

**Transcript of an Oral History Interview in the collection of the  
BREVARD COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
308 Forrest Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922**

Nancy Yasecko: Okay. The first thing I want to ask is to tell us your name and when and where you were born.

Jack Salmela: My name is Jack Salmela. I was born here in Sebastian, 1923.

Nancy Yasecko: And when did your family first come to Brevard?

Jack Salmela: My folks came to Brevard in 1911. They settled first [00:00:30] in Valkaria, then later homesteaded on Berry Road west of Grant.

Nancy Yasecko: What brought them to Florida?

Jack Salmela: The big land boom. My folks are both from Finland. It was their desire to move to warmer climate and to especially have land. And it was available in Florida through the Homestead Act at no cost.

Nancy Yasecko: What a change from Finland to [00:01:00] Valkaria. What were their impressions when they first came here?

Jack Salmela: Well, I'm not too sure about that but it was very primitive, of course. He had to use oxen wagon. And even the produce that he grew, he'd have to transport it to Melbourne with oxen cart. So, that's pretty primitive.

Nancy Yasecko: Did they come with other people they knew or did they just come by themselves?

Jack Salmela: No. They came by [00:01:30] themselves.

Nancy Yasecko: It's hard to imagine why someone would choose that area of all of Florida. Do you think they just looked at a map and said, "That would be good?"

Jack Salmela: There was evidently some promotion to get people to come to Florida. The first in Valkaria was called the Catholic colony. Now, what the Catholic had to do with it, my folks were not Catholic but evidently, they were promoting land available [00:02:00] to encourage people to come.

Nancy Yasecko: So they homesteaded. That meant that they had to clear some of the land.

Jack Salmela: Absolutely.

Nancy Yasecko: That couldn't have been easy.

Jack Salmela: No.

Nancy Yasecko: They had to deal with some of the mosquitoes and the animals that were around.

Jack Salmela: Yes. One of the stories I've heard that mosquitoes were so bad, the oxen, they ran away and went out in the river. My dad had a terrible time [00:02:30] gettin' them back.

Nancy Yasecko: You mean, they went in the river?

Jack Salmela: Yeah. Cattle used to do that to escape mosquitoes. Go in the water.

Nancy Yasecko: Lay down. Just have their head ...

Jack Salmela: Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: Oh, man! Did they grow a garden or plant citrus or ...

Jack Salmela: It was farming but my folks went completely broke farming and just gave up the place. [00:03:00] So then, he started commercial fishing and did real well commercial fishing. So then, he bought the hotel here in Sebastian. My mother ran it. He still continued to fish but then, when the boom burst, they lost everything they had again but fortunately, they had bought their home and the furniture was paid for. So he started back commercial fishing again.

Nancy Yasecko: I guess there was still a lot of fish around.

Jack Salmela: [00:03:30] Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: What would he fish for?

Jack Salmela: Mostly mullet and some trout and some pompano. Mostly mullet.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). He had a little boat?

Jack Salmela: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: Did it have a motor or how'd it get ...

Jack Salmela: Well, back then, you had what are called motor boat. And you towed the skiffs with the net behind that. Then, you would anchor the motor boat. Then, row from there and find the fish and put the net around.

Nancy Yasecko: [00:04:00] Sounds like a tough job. Would it take more than one guy to do it?

Jack Salmela: Well, it can be done with one guy. Most cases, it was two.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). They fish in the daytime or at night?

Jack Salmela: Well, it can be done both ways. My dad mainly fished at night.

Nancy Yasecko: I wonder why. Just cooler or ...

Jack Salmela: No. It was more successful fishing at night.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Somebody said, "If you had a lantern, the fish would jump in your boat." You think ...

Jack Salmela: Yes. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: A little bit.

Jack Salmela: Well a little bit, [00:04:30] yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah. Mostly you had to net them?

Jack Salmela: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: What was the name of the hotel that you all had?

Jack Salmela: It's just Sebastian Hotel.

Nancy Yasecko: Where was that located?

Jack Salmela: It's right about where the traffic light is now. There's a picture of it in the Tales of Sebastian.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And you'd get tourists coming down from up north?

