I said, "Well, the biggest opportunity, or the biggest issue we have is not horizontal, not trees laying horizontal, it's dead timber," where fires and blister rusts had come through White pine and killed huge amounts. And it came out of one of my friends that worked in Forest Inventory in the carpool said, "Tom, there's far more standing dead timber than there is logging slash," and so and so forth. And so, the Project Leader in the unit in Portland gave me the opportunity to write a problem analysis and run the first studies on standing dead timber.

**0:24:27.4 James Wall:** Wow. And who was that Project Leader?

**0:24:29.4 Tom Snellgrove:** It was Paul Lane. And he was the Project Leader for several years. And then Dick Woodfin replaced him. But when we did it and ran the first studies, people just said, "Oh, no, this stuff is just junk." And started realizing before it was over, when we were processing the material, we had very high people from all of the companies observing what was going on, how much true lumber was coming out of this standing dead timber.

**0:25:08.5 James Wall:** And how do you determine... Well, first it sounds like you had a good boss because you just started, and he is letting you bring your own ideas to him.

**0:25:18.7 Tom Snellgrove:** Absolutely.

**0:25:19.9 James Wall:** Which I've heard over and over again, a running theme, about the labs in Portland is that it was very collaborative.

**0:25:26.8 Tom Snellgrove:** It was.

**0:25:28.8 James Wall:** But how did you determine... There's so much standing timber, how do you know that it's good to use for anything? To the point where it behooves you to then do that problem stuff.

**0:25:42.7 Tom Snellgrove:** That unit was working primarily on live timber, and they would take the characteristics and develop what's called log grades. So, when someone was cruising timber, they could say this was the expectation. But with dead timber, you have a different kettle of fish, but I was picking up on things that they had done in developing grades, and it would be things like the percentage of bark left—the trees are dead—and how much checking. So, we put different characteristics, but the big thing was just basically getting those logs and said, "Oh, as soon as it hits the ground, it's going to be gone." Well, you ended up with more off-length logs because basically when you're logging you like them in multiples of eight because that's the way... Your studs were eight feet long and so and so forth. But when we did this, we found out, yes, there was more breakage, but the amount of material that came out of there was remarkable. And I think the... I can remember getting a call from one of the timber people in Missoula, Montana, said, "Well, Tom," he says, "I think you'd be pleased to know that this year," this is now... We were several years into that research that we actually sold more quote, "dead timber," than green timber.

**0:27:12.6 James Wall:** And today, would they categorize this as a fuels management strategy to get all that dead timber off the forest floor?

**0:27:20.3 Tom Snellgrove:** No, at that time that would have been the only thing that would have... But now, they were looking at it and saying, "Hey, this is a real opportunity." And in particular, they could buy the timber at a song, but that's what they wanted was fuel management, too. So, you were getting both.

**0:27:40.3 James Wall:** Wow. How long did it take from the minute that you brought that to your boss, the idea, to implementing sort of recovering this type of wood?

**0:27:53.8 Tom Snellgrove:** Well, one of the things that was interesting is that typical in the research process, you will do the study. You, of course, had a study plan and then all the statistics is laid in place. But in this case, once we had gone through all the reviews, and sometimes that takes two years before you can actually get it published as a scientific. So, what I did was made sure we had all the statistical reviews, we were comfortable with the data, but published it in Forest Industries Magazine under the banner of, "Wanted: Dead or Alive." And at that time, everyone read Forest Industries, but they may not read the scientific publications. [laughter]

**0:28:41.6 James Wall:** Well, it's a good title too, because I've seen a lot of scientific articles and they usually don't have titles that bring you in. And so that was a savvy piece of marketing, so you're trying to bring people to the table to... Companies and things like that.

**0:28:57.6 Tom Snellgrove:** Yeah. I won't put, "savvy," but it was a lark. Why not? Give it a shot. But the important thing, and this is not to be lost, that all of the statistical reviews had been done, but still the process to go through, people just don't realize how rigorous that process is before, and then the very last thing you get is an editorial review. But in this case, it went through an editorial review, but everything else was in place, but it just wasn't going to take the time. We wanted to get it out there.

**0:29:34.0 James Wall:** Wow. So, the first big idea, first big project was a big win, sounds like for you. Sounds like that was a real success.

**0:29:42.1 Tom Snellgrove:** For an old country boy from South Louisiana, yes, it was a win.

**0:29:48.2 James Wall:** This is off topic, but did people ever pre-judge you on your accent, because I was always told to get rid of it growing up, or else everybody's going to think you were stupid.

**0:30:01.3 Tom Snellgrove:** I took some kidding, so all I did is double down on it. [laughter]

**0:30:08.4 James Wall:** That's good, because a lot of people lose it When they go up north. Interesting, interesting. So, that was your first big project. Were there any other big... What came after that in terms of the work you were doing, or was that... I'm sure that was ongoing, right, to some degree?

