

## Haywood 1

I: All right. Interview with Bill Haywood on December 7th, 2016. Interviewer Jean Eells. We are going to start by going through a slide program that Bill had prepared and used for describing for roadside program and we will take a break after that and restart with another section.

P: Okay, well first of all, which isn't on the slide is my little bit of history. How I was involved.

I: Perfect.

P: Okay.

I: Perfect.

P: So. I'm a wildlife conservationist for the Black Hawk County Conservation Board and during the 80's was just a horrible time for funding and for the whole farm economy and John Deere was down. There was no money so the Board of Supervisors-- County Board of Supervisors suggested that I should be the weed commissioner that way they didn't have to pay anybody. And I went down to the courthouse and told them I couldn't be because we had five thousand acres of land and then we grew weeds. They are obnoxious weeds you know and so I got out of it. And the next year, they didn't ask me to come down they just made me weed commissioner and they gave me this equipment that could spray both sides of the gravel road at the same time and just huge stuff. Tons of chemicals and all kinds of things and it was just so against the grain you know of being in conservation and going back to blanket spraying of all the roadsides so I had an auction and sold the equipment and then we set-up pickups with backpack sprayers and said that we would target our spraying and we could get away with that because-- financially, because we had to take employees who were receiving county welfare. And those employees had to be a two parent household with children. One of them had to have a work record. It didn't matter if it was the man or the women and they had their choice of where they could work. They could work at the conservation board, they could work with the metro buses in Waterloo, the libraries, and I would have to tell my boss how many people I needed for splitting wood or working in the woods or whatever and then they would send them out. I could not hire them. Could not interview them. Could not hire them and could not fire them. So it was quite a little event. And those are the people I used. And I had two summer green thumb workers. They were retired people that received a grant of some sort and paid for their time. They helped me. They would drive truck sometimes and sometimes I would use my relief people to drive truck. We had two trucks out all the time. During that whole time, spread out over a couple of years I was a very avid photographer and I photographed everything and it just slowly started to make sense of where all the weeds were coming from and why we couldn't get rid of them with chemicals and that's where the Prairie Roadside Program began. Because of very of it when you are driving roads at fifteen miles an hour day after day you could see where the prairie grass ended and the weeds started. You could see what invaded the brome grass. The different European grasses that we put in the

roadsides. So it was just real easy to move into what over that two year period simply because it was also evident, you know. It was just-- so I put together a slide show and I gave it to the county conservation board first. They were impressed enough to invite the county board of supervisors and the county engineer. That-- the county engineers name was Larry Clark and he jumped right on board. 'Cause he didn't want anything to do with the blanket spray programs either and he could-- you know, you could see it. Once you showed all the photos and I could go back to where I'd taken a photo of the erosion coming off any field into the roadside one summer and have a photo of the same identical spot the next summer and show them the amount of weeds that grew there. So that all went and with the help of the county engineer that was so key because then we had a established person you know, backing us up a little bit. That's when we started working it up and then we showed it to Daryl Smith and so Milt Owens up in Worth (Mitchell) County and Story County was doing a little bit and a few others. We formed a committee. I'd shown it to some of the County Conservation Board Conventions by then. We formed a committee and we decided that we were going to do a conference and we had a liaison person who went between the County Conservation boards and the Department of Natural Resources and he connected us with some of the natural resources people. State people. They became part of the committee. We had to kind of drag 'em along. Little apprehensive about the whole thing and then we were starting to set up the first conference at UNI and they bailed out. They decided that they wanted to wait another year, and Daryl Smith had had bypass surgery. Heart by-pass and we were at a meeting in Ames and we left and I was driving home and I thought, you know, Daryl Smith. There isn't any heart by-pass surgery that ever stopped him from having a conference about prairie. And I went home and I called him up and sure enough that's the way it was. So we did it without him. It was real interesting because they (DNR) boycotted us. They would not allow their people to come under-- on time. On their work time and only two came on their own something like that but they couldn't stop it then because it really started rolling and that's when Daryl brought in the DOT. Steve Holland. Once that came in, it was really out of my hands by then. I was doing a lot of talks but they were the people that were getting it done. They were the ones that were really putting together the grants and the proposals and getting roadside-- well, natural vegetation management going you know. It was really remarkable. But here in the county we just kept right on working because with Larry Clark he bought us a prairie grass drill, we had a hydro-seeder. We were able to use their crawler and we started working roadsides and those things were a bit of a struggle because you know you don't get very good results the first year, especially if you can't mow these areas and we did create a lot of weeds and quite a bit of controversy during that time but it-- in the end it won out pretty well. So that's how it all started. So in the very beginning we put together a little slide show that the different county boards could show people and that's what I have on the projector right now.