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: What would draw tourists to this area?

Jack Salmela: Well, [00:05:00] adventure and good fishing, hunting, and people coming down to buy land.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah. When you were a little boy, then, it was pretty wild around here. You were living at the hotel or at the house?

Jack Salmela: Yes. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah?

Jack Salmela: I was born about a block north of there. Then, my folks bought the hotel.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). What was it like coming up? What would you do when [00:05:30] you were a kid?

Jack Salmela: Gee, whiz. When we were kids, it was wonderful because we had such good fishing and hunting.

Nancy Yasecko: You spent most of your time outside?

Jack Salmela: Yes. My sister and brother-in-law, they had the fishing camp over at Sebastian Inlet back in the 30s. So I could spend as much time there as I wanted. And I did some commercial fishing with my dad, then duck hunting, especially in the St. Johns Marsh was just out of this world. [00:06:00] Back then, the St. Johns Marsh, when you got out in the middle, you couldn't see the tree line on either side. It was that broad. Now, it's just a very narrow piece left.

Nancy Yasecko: Uh-huh. That must have been somethin'. There weren't too many people around.

Jack Salmela: No, no. That one time, I guess during the boom, the population of Sebastian got up to about 500 but then, during the Depression it was down around 300.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm [00:06:30] (affirmative). Well, your memories must be pretty vivid of the Depression era.

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: How would you get along? There wasn't much money around.

Jack Salmela: No. There sure wasn't but fortunately, the home and the land that my folks bought had a small citrus grove. Just the harvest, the fruit from that small grove would be enough to pay the taxes every year. So, that meant a lot.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And you had fish to eat.

Jack Salmela: [00:07:00] Plenty of oysters and crabs and that kind of stuff.

Nancy Yasecko: I guess they grew a garden.

Jack Salmela: A little bit.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah. Wasn't as bad as folks in the city, I guess.

Jack Salmela: I wouldn't think so, yeah.

Then, by the way, all my sisters were born in Grant but I was born here in Sebastian.

Nancy Yasecko: Mmm (affirmative). Where would you go if you needed a doctor?

Jack Salmela: We [00:07:30] had a local doctor, Doctor Rose.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). He pretty good doctor?

Jack Salmela: Well, we think so but looking back, we seldom got sick. We might have the measles or the flu or something like that.

Nancy Yasecko: I hear that from a lot of people. They say, "We didn't need a doctor, not so much."

Let's talk a little bit about as you got older, [00:08:00] you must have come of age just about the same time World War Two was starting to happen. What happened to you then?

Jack Salmela: I was anxious to do my part. I enlisted in the, back then, was called the Army Air Corps. And I went through flight training and became a pilot.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Where did you serve?

Jack Salmela: In Burma.

Nancy Yasecko: So you got a lot of flying time in?

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: [00:08:30] Yeah. I guess while you were gone, they built a bunch of little airports around here.

Jack Salmela: While I was waiting to be called, I actually drove one of the dump trucks while we were building the airport here in Sebastian. It's what you call an auxiliary field where the people would come from Vero and practice landings and that sort of thing.

And by the way, up to that time, that's the best job I'd ever had. I was working [00:09:00] 12 hours a day, seven days a week, making 50 cents an hour.

Nancy Yasecko: Wow! Guess that was good money.

Jack Salmela: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: They were building a lot of little fields around.

Jack Salmela: Park, this one, Valkaria, Malabar. Those are called satellite fields.

Nancy Yasecko: What did they use those for?

Jack Salmela: What's that?

Nancy Yasecko: What were they using those fields for?

Jack Salmela: For training purposes. In this area, it was all Navy people.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Where did you take your training?

Jack Salmela: [00:09:30] Out in Texas. Then, fighter training was over in Fort Myers on the West Coast.

Nancy Yasecko: What happened when you got out of the service? Did you come back to this area?