**0:30:23.8 Tom Snellgrove:** Yeah. Well, I'm trying to think now. I think that I ended up basically following some of that with a different species all the way up to... We did additional studies with different species, but using the same idea that could we possibly use it? And that parlayed that all the way to doing spruce up in Alaska, to trying to use under-utilized materials. One of the big studies that I got involved in was beach logs in Southeast Alaska, and not American beach logs, logs on Alaska's beaches was a huge navigation problem and tourism was getting really big in Southeast Alaska, and yet, if you had logs at the beaches that floated out, it created a navigation hazard. So, one of the things we did is said, "Well, we'll test them and see if perhaps these logs would actually be usable."

**0:31:31.5 Tom Snellgrove:** And so, what we did is went around the Alaska beaches, you would, plenty to find, the tides are so high in Alaska that at low tide there's logs all over. And what we did is selected just as a typical recovery study that we would run through mills, got the logs, took them all the way from Alaska to Seattle, processed them, and showed that irrefutably, the material is still usable. Now, whether it's cost effective, someone else has to make that decision. But, for the Regional Forester, he was very happy. Anything that could get the navigation hazard out. It's interesting. Had virtually nothing to do [chuckle] with just simply recovery. It was a totally different issue. But we applied the same tools that had been developed by this unit with Paul Lane and Dick Woodfin as being the project leaders.

**0:32:34.2 James Wall:** And you got to go to Southeast Alaska for some time.

**0:32:37.5 Tom Snellgrove:** I thoroughly enjoyed it. [chuckle]

**0:32:38.5 James Wall:** That's a pretty good deal, because that always sticks with people too, the first time they see Alaska. It's such a different place. So, as you sort of matriculate through the system, did you begin to take on your own projects where... You eventually became... You took Dick's job.

**0:33:02.0 Tom Snellgrove:** Right. I became Project Leader.

**0:33:05.2 James Wall:** How does that progression happen within Research? Because I know that there's a general process in NFS [National Forest System]. If you wanted to become a Forest Supervisor, well, you do this amount of time, and this four years you go

over here, then you go to DC for a couple of years. Then you come back. In other words, did you know where you wanted to go and how to get there in the outfit?

**0:33:26.6 Tom Snellgrove:** Not really. But after being a Project Leader here, and I think we continued to do the same type of thing. One of the things that I was most proud of is when I became Project Leader, we had a good reputation. We had a pretty good budget, and the regions and the Bureau of Land Management were willing, they liked to work with us because we could provide them information pretty quick. And we got involved in Red alder. And at that time, Red alder was considered a weed species. Just basically junk, it was used for pulpwood at the highest end and for firewood on the lower end, or on the worst end, we just tried to kill it. Again, going back to spraying and such because it tends to grow in riparian zones. And one of the things we were able to do, University of Washington had done some studies on Red alder and showed, well, it was peculiar. In forest products, if a tree is leaning, a hardwood tree, it creates real issues for drying.

**0:34:46.6 Tom Snellgrove:** It tends to... You get compression and tension wood. And when you say, "Okay, I've cut these two by fours, or whatever this is," but they'll just... And when they dry, they just completely tarp. Well, the small study up at University of Washington showed [Red] alder didn't seem to have that characteristic. But [Red] alder has the characteristic of leaning toward light. We knew that [Red] alder, in combination with Douglas fir, the Douglas fir, it did better. [Red] alder is a nitrogen fixer, and so it actually took nitrogen, and that work was done by the silviculturist, I think it was Dean DeBell, up at Olympia [Silviculture Laboratory]. He had a number of plots, and then he just realized inadvertently that the Doug fir, when it was grown in association with [Red] alder, was bigger than where the [Red] alder wasn't.

**0:35:49.0 Tom Snellgrove:** So, we considered trying to do a study on Red alder and because of [Red] alder leaning, thought this could be a major issue. Well, the small study on small samples said it didn't seem to be, so we did a very comprehensive study on Red alder and found out that it was insignificant in terms of... So, we would grade the lumber when it was green, we'd dry it, there would be virtually no warpage. So, that was not an issue. And then we found out that Red alder had... For a medium grade hardwood, it was not going to be your fine furniture or whatever, but of something like eleven different attributes that they look at when they decide the quality of wood, [Red] alder was top. The only downside it had is a relatively soft hardwood. And so, if you were going to use it for furniture, you had to put a hard finish on it. So, we ended up getting involved using the same tools and techniques that had been developed by all the guys that were doing the recovery studies and following it all the way through. And then we had a pretty big thing at the Western Forestry Center in Portland on Red alder. And it got really broad acceptance then.

**0:37:19.5 James Wall:** So, up until this point, it was seen as an invasive species, is what you said?

**0:37:24.1 Tom Snellgrove:** Yeah. It was, whether you say...probably, yes. I guess you'd put it as an invasive species, because if you were going to practice forestry, it comes in fast, it comes in quick, it would get a toe hold. But eventually, Red alder is interesting in that it comes in in what is referred to as a "dog hair thicket." But then it self-thins. If it's too thick, they'll start dying out. Well, in that process, it not only self-thins, it self-prunes, because

we're in real tight, the lower limbs die. But if you go look at an old growth Red alder, you'll see limbs coming out. Well, if you cut them, they're epicormic branches. They don't go to the center. They're just on the surface. And so, the amount, when we did the recovery study, we could show way more high-quality material. When we say high quality, typically Red alder was used for more things like baby furniture or things like this that were going to be painted.