I: Sounds great.

P: It might not be in perfect order but we tried to get a film but we couldn't get any backing in it. It cost about twenty or twenty-five thousand dollars to have a film made and we just couldn't do it. We couldn't find the money and so we backed up and

basically did this ourselves. So that's neighbor and that's my daughter. Yep. And I can't remember all the verbiage that went with these but you know you can just kind of imagine as we talked about how the roadsides used to look, you know, and what you could find there and the wildlife that it benefited. We always brought in the Goldfinch, the state bird and kinds of things like that you know and we talked about some of the extinct species and there's a ring-necked pheasant in there. Agriculture and how we had to get along with them and during this time period, this was also the time when Agriculture totally changed. They had chemicals that they could put on their fields and they have even better ones today so nothing can grow on their fields and so the noxious weed law was basically outvoted. It just shouldn't have even been an issue anymore because the noxious weeds do not grow in Agricultural land anymore. Nobody had to pull a buttonweed or anything else out of the beans. So we talked about invasions by the different shrubs and trees and into the roadsides and I can't remember what that was and must have talked about how many miles of Iowa roads there were. And this going on-- something pretty. And then we talked-- we are getting a little closer to where weeds come from, you know, and how we have to stabilize roadsides and this is the way our interstates used to look. They look a lot better now so that's the DOT, boy, they really did a job with that. And there's a spray truck. Probably did some education there and another old dirt road. Here is one of our restorations probably right at the start of it. And this is what we first started-- we didn't have very good equipment and so we tried this with the tailgate seaters, they didn't work too well. We tried-- that's a stand of brome there but we might get to hydro-seeding here I can't-- I must have been out of sequence there a little bit. Crown vetch in there. Talked about that some. Some of the things that we did plant to help with roadsides and now we are talking about-- this was erosion off the field and it's just a thick mat of cornstalks and how that would kill everything out and then the next year it would start to grow weeds 'cause the grasses were dead. Talked about the different animals that were out there that also disturbed this soils and created little pockets for bull thistles and different things to grow that were considered a noxious weed. That'd be the next year what happens with a pocket mound. And over-spraying from the field we showed quite a bit of that. That was-- that was a big thing back then and I'm not so sure it's quite so big now. They still do it though. The different plants that would come back from it. Wind erosion, that created a lot of problems. Wind erosion. That has been sort of taken care of by modern agriculture, too. They chisel plow and we don't really get that type of erosion anymore. But that could leave a layer of black soil and enter too deep in the ditch and it was just remarkable the quantity of weeds it would grow and the complaints you would get and we discussed things. Adjacent land owners. This person burned whatever trees or something and killed all the vegetation on that slope. And this was over tillage. Tilling into the back slope of the ditch. Trying to expand the fields. And looks something similar, could of, the weeds the foxtail and stuff that's grown in the fence line would have been caused by the soil being thrown. That's wild parsnip. Then we got the burning, talking management and what we could get back from it. Then some of those roadsides. By the old ones were the natural native prairie had not been destroyed. They really came back. They were really remarkable. It was during this time period also that Pauline Drobney did her master's degree and did the roadside inventory of Black Hawk County. One-tenth mile at a time and that was incredible. With the amount of data that it generated and also solidified everybody's