Jack Salmela: Well, just came back to Sebastian. Nothing to do then but a little more commercial fishing but then my brother-in-law, he had a big wholesale fish business. He's also starting a beer distributing business. So we moved [00:10:00] down there to go to work with him but something about that venture failed. And I was kinda stranded down there. So I just went out to the airport and got my instructors rating. Meantime, a flight school opened at the Melbourne airport, [Robin Skyway 00:10:17]. So I moved up there in '46. And I worked as a flight instructor.

Nancy Yasecko: Tell me about that. What was that like?

Jack Salmela: [00:10:30] That flying school was based around the GI Bill whereby veterans could receive money to learn some vocation. In this case, they were learning to fly an airplane.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And they would go on to be commercial pilots?

Jack Salmela: In many cases, yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: I guess Florida had good weather for flying.

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: It must be why they built all those little airplane.

Well, at what point did you get involved [00:11:00] in mosquito control?

Jack Salmela: While I was working at Robin Skyway, the Board of County Commissioners had purchased, I think, six surplus Stearman airplanes to go into aerial spraying for mosquito. Now they—this is a carryover from World War II when the Navy was spraying. Now they not only sprayed the base but they would spray quite a large [00:11:30] surrounding area. The results were just fantastic. That was with DDT.

But, then when the base was closing down, the Board of County Commissioners bought these surplus Stearman airplanes. They were for sale for anywhere from 250 to \$500 a piece. So they put tanks on them. They did some spraying in '46 but we really started in '47. That's when I started flying [00:12:00] with them, too.

Nancy Yasecko: So you were actually out there doing the spray work yourself?

Jack Salmela: Yeah. Now, the first couple years, I was not a county employee. It was through this contract that Robin Skyway had with the county. But, then, 1950, then the chairman of the board, Max Rodes at the time, I want to say I believe he was chairman then. He talked me into going to work for the county as a full-time employee. And that was \$150 [00:12:30] a month.

Nancy Yasecko: You're worth every penny of it, I'm sure. If you'd taken up a collection around, you might have done better. Where did they base the operations of the mosquito control operations? Was that in Melbourne?

Jack Salmela: We had, more or less, three areas on account of the length of the county. At that time, what little office we had was up at the Titusville airport. Then, we had another operation out of Merritt [00:13:00] Island. In fact, mosquito control built that little airport there and another one here in the south end of the county. So I mainly worked here in the south end of the county and later became what's called area supervisor. I was supervisor, all right, just mainly supervise myself and maybe one other employee.

Nancy Yasecko: So you'd have your tanks and stuff in different—in all three locations?

Jack Salmela: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Then, we had a tank truck [00:13:30] that could go to wherever we were flying.

Nancy Yasecko: How would you know which areas needed to be spray?

Jack Salmela: All right. At that time, Thomas L. King was our director. Then, he was formerly with the extension service. A very knowledgeable person. And he hired two very energetic, very knowledgeable young people. One of them was Walter Braddock. Then, [Robbers 00:13:59]. What [00:14:00] was his last name? They would go out either by boat or truck and search for where the mosquitoes were breeding and take adult counts. And that was a big help in determining where to go. Of course, you get telephone calls. People let you know.

Nancy Yasecko: When you say, "Get a count," maybe you could describe for us what would be involved with that.

Jack Salmela: All right. As far as larval count, you have a white dipper you dip in the water and count quickly how many larvae [00:14:30] are in that dipper. That's a larval count. An adult count is called a landing rate count. You stand for one minute, then count how many mosquitoes land, what you can see on your front and multiply that by two because, see, they're landing on your back, too, so that's a landing rate count.

Nancy Yasecko: That was part of your job to stand out and get bit?

Jack Salmela: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Oh, yes.

Nancy Yasecko: That seems like a pretty bad job description.

Jack Salmela: Yeah. Even then, we had [00:15:00] what are called light traps. Mosquitoes are attracted to light. Not all species but in this case, the mosquitoes that were the worst problem to us, they are attracted to light. Then, they'd be captured. You can count how many you had. So we had a pretty good indication of what the problem was.

Nancy Yasecko: What would be the dipper rate, the larval rate when you had a pretty bad problem?