**0:38:46.7 James Wall:** Wow. So, you resurrected the reputation of this unfairly maligned tree.

**0:38:52.2 Tom Snellgrove:** Well, and I wouldn't say I did, but I would say our team did that.

**0:38:54.1 James Wall:** Oh, your team, yeah.

**0:38:55.6 Tom Snellgrove:** And that study. But if you looked at it, it was from research in silviculture, it was from research in forest products. It was a combination. And we sat in a position that we could recognize it. We were the ones that could pull all that together. And I can remember after I was back in Washington DC and invited to be on a panel of various things, that I would be on a panel. One of the panel members with me was from Weyerhaeuser Corporation. He was the Vice President there. And he says, "Tom, I'd just like you to know that last year Red alder was the most profitable portion of Weyerhaeuser's entire operation." [laughter] And so, that makes you feel good. But again, it goes back to all the things that you stand on the shoulders of those who came before you. [chuckle]

**0:39:52.6 James Wall:** Yeah. That's good research—always builds on prior research. Dick [Woodfin] told me a good story, I wonder if you remember this, because I'm always interested in the successes, but you know, the story of science is a story of trial and error, and of epic failures.

[laughter]

**0:40:14.8 James Wall:** And learning from those epic failures. But do you remember the helicopter idea? Dick told me this idea that they were going to have four helicopters that took a balloon into the middle of the forest to... [chuckle]

**0:40:29.6 Tom Snellgrove:** I had forgotten about that.

**0:40:29.9 James Wall:** Was that during your time?

**0:40:30.0 Tom Snellgrove:** Yeah. It was, but I think it was not coming out of our unit, but it was an interesting one. And to be truthful, the notion, to me, it is one of those things that you give it a go. But when you said helicopters, what immediately jumped to my mind was the work we did in Mount Saint Helens. That in terms of after Mount Saint Helens blew, one of the things was of, my God, a call comes in at that stage from Washington DC saying, "The Chief of the Forest Service needs some numbers." We would like to be in there. And again, because of the things I had learned from Dick Woodfin and such about affiliation, working closely with forest managers. There was something that I was aware of in the back of my head that they call the "Incident Command System."

**0:41:33.7 Tom Snellgrove:** And what I found out with...no one could get into Mount Saint Helens after it blew for a number of reasons, safety, and such. But what were you going to do? Well, I can remember they wanted some numbers and wanted to take a crew in there. So, I was a brand-new Project Leader. They asked me if I'd consider doing it. And I said, "I'll take a shot at it." But I said, "What I'm going to do is call the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and ask them, 'We would like to go in there. Is there a way we can do it?'" And I said, and when I called, I said, "I understand your Incident Command System, someone is God, I want to speak to God." [chuckle] And the secretary laughed and said, "That's Paul Stenkamp." And got him on the phone.

**0:42:32.0 Tom Snellgrove:** And I said, "I realize you all are worried about life and limb. You're saving people's lives. You're not, but we work for the same Forest Service. We would like to go in there, but you tell us exactly what you want us to do from a safety standpoint." And he did. And so, we took a group in there of the famous Jerry Franklin that you may have heard of in the Forest Service. Heck of a background. But it was a... Put together a team of a couple statisticians—I shouldn't say statisticians, people who had worked in Forest Inventory—that we were going to do now, we're not looking at standing trees. We're looking at [chuckle] downed material. Could we go in there, get some samples, see what we could do and see if it would possibly make any sense?

**0:43:30.2 Tom Snellgrove:** And we did. We went in basically first just took some slabs, brought it out. And in one of the famous interviews, which is almost ridiculous, people were saying, "Oh yeah, this timber is just completely shot. It looks like celery." Well, we brought out things and I remember them laid out the slabs that we had taken, the crosscut section, said, "Well, it's not celery." [laughter] And then we went in and got some logs, were able to get in there and harvest certain things, and then took them to...A couple of mills said they would process them if we could get them to them to see could you possibly saw lumber out of it and could you peel it? And we took it to Van Ply [Vancouver Plywood] and I think SDNS Lumber Company, and they processed it and said, other than some staining, and of course the really tough thing was on chainsaws, all the silica would just eat up chainsaws. But other than that, there was no problem. And I think we ended up, the Forest Service ended up salvaging three and a half billion board feet out of Mount Saint Helens. [laughter]

**0:44:48.1 James Wall:** Wow. And was that a team, like in other words, you had the idea, and the team had the idea, but who said it first? Do you remember? Was it just sort of... You know, you were just talking.