feelings about how prairie was our absolute first and best line of defense against any kind of weeds or anything else that could happen in the roadsides and it was just-- it was a real eye opener. This was the prairie grass drill Black Hawk County bought for us and then that's their dozer we pulled it with. And I don't think that we re-established that seems like just another native picture. A little burning. Burning is so difficult. That's one of the hardest things and it's one thing we will never accomplish. We just can't get away with it. He can put a crew out there and everybody plans on being there on Monday morning at 9 o'clock and Monday morning and 9 o'clock the winds coming in at twenty-five miles an hour or it was a really damp evening the night before and we can't get things to burn and so we reschedule and you have to have so many people to take the liability out of the burn and so it's a difficult thing and I'm not sure we will ever make burning part of our management but the new guys out there on the block, they probably have some good ideas. This was another county's weed control program where he's probably spraying Canada Thistle looks like with a backpack sprayer. Mainly just to satisfy the law because it certainly didn't make any difference to the Ag ground. This was a planting. Prairie planting. Most of these were probably. There's Daryl one of our talks. There's the man. He really did it. He could really get a crowd to work together. This was roadside biologist visiting with a landowner. And we are back to my neighbor and my daughter walking so we are at the end here. I'll have a few-- these photos I think were shuffled from the front. This is another tillage into the ditch by the farmer and what it creates-- the mess that you get the next year. So that would be another site where there was disturbance and weeds growing. That's a prairie planting with a drill--in crooked. I'm not sure what it was, but I think was really our whole goal was to have space between the Ag field and the fence and have the back slope protected and even though that looks like one of the drop seeds actually and not brome at all-- so I think that's what it is. So it's probably a picture of what we wanted every roadside to start to look like. There's some of the benefits of doing the work. There is is. Then let's see. We did get the DNR on board eventually but-- [laughter] then we had a large group of people here that we thanked.

I: Cindy Hildebrand listed there.

P: Yep. That's right. yeah. Do you see her?

I: Yeah.

P: Yeah. How about that. Yeah. When that project green out of Iowa City that was a powerful group. They made things happen down there.

I: The Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards.

P: Yeah.

I: Issac Walton. Native America, Iowa Division, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Iowa State Snowmobile Association, Pheasants Forever Incorporated. Project Green from Iowa City. Black Hawk Pheasants Forever, Fayette Pheasants Forever,

Winnebago-Hancock Pheasants Forever. Pioneer Chapter Pheasants Forever, Dickinson Pheasants Forever, and Cindy Hildebrand.

P: Right. Right. Well, quite the time.

I: It was quite the time.

P: Yeah.

I: A lot of good work and a lot of good people that came together.

P: Yep. Paul Christiansen from Cedar Rapids. Yep.

I: Because Paul passed away and can't be part of the collection, I've been capturing memories that anybody that did know him or had any interaction with him can tell about him. Did you work with him enough to have any thing you could share--

P: I was always another person in the room with Paul but the one thing about Paul was how calm he was. Always. When we did a presentation in Iowa City for that Project Green group. I think I was feeling just a little smarter than I actually was and I had looked up how much money their county spent on roadside spray program. And so when I made my presentation I told them they could take that forty thousand dollars, turn it all into pennies and go on out there and throw it on the weeds for all the good it would do. Their county engineer and some of those other people were there and afterwards they came up and it blew up. We got in this big brawl. Paul walked right into the middle of it. Just settled it all down. That was the end of it. I learned not to be such a smart-alack though.

I: Great story. Calm he was, that's great. yeah, it's helpful to capture some of those impressions and I'm thinking Sylvan Runkel was a little too elderly to have been--

P: Yep! And he stayed mostly with the woods you know.

I: And the early parts of Landers left in '79 '80 at that time period so he wasn't--

P: He was already gone.

I: Before you really.

P: But there was a lot of communication with him. A tremendous amount by different people. Yeah.

I: People that wrote back and forth and

P: You know, going back in history I don't think it's ever been exceeded the work that J. J. Weaver did on his two books that he did at the University of Nebraska during the

dustbowl years. That was the greatest education you could ever get. It was just unbelievable and maybe it's in print now. I had to have it photocopied and got it out of the library and punched the holes in it and all that and the pictures weren't any good, but you didn't need the pictures. It was so remarkable the quantity of work and you think about him and then Landers and different people like that-- you can say yes they weren't there but they were there. We couldn't have ever gone anywhere without 'em. You know, if they hadn't done the work that they done. So it was really special I think but that J. J. Weaver's work. Boy! The holes those graduate students had to dig ten and fifteen feet to expose the whole roots and all the detailing they had to do and the amount of material they had to take out of the soil that you know, the living roots and weigh it and what an enormous amount of work!