Jack Salmela: Oh, gosh. When they're really thick, it'd be [00:15:30] just so many you couldn't count them.

Nancy Yasecko: You'd say, "Off the scale."

Jack Salmela: Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: What about the landing rates? What would those be like?

Jack Salmela: A normal count might be in the hundreds but 500 is not unusual. Occasionally, while we're running tests, they would even put down 1,000 because it be just a black cloud of mosquitoes.

Nancy Yasecko: It must have been hard to stand still for a whole minute.

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: Did you ever just say, "I think [00:16:00] I'll just guess," and get out of there?

Jack Salmela: Sure. Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: What did the old timers do to deal with mosquitoes before you guys came?

Jack Salmela: By God, about the only thing they could do. Well, at every door, the people had the old mosquito brushes made from palm fronds and they'd beat the mosquitoes off and then hurry inside. Then, they use a lot of smoke. They'd have a pot burning with rags in it. Then, BeeBee Bee—Bee Brand [00:16:30] Powder had pyrethrin in it. You could put that on a fire as it's smoldering. And it was quite effective. Then, on your body, about the only thing we had was citronella. You could smear that on your skin. It was kinda a gooey mess but it repelled mosquitoes.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). So they had some things that could do but ...

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: ... until you started spraying, there wasn't much relief?

Jack Salmela: No. None. Like I say, [00:17:00] the grove workers, they would wear heavy clothing, even in the summertime and maybe a net over their neck.

Nancy Yasecko: Wait, when you're spraying initially, it was with DDT. Then somehow, you got the idea to work on the marshes themselves.

Jack Salmela: All right. When we started spraying—when the Navy started spraying with DDT and it was so effective until it was just miraculous. The first couple years [00:17:30] that we sprayed, we had excellent results but without our knowing it and we were not only spraying the populated areas, we were also spraying the breeding area.



Even though it looked like we were killing most of the mosquitoes, there were some that we were not killing. Now those were the ones that were able to withstand DDT. Through that selection process, in just a few years time, we had selected mosquitoes that was resistant [00:18:00] to DDT. You couldn't kill 'em with DDT.

So then, oh, gee whiz. It was a terrible thing to go through. In fact, they fired the director, thinking he wasn't doing a good job. They just couldn't believe that the mosquitoes had become resistant to DDT but tests mainly by the US Department of Agriculture proved that point. So then, we switched to benzene hexachloride, which is [00:18:30] a similar material. It wasn't a whole lot better. Then, after that, then came malathion, which was more effective but it didn't take me long to realize that just spraying for mosquitoes was a poor way to do it.

Fortunately, the State Board of Health got involved. In 1951, they were able to get a law passed that furnished \$15,000 matching [00:19:00] money to each mosquito district to help with the program.

Then, 1953, Chapter 388 was passed. That provided up to 75% matching funds but that money had to be used for source reduction only. In other words, to do something with the breeding area. It was at that time that we bought a couple dredges and six drag lines. We really [00:19:30] went into a massive program of altering the marshes to control the breeding at the source, which is a much better way of doing it.

Nancy Yasecko: Can you describe for us how you would approach a marsh? You had a marshy area along the river. What would you do?

Jack Salmela: With the dredges that is pretty much complete control. You just go in and just elevate the land until it no longer held water but dredging was [00:20:00] very expensive and very slow. And of course, it just completely destroyed the marsh habitat.

Another method is ditching. In some cases, it might drain the water off and other cases provide minnow access but not ... In Brevard County, we have no daily tide. So you could have a big ditch right here and a little hole over here. It's still breeding mosquitoes.

[00:20:30] I give Dave Nisbet, one of our commissioners, credit for encouraging us to study impoundments. Now with impounding, you build a dike around this breeding area. Then, during the breeding season, keep the marsh covered with water.

The reason you do that, our worst mosquitoes are floodwater mosquitoes. They do not lay their eggs on water. So if you cover that area with [00:21:00] water, they do not have a place to lay their eggs. Then, of course, the minnow population builds up. And you got good predators to help also. I think I played a big part in making the impoundments work. And I like that on accounting the fish and good habitat for birds.