**0:45:01.7 Tom Snellgrove:** No. Just there was no saying it first, we just decided to go in there to get the Chief some numbers and give him something that he could talk to. And one of the things that I did after that, I put together a team of people from Forest Inventory and statisticians that would say...the Forest Service had a good reputation and a long reputation of dealing with standing timber. But when it's downed, how do you inventory it? People don't realize the Forest Service does an inventory just like a census of people every ten years of the forests of the United States of all the forests. People don't realize that, but every ten years, there's an inventory that's done, but that's dealing with standing trees. But when you came to so much of it downed, and that was a real challenge for the team that sort of coordinated, I'll put it that way. Got them to participate. And how do you develop an inventory when more of it is horizontal? And they developed the tools for doing that.

[laughter]

**0:46:21.9 James Wall:** Wow.

**0:46:22.2 Tom Snellgrove:** Yeah.

**0:46:22.4 James Wall:** So, was that the biggest salvage project that you worked on?

**0:46:26.2 Tom Snellgrove:** Oh yeah. That's huge. [chuckle]

**0:46:28.8 James Wall:** Three and a half billion board feet.

**0:46:32.5 Tom Snellgrove:** Salvaged, and that was...

**0:46:32.6 James Wall:** That's wild. Was salvaging timber the biggest thrill for you in terms of, was there something about other people looking at something and seeing garbage and you being able to resurrect that?

**0:46:47.4 Tom Snellgrove:** I'd say between that and the recognition with Red alder, the opportunity piecing some number of things together, and it goes back to the tools. You stand on the shoulders of those before you, that we had these particular tools that we could apply. And it was basically a situation of scratching your head and saying, "Now..." [laughter] But I'd say both of those types of things were, that was really fun.

**0:47:15.5 James Wall:** Right. So, at what point did you head to DC?

**0:47:18.8 Tom Snellgrove:** I'm trying to think that...at that time I had been Project Leader now for ten years or whatever, and close to that. And I had gotten a couple calls that were interested in me coming back. And I had always said that "Well, I still have my kids in school. When my youngest daughter graduates, I would consider it." And my youngest daughter graduated at midterm, and I got a call. [laughter]

**0:47:53.1 James Wall:** So, they really wanted you to come to DC?

**0:47:56.1 Tom Snellgrove:** Well, some, yeah. I'd say the person knew my family and said, "Maybe this would be a good time." And I said, "Why not?" And truly going back with a thought and be blunt, typically what would happen, you would take a position like that, you go in, "Get your ticket punched," and come back out and replace someone else. And I got back there, and we enjoyed it. And I felt some of the things that I was able to do there surprised me. One of them, I have a paper I had written on sustainable forest management, that you... All of a sudden you had an opportunity to do some things on a broader level scale. And I wrote a paper on Sustainable Forest Management—why, what, and how—and it received, it got a lot of good attention. It was accepted as the best paper at this big conference in Atlanta, and then before it was over with. I ended up giving that paper in Hamburg, in Melbourne, Australia, and in three or four places in Japan.

**0:49:17.4 James Wall:** Wow. And what was the main intervention of that paper, for the average viewer?

**0:49:27.3 Tom Snellgrove:** What it was was a rundown on trying to, I guess for me, getting into the politics of people were so at each other's face about clearcutting, about just all of the issues of a degradation of streams and such. And the people at the Forest Products Lab said, "You have an environmental bent, you really like this and it's going to be this, would you consider writing a paper on it?" And I wrote the paper, gave it at a TAPPI [Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper Industry] convention which had thousands of people, it's a big thing, but I gave it, they had breakout sessions. I gave it to like a small session of maybe forty people, but it got the best paper award in the whole thing. So, from that, I ended up giving this paper in different places. But it, to me it's just...

**0:50:27.9 Tom Snellgrove:** It just made common sense. I tried to sit down and think, "What makes sense for us? We've had multiple use. We've had sustained yield. We've had all these tools. But trying to put it in a broader context of what would it really look like." And one of the friends that I met in Washington, I had seen a slide and stole it from him and would start the presentation with a picture of the world from outer space. And the note was, "Good planets are hard to find." And truly that, it was fun, but it would catch people. And then the presentation, the types of things that were in there, I got a lot of comments, it just makes sense.

**0:51:19.5 James Wall:** And what year was this, ballpark?

**0:51:27.6 Tom Snellgrove:** Let's see, I went back in, I would guess the '90, early '90s.

**0:51:33.7 James Wall:** So, by that time, everybody always marks the '90s, or a lot of people do, as a time of intense transition or challenges for the Forest Service. But if I'm distilling this paper accurately, in other words, the thing that drove you or that you were seeing was that the Forest Service and the "ologists," as they say, in all of these different parts of the Forest Service were sort of siloed against one another or had blinders on. And there was a compartmentalization. And you're trying to bring it all together with some string theory, basically. So, that must have been enormously helpful for redirecting things towards a bit more of a big picture.