I: Yeah. So were you to have started doing that as the county conservation board employee, I knew Steve Finnegan and I-- he was tenacious at protecting the things that you guys had as the Black Hawk County Conservation Board and Steve must have been behind it one hundred percent but also probably gulped hard now and then?

P: Yeah. He was behind it one hundred percent. he was willing to donate my time. Gave me a vehicle. A little Chevette. So I could run around to all those places and do all those talks and paid my salary for it. But when it finally came down to who was going to actually be the roadside biology crew in Black Hawk County it was passed over to county roads and he wanted that. He wanted it out. He didn't want that to be in his budget you know and have to account for that and there again, this was all through the 80's, the hardest time anybody's ever seen in Black Hawk county anyhow and so real good at everything allowing me and other people to just get it all going. You know. That was really great and then that's also when we were working on all this that's also where-- well, I was leaving. I left in '89 but that's where we transferred everything that we knew and everything that we were involved with over to UNI and Daryl Smith and he was building the roadside, what do you call it, it's a whole department there at UNI. They were just starting to put that together. So it worked out remarkably well. They were in a much better position to handle that then we ever could be and Steve didn't want to be funding different conferences and things like that so he didn't want the whole focus to go to roadsides and compared to Black Hawk County's wildlife program and so.

I: Let's take a break for just a little bit. I'll shut her off and double check the battery and then we will restart.

## Haywood 2

I: Session 2. Interview with Bill Haywood December 7th, 2016. Interviewer Jean Eells. So I'd like to pick up a little bit about your knowledge of some of the legislation that might have gone on-- just if there is anything that you remember about, you know, who was for it, who was against it. Anybody that had any influence. I know you were in the middle of the actual work but you would have known who was pushing and promoting and--

P: We-- I think everything came about without legislation and it came about because of Steve Holland and the DOT. Once they started their program and they could tell people why they weren't mowing the median in-between interstates anymore and those types of things. Then it just went on from there, but I met with the Secretary of Agriculture, Iowa's and he didn't care about it at all. And I did a presentation to the state association of weed commissioners and that went fairly well. In a way it was like telling them you are going to lose your job if this all goes, and there were quite a few that were in agreement. There were quite a few that were just old school and that's the way it was and actually there's still a lot of counties that same way in Iowa still still-- [inaudible] so we didn't change any laws or anything like that. It was just a great education program by UNI and by the Iowa DOT.

I: So as you traveled around and talked to various county conservation boards or they would have you come and make a presentation on their behalf to a group, you would probably get some pretty serious questions from people who had some concerns over-- what were some of those concerns? What did they--

P: It was always weeds and it was always noxious weeds. So what'd we have ten or twenty of 'em on the books and the biggest thing there was just that agriculture had changed and we didn't have to feel so obligated. We did have to always address pasture land. The musk thistle had moved into Iowa during that time period and if you recall it followed every railroad track, you know. It came right across the state. It was really remarkable because they do broadcast spray their slopes. They kill everything and the musk thistle is the only thing that grew there. So it came right on across and so we had-- that was an issue that came up virtually every time but overall I think the good in the program outweighed any of the negatives and people just had to accept it. I recall one time, one of the weed commissioners from around Davenport was so upset about tesle and how it was spreading because people used it in ornaments you know, made flower vases with it and wanted it outlawed from the state of Iowa and there wasn't any talking that person out of it. Just like they couldn't talk us out of thinking that growing big blue stem was far better than growing brome and so you just kind of learned to live with it. Hope they didn't follow you around too much!

I: Talk a little bit about any remnants that you were aware of that were perhaps adjacent to roadsides that close examination. Did you have anything-- any knowledge of remnants that might of come to attention because of roadside work?

P: Because of the public information that was going out-- and we did get covered by the newspaper every year you know. There was quite a bit of interest so those things came along. People would call and there was a milk truck driver and he called in one time about this little remnant sort of the east central part of Black Hawk County and another one was over southwest of Dunkerton. Somebody else brought that to everybody's attention. There was quite a bit of that things were just happening-- it was just kind of fun and there's one right over here by the sand prairie and of course the sand prairie, that was a big thing I mean we had a nice forty acre expanse of native prairie that people could see you know so that was really wonderful to have that. That was mainly UNI and Daryl. I love finding them in the road ditch though. That was the best. There are so many beautiful little grasses. We talk so much about Indian grass and big blue and those types of tall grasses but there are some soft little grasses that are associated you know and they are only niches on the slopes in some of those ditches and that's really neat.