Nancy Yasecko: So there must have been some way for the water to get in and out of the impoundment.

Jack Salmela: All right. [00:21:30] To begin with and especially on this big NASA project, we did it in two phases. One was to build a dike first and put water in there. We did it with a pump or here in the south end of the county, I did quite a bit with artesian well. Then, later, we could go back in what we call phase two and then put in culverts so that the fish could go and come. It was not necessary to keep those marshes flooded year round.

Nancy Yasecko: How many acres do you think [00:22:00] were actually impounded in the county?

Jack Salmela: Oh, it's right at—it's between 20 and 30,000.

Nancy Yasecko: That's a lot of work. That must have taken years.

Jack Salmela: Oh, yes.

Nancy Yasecko: What is the mosquito breeding season? I don't think everybody knows. When--?

Jack Salmela: It depends on the time of rainfall. We usually start getting rain about the third week in June. What's happening, that marsh [00:22:30] had been dry up until that point. And floodwater mosquitoes, they lay their eggs over a long period of time. Those eggs accumulate. They reach tremendous numbers breaker. They've been counted as high as 50,000 per square foot.

Nancy Yasecko: Wow!

Jack Salmela: All right. Then, when the rain comes, the whole marsh doesn't flood but there'll be holes here and there that flood. Those areas, they don't [00:23:00] stay flooded very long but it only takes about five to seven days from the time the egg hatch until the mosquito flies away. Then, the hole might dry up again. There no chance of fish becoming established.

When that repeats itself a few times, the population keeps getting bigger and bigger and bigger. Then, you have what are called a huge emergence. There are so many mosquitoes, they have to migrate in search of food. [00:23:30] So, that's when they travel great distances and fly into town. They might travel 20, 30 miles.

Nancy Yasecko: One little mosquito?

Jack Salmela: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Well, they usually pick the wind and go with the wind.

Nancy Yasecko: Wow, I always thought they stayed pretty close to where they hatched.

Jack Salmela: Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: No? What did they like to find for a host? What do they look for? They feed off of ...

Jack Salmela: With these mosquitoes, warm-blooded animals. Of course, we're [00:24:00] warm-blooded animals.

Nancy Yasecko: They also—I guess no reptiles, just ...

Jack Salmela: Well, some mosquitoes do feed on reptiles but those are not a problem to us as far as nuisance.

Nancy Yasecko: There's two or three kinds of mosquitoes around here?

Jack Salmela: Oh, yes. Well, at that time, we had 67 species. Now, with the Asian mosquitoes, I guess it's up to 69 but not all species are a big problem. In fact, some of them [00:24:30] don't even bite.

Nancy Yasecko: Huh! Is there anything good about mosquitoes? Do they do anything? Are they good for anything?

Jack Salmela: Well I don't know of anything that depends entirely on mosquitoes for food but of course, bats eat the adults but I don't know of anything that depends entirely on mosquitoes as a source of food.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah. The little fish will eat the eggs, I guess.

Jack Salmela: Mainly the larvae.

Nancy Yasecko: The larvae. [00:25:00] Yeah. The wiggling larvae.

As you did the impoundments, you were still doing some spraying.

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: So it was kinda a combined effort?

Jack Salmela: Yes. Even now, to begin with, when you get your first rains and you go out with the helicopters and airplane, locate exactly where they're breeding. You might go ahead and just treat these few little places.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Well it was about 1950 that the Air Force station [00:25:30] came in and they started launching missiles from the Cape. And I know some of those early space guys talk about how bad the mosquitoes were out there so no doubt they called on the county for some help.

Jack Salmela: Well, no. Back then, they did their own work. In fact, they even had an airplane that would come down from Langley or some place and spray the area.

Nancy Yasecko: Huh. That was interesting. At what point did the county get involved with working [00:26:00] with NASA and the Air Force on mosquito control?

Jack Salmela: Let's see. That was in the early ... We first worked with the Air Force, that was before NASA came. So we had a good relationship with the Air Force because we were already

working on Air Force land. We'd already built some dikes up at the Cape. Then, when NASA came along, we expanded that program to include NASA also. That was the early 60s.