**0:52:25.6 Tom Snellgrove:** Well, I'm not sure. All I know is I can remember going into meetings and people, I can remember one of them. And to be truthful, by that stage, I was in Washington, put together a meeting, I generally had some pretty strong backing from the political, understood the political side of it. And I brought the very disparate parties to Washington DC. And I can remember giving some of this presentation, one of them said, "Tom, where do you think this will go? What do you think?" I said, "I have no idea. But this I will tell you: every one of you, and both conservatives and liberal in terms of how we should manage, have been handpicked. Because in this case, I personally value your opinions. I may not agree with them." And I said, "Right now, I think that ninety percent of our effort is into debating and basically arguing over the process and maybe ten percent is, 'What should we be doing? What can we do to get out of this quagmire?'" And I said, "I'd like to change that around. That basically," I said, "I think that we can agree, we can start with things that we currently agree on and then start expanding rather than arguing on the extremes." And it seemed to work, it seemed to help. I truly hit it, and that's the way I closed out my career right there. [laughter]

**0:54:09.0 James Wall:** So, that was sort of a fitting coda to your career. That was, in terms



of the papers that you wrote, would you say that that's the one that you hold in the highest regard?

**0:54:16.7 Tom Snellgrove:** Oh, yes. And I have it, it's available and you can actually get it from TAPPI for a mere thirty bucks. [chuckle] And I found out when I explained to them who I was that I wanted some copies to give to friends.

**0:54:31.6 James Wall:** Oh, I see.

**0:54:33.9 Tom Snellgrove:** And they said, "Oh." And you could tell they were doing some background, checking out, "Who is this guy?" And so, they sent me copies and they said, "We'll send you the electronic version if you want."

**0:54:42.4 James Wall:** Sure, sure. Yeah. Wow. So, when did you know it was time to hang it up?

**0:54:52.6 Tom Snellgrove:** [chuckle] That's an interesting question. I think at that stage, to be truthful, I said, "I don't," and financially we were in a position that we could, we're sitting here now, had the opportunity that financially we could do it, my wife and I, and truly, you know, by then, I had spent what, roughly ten years in DC. That's a long run. And yeah, but it wears on you. But we loved it, we loved the time, we loved the, and we took advantage of the whole DC scene. I mean, I come from the swamps of Louisiana. I did so much of my work out in the Pacific Northwest. You go back into DC, and you have the benefit of seeing all these different units now because I had oversight of them and be reviewing things in upstate New York, it was just wonderful. And so, you know, "Maybe it's time to leave on a high horse."

**0:55:53.6 James Wall:** Leave on a high note while you know that you're at the top of your game, I guess.

**0:55:57.8 Tom Snellgrove:** Yeah.

**0:55:58.7 James Wall:** Well, that's, you know, that's probably a good time. Now, you came back to the Pacific Northwest. So, I guess at that point, had this become home? Because a southerner—they say you can never go home again—but, you know, the South has a way of sticking with you in your blood. Had you ever considered going back south or...

**0:56:21.7 Tom Snellgrove:** Well, I go at least once, maybe two or three times a year. [chuckle] So, I do, and get my fix, go get some crawfish, go... [laughter]

**0:56:30.6 James Wall:** So, but the Pacific, this particular area seems to, you seem to love it quite a lot.

**0:56:35.6 Tom Snellgrove:** Yeah. And my wife was raised right over here in White Salmon [Washington] and we can almost see her house from here.

**0:56:43.0 James Wall:** Wow.

**0:56:44.9 Tom Snellgrove:** Yeah, and across the river, and we just loved Oregon. All the

opportunities, we had a chance to see a lot of different places. And I did not particularly want to cope with Portland with the wet weather. And so, we chose east side. There's two places, I said, "Either here or on the east side of the Coastal Range Mountains in Oregon." You have the same situation. It's basically oak pine savanna, I think, is what it would technically be from a silviculture. It's dry enough that oaks and pines will grow together, but it's a rain shadow.

**0:57:20.4 James Wall:** Yeah. Do you miss the science, the scientific aspect of doing science and seeking out knowledge and things like that?

**0:57:32.8 Tom Snellgrove:** That's an interesting...I guess I do mine online now and just reading and...

[laughter]

**0:57:40.3 James Wall:** Keeping up with the research as it is, or the state of research.

**0:57:44.1 Tom Snellgrove:** Yeah. And I think that that's...and in particular, Washington can wear on you, it's tiring. There's a lot of issues that come at you, and so, it was a nice and... But for me, taking this place and doing what I've done, the landscaping for wildlife fulfills a lot of that. It's like a research challenge. Will this tree grow here? And if it does grow, what species will use it? And so on and so forth.

**0:58:15.1 James Wall:** Yeah, it sounds very Jeffersonian.

[laughter]

**0:58:20.3 Tom Snellgrove:** I'm familiar.

**0:58:23.0 James Wall:** The way that he looked at Monticello and experimented with different trees and experimented with different things. He was really an agricultural scientist in a lot of ways. You like to tinker with landscape thing and things like that?

**0:58:37.9 Tom Snellgrove:** It's interesting that you say that because of going to Monticello, that's exactly the feeling. I mean, I related to it on a sensory thing.

**0:58:47.5 James Wall:** It's probably though, it looks like your house is a bit less of a work in progress than Monticello because he famously never finished it. He always was building on it, so I don't... And I don't think he ever would have finished it if he'd have lived for a thousand years.

**0:59:01.8 Tom Snellgrove:** That's interesting.

**0:59:02.8 James Wall:** He was just that type of a guy, but it did remind me when you said that, because he was always doing stuff like that.