I: Talk a little bit about any of the wildlife impacts that you may have personally seen--

P: Well the wildlife impact on the state of Iowa well because of Silent Spring and getting rid of DDT and so during those years, had nothing necessarily to do with the prairie program but from 1980 on-- we went from a state that had what, six deer in it back in the 1950's and we had no Canada Geese. No wood ducks. We did not have beaver, bull frogs, didn't have eagles, turkey vultures, and during those years all those species came and the revival was inspirational-- especially when you looked back because you had to get a few years behind ya. But to see how the beaver-- because their pelts weren't worth any money, people weren't entrapping them they started expanding and when you got the beaver you got the wood ducks and you also got the bull frogs, which some people think are an invasive species from the south but just the same, they were there and just the contentedness of everything was remarkable.

I: Yeah. Still.

P: Turkey vultures we wouldn't have had then-- we wouldn't have something to run over on the road.

I: Yeah. Did people complain about, oh gosh, if we have more wildlife in the ditches then we will have more--

P: Oh. yeah. Oh yeah. That came up once in a while. The deer issue was really big but that really hit its peak after I was gone-- after 1990. That really came on. Beaver caused a fair amount of problems because they would just clear out a half acre or corn next to a pond you know. Corn shouldn't have been there in the first place but it was and so those kind of issues came up and those actually came up through my work more than through the roadside program. We'd have to go out and look at it and try to talk them out of whatever you know, sometimes we'd have to bring in the game warden and he'd give them special permission to kill 'em and things like that. There's just a number of hoops to jump through.

I: Talk a little but more about the association that you guys kind of formed up that kind of the energy around being pioneers in that.

P: It was really remarkable, with Milt Owens out of Worth (actually Mitchell) County and then I forget some of the people but working with Story County and some of the others and John Olds out of Black Hawk county, just a fun of-- everybody being so excited about things. Everybody was so anxious to get it all going and everything was shared. Every bit of information. Everything you tried to do and failed out you could discuss and people would tell you how they did it and what they did it with and how they modified this piece of equipment and yeah, it was just a-- it was really something. I thought about it quite a few times afterwards and I've seen a little bit of it in the forestry end with the contractors, the forestry contractors that actually do the work in the woods. They also were like that for a while but it's just being there at that time with all those young people. The other thing about it was the county conservation boards were all brand new so everybody was a young person and they were all springboard jobs. Everybody wanted to end up at the state you know. But they were so anxious to accomplish something and everybody was just doing it. Yeah and it was just a lot of fun. Even drinking beer with everybody was the most educational thing you ever did. It was-- just never stopped. Talked about it all the time. Just everything yeah.

I: Good fun. Lots of good memories of good people in that.

P: Yeah it was.

I: Can you name some of the other names, kind of for future reference, just wither they had a lot of importance or not, I'm not asking you to say who was the most important. Just name some of the names of people that you worked with so that anybody in the future might be able to connect the dots. So John Olds and--

P: John Olds--

I: Who was in Story County? Who was the

P: Steve.

I: Steve Lekwa

P: Yeah. And Joe Hanner out in Dallas County. Little bit and but you know, it's been so long. I've forgotten the names. I know I'll leave out some important people.

I: Rob Roman

P: I really liked working with Harry Graves. Out of Buchanan. There's a guy that could figure out a way to cobble anything together that will make it work so the guys out of Linn County. They were another big county like us that had more money than anybody else. There was a little resentment about that but it was okay. They all realized that

especially with the way Steve Finnegan would allow me or some of the other people, Mary Durtiza to oh, Mary is a special person, but anyhow, how Steve would allow them to work with anybody at any time. So that-- when people say yeah you guys have a lot more money you can afford these people and do that, well, Steve shared those people. You know, so it wasn't like anybody was overly resentful. They were aware of the fact that we in Linn County and some of the others were rich counties but they didn't take it to a level of animosity at least. Yeah, we got to work with all of them and I enjoyed Johnson County. They had a big man for an Exec. big handle bar mustache. Some of those guys were so beneficial because they were so aware of their budget that they could ask you the right questions. You know, is this going to work, what does this cost, what are you going to do if it fails, you know, questions that us young enthusiastic people never even cared about because we were just going to go do something you know. So they were really good. They were kind of like the governor controlling the speed in this thing. Yeah, everybody fit together real well.