**0:59:07.7 Tom Snellgrove:** We would take people, and we had a lot of friends visit us when we were in DC. It was a perfect situation, we just bought a small condo so that we could travel and do things, and so we had batteries of company would come and we love, that

was going to be a mandatory trip. And what was the other one that was a little, the re-enactment of the whole community in DC?

**0:59:35.0 James Wall:** Colonial Williamsburg.

**0:59:36.7 Tom Snellgrove:** Yes, we love taking people.

**0:59:39.3 James Wall:** Sounds so. Yeah, that's a scene for sure. Those are committed performers and good history students and historians. So, the people of the lab that you worked with, we talked about Gene Pong. I know Dick Woodfin really well, I was wondering if you could talk about Dick for a minute, because he's such an interesting character, I think not what I would imagine in a research sense. He's so animated, what did you learn from Dick? Because you did end up taking over for Dick at one point, is there anything you learned from Dick Woodfin besides just absorbing a massive amount of energy?

**1:00:24.1 Tom Snellgrove:** I think the confidence to go forward, you know, the "just do it." A lot of time in research, people just they get just stymied and in fact they can't even publish, to be truthful, they get so wound up, they have trouble. And, no, put it out there. And I think he, more so than me, but that was a thing that I just so admired with him. He was going to get out there and as I say, make some dust. And in research that's not always the conventional... [laughter] It's more of sitting back and thinking. Yeah, you got to do the thinking, but once you've done the thinking, make some dust.

**1:01:14.4 James Wall:** Wow. Was there anyone who particularly challenged you in a good way, scientists are good at, I think, building each other, challenging each other in productive ways. When you would have an idea for a paper, right? And there's positive voices in the room and then there's also people who will take a hatchet to it in a good way. Was there anybody in your career that sort of took a good hatchet to your work and made you better?

**1:01:48.3 Tom Snellgrove:** That's an interesting question because I had said earlier that I know we have people we disagree, but I'm trying to think the ones that would challenge...it's just not popping in there right now, probably it'll pop in tonight when I'm sleeping.

[laughter]

**1:02:09.7 James Wall:** Sure. Yeah, well, it's very interesting. I was wondering if we could talk about Bill Cannon for a minute, because this is a very interesting story to me. Not just because I work for the museum or anything like that, I don't deal with any financial side of anything. But it's a strange story, I guess, in a heartwarming way, in a good way. But how did you get to know Bill? I know you were a friend of his.

**1:02:34.3 Tom Snellgrove:** When I went into Washington DC, went in RPA, which is are you familiar with RPA? It's the Resource Planning Act. It's the fact that every ten years you do an inventory just like the census, and from that you develop a "strategic plan." And when I went in, I was on the staff and represented Research. Well, Bill was on the staff representing State and Private Forestry. And he had spent a lot of his career, he had started

on the ground as "dirt forester," but he got more into State and Private. And so, we just got to be friends and enjoyed each other, and he always said he had no family, he just would say that. He never touted, or...But in reality, he had at least three families: the Hamiltons, Tom Hamilton, who became Director of the Forest Products Lab. He was the head of RPA, he's the one who hired me back into RPA. And then Fred Kaiser, who was the Head of Economics Research, and us. And we just became friends, and like I said, Bill, any given Thanksgiving or Christmas, he was likely to have three of them.

[laughter]

**1:04:03.7 Tom Snellgrove:** Because if we didn't all get together, we did it independently, we would all invite him. So, we did. And he was just an interesting person. And one of the things that for me was we enjoyed traveling together, but he was very good with investing. He had a keen interest in it and was good. And he taught me a lot. And one reason that I could afford these things to be truthful, I was learning from Bill, and Bill was a Warren Buffett man.

**1:04:38.8 James Wall:** Real value investor.

**1:04:39.5 Tom Snellgrove:** Real value investor. And back there in DC what was it? Oh, there was a local in DC that was really good that he liked. But that was a tremendous value to Jeralyn and I, because I was plugging along and we were frugal and so on and so forth. But in terms of really investing and spending a lot of time just chatting with this type of purchase, and it's interesting, he was always aware of what he thought might give me a good investment. And when he was toward the end of his life, my wife and I were going to be taking a trip to... Now, we're at... He's at home and he's getting care, he had to have care because we couldn't keep up with that anymore.

**1:05:35.0 Tom Snellgrove:** So, we were going to be leaving for our trip to Greece and I said, "We're going to be gone for 17 days, and so we're going to need a little more money. Your annuity is not going to cover for Bonnie and her crew." And I said, "I need to raise a little cash." He never opened his eyes; he was at that stage. He said, what's the name of the company? Oh, I can't, it starts with an "A." He said, "Go into account number." And he had a number of accounts. "Go into account number 1825," whatever the number, "And sell 200 shares of such and such." Never opened his eyes, and he could still... And at that stage, it was just fascinating that he had such an interest in it and was so good at it.

[chuckle]

**1:06:34.1 James Wall:** Right, right. And chose to be a forester. Sounds like he had the skills to be a broker or to be a...

**1:06:42.5 Tom Snellgrove:** Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

**1:06:44.5 James Wall:** Deeply researched economist.

**1:06:46.4 Tom Snellgrove:** Those brokers, whether he had had the personality to do it. But in terms of the knowledge, it was just amazing, and I knew very little. We were putting money aside, but I had no idea of when I started broadening out into... And the few

investments I had, he just looked at it...

[laughter]

**1:07:11.7 Tom Snellgrove:** "Just get rid of that."

[laughter]

**1:07:15.4 James Wall:** He was a good... Sounds like a good friend to make and to keep. But when did you find out that you were going to be... That he had tapped you or wanted you to play this very important role?

**1:07:30.7 Tom Snellgrove:** It was in DC. We were back there and since I had just done it for my family. And it was a situation with my family that we had a lot of property scattered around, and I enjoyed doing it. And then my parents had asked me if I would do it for our family. I was the youngest, and I'm not sure exactly why. But we had no issues. But I worked with my dad, found all our properties and so on, put it all together and it was just smooth as silk. And he was aware of that, and apparently that had not been his situation in his family.

**1:08:09.1 Tom Snellgrove:** And so, at that time he asked me. He said, "Would you consider being my...and the way I am, "Oh, sure." Had no idea what I was getting into with the number of investments, the amount of it, and all of the issues that could be involved. And in fact, when he, at that stage, when we were in DC, he had his, I don't know if it was a will or a trust then. But we took Bill, he was using a walker by then to the attorneys that set up the last thing. And we used that same attorney to set us up. And exactly why, I don't know. He felt Bill needed a trust, and we should have a will for tax purposes and so forth, anyway.

**1:09:08.8 James Wall:** Yeah. What was his...obviously he must have known or participated in the museum, but this seems like it was a surprise to everybody. When did you find out that that was something he had chosen?

**1:09:24.2 Tom Snellgrove:** What was that meeting? One of the national meetings we would have in the Forest Service. It was in Missoula, and all they had is a little plot and they had a... Maybe it seemed like it was a part of a lookout.

[chuckle]

**1:09:48.4 Tom Snellgrove:** And Woodfin was there, and Tom Hamilton, all of the usual suspects. And Bill made a pretty good contribution. At that stage, and he just would talk to me about it and say, "I think this is something that I might like to invest in." But again, I had no idea the amount. But I think at that he got maybe something like the Governor's Award or something for a substantial contribution. But again, I had no idea that, you know. And it really wasn't, even when we took him to the attorneys here, I had no idea until we really started looking and, "Oh my, we're talking [laughter] way more than I thought."

**1:10:33.9 James Wall:** Wow. So, do you feel like you got to know him more after he passed? In terms... While you going through that process or at least you got, you were revealed the

scale of his brilliance probably as an investor.

**1:10:49.1 Tom Snellgrove:** And I was picking that up because he... Ironically, the one thing that when we were in DC, I got him involved in probably partly because of Jeralyn's background in computers. There was a video type thing you could purchase called, "Managing Your Money," that was really good. And it was a level that I could cope with, and it was a good way of organizing your stuff, and he loved it. But then as things are want to be, they lost, they couldn't support that. The computer wouldn't support it anymore. And so, but I got him involved in that and we just loved, and we would talk about it. It was just a really efficient way of organizing it. I haven't found anything that's even close to that. My wife and I have done it for ourselves, but Bill, by that stage, he was down to doing much of it with a pencil, and I could show you some of the things. And I have one in there that, one thing that I kept just to show people when they say, "My God, how did he do this?" And then you look at the detail that he loved doing it. [laughter]

**1:12:06.7 James Wall:** Wow. So yeah, he must have had a sort of rich, detail-oriented mind, almost like an engineer.

**1:12:14.3 Tom Snellgrove:** It was.

**1:12:17.9 James Wall:** Yeah. Wow. That's an interesting story. And you know he must have thought very highly of you to put you in that position.

**1:12:23.5 Tom Snellgrove:** We feel good about that. [laughter] Yeah, and it was friendships, but I think anyone, Fred Kaiser. Fred would not have, probably, we're very different personalities, but would not, it would've been harder for him to do the stuff we did here. And then Tom Hamilton, all of us were close with him with different things, but I guess we did more personal things with him.

**1:12:51.6 James Wall:** Sure, sure, sure. Well, you ready for the lightning round of questions?

[laughter]

**1:12:57.4 James Wall:** That we discussed earlier?

**1:13:02.6 Tom Snellgrove:** Okay.

**1:13:03.1 James Wall:** Is there a mentor that stands out in your mind where throughout your career that you think about who maybe put you on the right path or really shaped your philosophy?

**1:13:20.3 Tom Snellgrove:** A guy named Ed Clark in the Forest Service that I really admired his writing, the thoughtfulness. And in fact, right before I went into Washington, I was able to hire him again to put together a thing for me. He gave me the broadest look at wood quality and such, and more than just the "log grades" and so on and so forth. I really admired him. And Dick Woodfin.