I: Western Iowa did you get over to western Iowa?

P: Not much. I did go out there, Carroll County was real good. And they had-- Carroll County was interesting because they were one of the groups that had farmers rotating their livestock, their cattle, every few days through warm season grass pastures, so they did, as far as I was concerned, the pioneering work in Iowa with that type of thing. Pasture land out there was a big thing and there again that was where noxious weeds were a little bit more important because they couldn't invade the pastures and so it was an issue that had to be dealt with so the fact that Carroll County did that, that was really good you know. That they had people that were willing to listen and work with that type of program so--

I: Have you kept in touch with where some of the programs are now?

P: No. I haven't.

I: Once you left, you left.

P: When I left, I had to make up my mind. I was not a forcer anymore and I had to make up my mind what I was going to do and I said, I'm going back into forestry and I did and I refused to do any warm season plantings. There were forestry contractors and I'd refer 'em but I didn't-- I didn't want to spread it. I just wanted to work the forest end so that's what I did. It was a little bit unfortunate in the sense that I lost contact with everybody but it was also very good for me to do that and the forest is just like the prairie. You could live your whole life studying and all you can pray for is that when-- when you die, if you are reincarnated you could start where you left off and spend another lifetime at it because it is that complicated and that in-depth and so yeah.

I: Being able to read all the signs that you see out there.

P: I didn't really like being a jack of all trades and a master of none. There were people in prairie who were just-- knew so much more than me. Could identify so many more plants so I had to pick my area of expertise you know. And so yeah.

I: Talk a little bit about learning the trade of being weed commissioner and how you bridged going from wildlife conservation to all of a sudden here you are in charge of these trucks and-- that had to been taking a little bit of courage to sell off the equipment and switch to backpacks, you had confidence.

P: It was good but I was a little bit-- being forced into it I felt like I could get away with it and I did. We got a lot of calls. And you know, Jean, half those calls. I swear, half of 'em, and we did get a lot of calls, but half of them, were because one landowner had an issue with the other landowner. Sometimes it was a brand new issue. Sometimes it was one that lingered from when they were kids and I'd have to go deal with that and there's just a whole bunch of examples but one little one was one time a police didn't like his neighbors natural roadside ditch and it was kind of an area where the housing was spreading and I was stuck with that issue and actually I did nothing about it in that case but it was so difficult to work through some of those and the politics, they loved calling the supervisors and of course they wouldn't call me, they would call Steve and so I almost dread it-- being weed commissioner. His was-- and still to this day drive through Black Hawk county and see areas where I remember bad things happening because I was out there stuck between two people who did not want to get along. But as far as, as far as it all went, the longer you could take to wipe out a set of weeds or something, you know, that somebody had called in about, it was a big issue. So maybe we could just mow it. Maybe it was just ragweed and you could just get it mowed. Or something like that. Canada thistle when they were stuck on that one it was a tough one and sometimes you could wait thirty days and it would disappear. That was good and sometimes you couldn't get away with that and that's when our backpack crew would be out there and it almost sounds like I was a scam artist but I wasn't. There was just a lot of things like that going on all the time that you had to dance around and--

I: So you might have wanted to wait because it wasn't the right time to do something--

P: Exactly, by the time Canada Thistle is in bloom you are not going to kill it anyhow and the other thing is if you wait a couple weeks it'll disappear and the blooms will be gone and it won't be quite so visible and so there was a little bit of that going on all the time but oh boy,

I: Yeah, because spraying it at the wrong time is wasting money and time--

P: Yeah, you'd have to-- really the way to do it was to wait until the very next year and come back the first week of June and hit it with a particular herbicide, which did work on it. It also killed legumes though. That herbicide. So you know, these things never grow alone. That was the other big problem, you know, it was just knowing that what you are doing was not exactly right, you know, you could go in there and use a backpack to try to spray the individual thistles but then you are killing some little prairie legume possibly

at the same time. So sometimes I-- and I did learn this, and I took a longer view and sometimes I would say, okay, we are just going to go in there and kill that out and then we are going to allow succession to just advance and take it and in ten or twelve years, it's going to be okay. That's all we can do on this issue. You know, so that's how we go at it sometimes but yeah, that was a part of it I did not enjoy was the complaints.

I: So being an avid photographer really helped, you mentioned that.

P: Oh tremendous. That was my hobby then.

I: 'Cause you could document, certainly the results. Are there roadsides that you go by now and remember working on that one and say oh yeah, or oh it really needs more help or how do you look at it now?

P: I do see both. I see one that I hydro-seeded and I'm almost embarrassed to tell people I did it but that was part of the learning process too because hydro-seeding without being able to culti-pack was almost a waste of time but we did not know that for about two years and the reason we hydro-seeding was because we couldn't get equipment on it so you never could culti-pack on it so that was just one of those learning curves you know and so anyhow that road is down by Gilbertville and I do drive that once in a while and wow, it doesn't look so good to me but--

I: But there are some that do I hope.

P: Yeah. There are. Not being able to burn is a big hindrance to this whole program. Then you can say, some areas you can mow but you can't and mowing also with a tractor on any kind of slope is a disturbance. You are always ripping up the soil so using native prairie, without fire on steep or moderately steep slopes is always going to be a problem but it's better than it was. Their biggest problem right now, and this I see it a lot is the invasion of woody species and that will never go away. Especially with the global warming and you know in thirty years, Iowa's picked up three inches of rainfall going across the state and so we are wetter. We are warmer, we just have a lot of woody vegetation moving into the roadsides and they are all kind of scrambling right now. I see some really disastrous programs where they just drench the trees down with an herbicide and kill everything on the ground and it just looks so ugly and terrible and some of 'em try to use the big grinders that reach out with the arm and grind 'em down and there isn't a solution that I can see to that right now and it will be a problem. It's going to be a threat in a sense to the prairie.

I: So you managed to stay out of the politics to some extent.

P: Yeah. Almost entirely.

I: Entirely. How-- elaborate a little bit more on the relationship with DNR and you know, they were holding an arms length there for a while and then they--

P: There again that's the liaison--

I: And who was--

P: I can't remember the names of those people.

I: It was a person who was a liaison to county conservation boards or--

P: It was..

I: So like Bob Walker or Jim Zohrer.

P: Oh it was. It was Walker first, wasn't it. Yeah. Then didn't Zohrer do it later? Yeah. Right. Exactly. Well they are the ones that healed that all up and you can even see I didn't recall that they were even part of the people that funded that little slide show but they were.

I: Yeah.

P: So they can write a board but that first year they didn't want to get in and I don't know how much of this you want to transcribe but I always saw that middle management in a state job is really in a tough position because if it's a good decision their bosses would rather make it and if it's a bad decision it could hurt their careers so you know. They have to be careful and we didn't have that problem in the county conservation boards. We could make all kinds of mistakes you know and life went on so it took 'em a year to get in there but the other thing that really helped bring all those groups together was like Pheasants Forever. When you start picking up those groups and you have these moderately wealthy people who have a strong opinion and tend to vote republican and are on your side, you are going to go somewhere. You know, it's going to happen so. Yeah, and that's how those things worked for us at that time.

I: Yeah, that slide program made me think about how vibrant those groups were at that time. Some of them still are but certainly that changes over time just like anything else.

P: Yeah, right.

I: So you get a firebrand in there who is really exciting and people like to--

P: And they were all new!

I: They were all new too, yeah. Interesting connections. Well, anything else that you can think of that--

P: I think you've plucked everything out of my little brain that I could come up with. I'm surprised-- I thought fifteen minutes would be it, that's all I can remember.

I: I would like to have you talk just a little bit more about your relationship with UNI since you guys were so nearby and close and Daryl Smith had-- and I had interviewed Daryl and Kirk Henderson so I have, you know, some history there but tell me a little bit more about that interface with them and the county conservation board so-- as far as them being a resource and--

P: Well, you know what it was, it was serendipity because they made me weed commissioner at the same time that Pauline Drobney had to do her master's degree research and that really tied us together. Daryl was also supportive of things but his-- his items were always established little plots of prairie and then all of a sudden we had all these roadsides and he had a graduate student that had an idea on how to build that into a masters degree thesis and so then we were just talking all the time and so it wasn't just a matter anymore of meeting and saying Daryl we are going to try to put a little three acre planting of switchgrass in at Hickory Hills, what do you think we ought to do? It was big stuff-- you know, it was exciting stuff than all the things we found out in those roadsides and so that's what kept us so connected. If there was one thing you know, other than just friendship. It was the fact that we were working through that.