**1:13:53.3 James Wall:** Dick. So, Ed, you mentioned his writing. Outside of yourself, who do

you think was the best writer in your field? The people that you interacted with, where they would write a study or a paper and you would look forward to reading it, you would say this person absolutely can communicate his research.

**1:14:20.1 Tom Snellgrove:** I would go back to Ed Clark. I read more of his stuff and went back and read. And as far as I was concerned, he was way ahead of his time, and most people hardly even know of him. [laughter]

**1:14:31.8 James Wall:** Ed Clark. Well, I'll have to look him up. I'm assuming he's no longer with us.

**1:14:36.8 Tom Snellgrove:** Oh, no, no. He passed away long ago. But...

**1:14:41.2 James Wall:** Did he work out of Portland?

**1:14:43.6 Tom Snellgrove:** Not when I was there, only except that I hired him to do a relatively small thing, but I wanted his opinion on something and now I can't remember even what it was, but I had him come back and he... Part of that was in response to just what I had learned from him before. And he was at the point, he was well beyond retirement, and, but I think he appreciated it. And he... I'm trying to think what it was that...it might have been something to do with the Red alder. [laughter]

**1:15:23.7 James Wall:** Your old pal.

**1:15:26.3 Tom Snellgrove:** But he gave me... He wrote a piece for me that was useful to me, so.

**1:15:33.7 James Wall:** Wow. Yeah. Is there one, now that you're retired, is there one thing about the job that you miss the most?

**1:15:48.6 Tom Snellgrove:** Maybe the discipline that you had to...because I have to be forced into discipline, I'm... You obviously, [laughter] with my interview, I'm all over the place. [laughter] And that forced me to be more disciplined and things and but up here, "Hey, I can do all the stuff." And so, I enjoy that, but no, I can't think of any, just one.

**1:16:17.6 James Wall:** Okay. Fair enough, fair enough. Is there someone that came up after you, that you were able to help out, or someone that you mentored that you think about?

**1:16:32.6 Tom Snellgrove:** Yes, to some degree. Oh boy, this is terrible. I can't even put her name. But it ended up, I encouraged her to perhaps replace me in Washington or at least be considered. And she ended up going to Virginia Tech instead. And I'd have to find, God this is terrible, but, oh man. Not what it used to be, but she was really, I think I was able to help her. And, yeah, that would be the most prominent one.

**1:17:06.0 James Wall:** Great, great. Great. If you come up with a name, just give me a call, I'll put it in your file for the interview. Let's see, what else? Oh, the classic question: if you could go back in time when you were starting out, knowing what you know now, [laughter] and give yourself a piece of advice about what to do or what not to do or how to survive in the Forest Service, in the research arm. Anything that you might tell young Tom?

**1:17:37.3 Tom Snellgrove:** I guess what I learned from Dick that, "Think and act." And, "You build on the shoulders of those who came before you." For me, Ed Clark, for Dick, all the things, the tools that they developed. And you can't just think too often, unfortunately, I think in research we can get to thinking, but, you know, "It's time to make dust."  
[laughter]

**1:18:11.8 James Wall:** Yeah. No, it's an underrated thing because I think anybody in research or academia, it takes a lot to send that baby out into the wilderness to put it out and push it out into the ocean, you know, because you know that people are going to rip it apart or you know.

**1:18:27.5 Tom Snellgrove:** That's right.

**1:18:28.2 James Wall:** Praise it or criticize it. So, actually sending things out into the world is a big deal.

**1:18:33.6 Tom Snellgrove:** I had a, at the end of the career, we did a couple of papers, a guy named, Hal Salwasser, who became, ultimately became Dean down at Oregon State and Doug MacCleery, who was a great historian. And somehow or another we lashed up together and wrote a couple of papers that I thought were very well done. And so, it was really fun to put something like that together. We wrote some papers trying to get out of the quagmire of, oh, I forget the different, the Applegate [Group] was one of them, the different environmental groups and then the industry groups that you were just butting heads. And the three of us tried to write things that made sense and I think we were successful.

**1:19:30.7 James Wall:** That's definitely an underrated skill, to take a science and being able to communicate it to the...I was interviewing an engineer and he said, "The hardest thing I ever had to do was learn to write to simplify things. You know, so that makes sense. Well, last question is always what does the Forest Service mean to you? I mean, what do you feel about the Forest Service now that you think about it? You're on the other side of it. What does it mean to you and your work?"

**1:19:57.6 Tom Snellgrove:** Oh, I get cold chills. [chuckle]

**1:20:05.6 James Wall:** So, you'd do it all over again, you're saying.

**1:20:07.2 Tom Snellgrove:** You'd like to think, "Maybe a little smarter here, a little smarter there," but truly, and I look at that a hundred and whatever it is, 150, some National Forest, 190 some million acres, and the work that is done on...I saw that, I can't come up with the number now on what it costs. It is amazing. If you look at each of the people, let's just say a hundred and what's 191, maybe 192 million acres now. And we do it with this many people, just to me is unbelievable [laughter] I can't say there's not things out there better that I don't know of, but that's just really impressive.