I: As I think about the tasks that you would have to do to establish something if you are starting from a fully scraped road ditch that's been scoured you got to scarify it a little bit to get something to stick, acquiring seed-- let's talk a little bit about seed--

P: There was a company in western Iowa and I can't recall the name of it. John Olds actually did quite a bit of that worked with them a fair amount. Does Buffalo Seed seem familiar?

I: Yeah.

P: And sometimes we were buying seed that was just combined. Indian grass in-particular. Not even cleaned or anything and had no germination percentage. So we were dealing with those kind of things and everybody was trying to get by on it cheap and turned out that's not the way to do it at all. Turns out the best way to do it is go get yourself a really good drill and buy certified seed and use what they recommend and things will happen, but we went through quite a little bit of that. We combined our own seed. We had a farmer name Marlin something that would combine for us. He had an old pull-type combine that would do it. We'd store it. Dry it. lay out plastic and dry it on the floors of the machine shed and then stir it everyday and then we'd bag it all up. Oh boy. There was a lot of that. Then go try and get it to grow. The thing was the switchgrass was real easy to get going and I think the variety at the time was Blackwell and there was another one Cave-in-rock. People kind of abhor them today because they are kind of weedy, but that's what we used. A lot of seed that we bought was actually developed for pasture so it was very rank-roan. Our big blue stem would be very rank and then all blow over in the winter. Wasn't-- it wasn't as good as the native which didn't grow as tall and stood up better. There were a lot of little things like that going on but that's where we learned from everybody else at all those different meetings you know so it didn't take so long to work our way through those errors and--

I: Yeah. Yeah. That makes sense. So you would be able to combine them from remnant prairie or--

P: No these were plots that we planted.

I: Plots you grown out.

P: When Mary Retcehl was here she had a couple of little-- I wouldn't-- educational plots. One of them was at hickory hills and we had one up the fire trail three miles up from Black Hawk Park. We had another one up there. So we would combine those. Those were the two main ones.

I: Mixed stand or single species?

P: Well, they were planted mixed but switchgrass one and sometimes Indian at first, we rarely ever managed to get big blue stem.

I: Okay.

P: Yeah, it was-- those varieties of switch. They were really aggressive but it was still better than what we had, it filled up great you know, it helped sell the program. Yeah because it wasn't so rank and thick.

I: So then '89-- had people like Dan Allen gotten started--

P: I didn't know him.

I: I can't think of any other-- Darryl Kottenbeutel had a little but I don't that he did much for roadsides. I think he just did more. Howard Bright up in Ion Exchange.

P: That's right. I didn't work with Howard, I knew of him.

I: I didn't know if he had jumped in all that soon. Yeah. Made a difference. How did you learn about working in a roadside for planting? Like you say, the hydroseeder, you know 'cause you couldn't get in with equipment and you know..

P: We bought the drill.

I: I think about how ditches when they do a clean out.. it's wet--

P: Those you have to hydro-seed 'cause they don't leave you a slip to drive on really, you know. So yeah, that was a good thing about Black Hawk county. They were behind us and they had the equipment and so...

I: And they knew you needed to come in and do something. They knew you were going to need to see.

P: What nobody wanted to do then Jean was spend all that money on the seed. That was why we were harvesting our own and stuff like that but we thought we could do it. We thought it would work. And it didn't work so good, but that's the one thing I remember. Everybody was great on cooperation but nobody had any extra cash to spend on it so being in with Black Hawk county though that was great because boy they have equipment.

I: Which sometimes is the limiting factor even if you can afford seed or have somebody give you seed if you can't get it in.

P: Yeah.

I: Doesn't work so well. Uhm, okay. I'm just curious, Cindy Hildebrand's name was at that bottom of that list and she played a role apparently?

P: I bet she helped out at-- I'll bet you anything. Yeah.

I: Okay. All righty. This is been really helpful. This is just great. I'll go ahead--

P: It's like a blast from the past.