Nancy Yasecko: Did they ever say, "Well, [00:26:30] this area is top secret. You can't come into this area or that area?"

Jack Salmela: No.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah. Pretty much free range of the ...

Jack Salmela: Yes, but of course, we had to have passes and ...

Nancy Yasecko: Badges and ...

Jack Salmela: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: They probably did security checks on you to make sure you were ...

Jack Salmela: I didn't know what all they did do but most of our work, though, was in remote regions.

Nancy Yasecko: And that helped take care of the whole thing.

Now there was a shift in the kinds of [00:27:00] insecticides and things that were used, even after malathion, right?

Jack Salmela: Mmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: They looked for more like, biological controls.

Jack Salmela: Yeah. I think what you're thinking about here is mainly in the larva sighting field. One material that was very effective is Altosid. It's an immature growth regulator. You put that in the breeding area. It's very safe. It can even be put in drinking water. [00:27:30] And it's a hormone mimic. And when a larva goes to the pupa stage, they just don't make it.

Nancy Yasecko: Well, that sounds pretty effective. They don't even emerge from the water at that point.

Jack Salmela: Then, another one that came along a little bit later is Bti. It works in similar fashion.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). You think they'll ever get rid of all the mosquitoes?

Jack Salmela: Very doubtful.

Nancy Yasecko: Just too many of them?

[00:28:00] Well all along, you were also interested in wildlife and working with the wildlife people and ...

Jack Salmela: Well I think I was personally interested. Then, Dr. Provost, the head of our research lab in Vero, at that time it was called the Entomological Research Center. He was very instrumental in encouraging mosquito control to be compatible with the environment. [00:28:30] He and I were great friends and worked closely together. He was a great influence for all of us.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Let's start off talking about some of the horror stories—mosquito horror stories that you heard. You got this lamp here.

Jack Salmela: Yeah. I think I mentioned how the grove workers would have to wear heavy coats even in the summertime. Their stories, in fact, I've had it happen to me that this is the type lantern [00:29:00] that the commercial fishermen used for probably 40 years. At times, the mosquitoes would get so bad. See, they were attracted to the light. They would close up these little vents and the lantern would go out. You might recall, there was something in the paper just a couple weeks ago where Harvey [Honnish 00:29:18] had mentioned the same thing. I've actually had that happen to me.

Nancy Yasecko: What kind of stories would people give you when they called up to tell you that you got to come out, [00:29:30] do some spraying?

Jack Salmela: In most cases, people were just very nice, just to call and let us know that they have a problem. They knew that we could send people out right away to check and see maybe the breeding is right close to their home or what and good possibility that we could locate the problem and solve the problem so it wouldn't reoccur right away. But there were times when the mosquitoes got real bad and we'd get hundreds of calls per day. And there was times that we were just overwhelmed. [00:30:00] We can't cover the whole county every day. Back then, it took almost a week to cover the county. So at times, people got a little bit impatient.

Nancy Yasecko: But on the whole, I think that the county commission was behind you 100%?

Jack Salmela: Oh, my goodness. Yup. See, the Mosquito Control District used to be completely separate. Now the Board of County Commissioners was [00:30:30] our governing body but they would have a separate meeting for mosquito control. We answered directly to the board. And I believe you'll find it in the minutes. It was stated that the mosquito problem was the worst problem that the Board of County Commissioners had to deal with. In all my experience, that director just gave me nothing but 100% support.

Nancy Yasecko: [00:31:00] What would the meetings be like? What would they talk about?

Jack Salmela: Of course, the meeting is mainly business meetings, the budget and the cost but if there's some problem, we'd go into that, too.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Looking for new ways to attack the problem?

Jack Salmela: The Board of County Commissioners didn't get too much involved with that on account of we had our research laboratories to do that. That was mainly handled through,

[00:31:30] it was the Bureau of Entomology then in Jacksonville. It's now called the Office of Entomology but now, since I've retired, mosquito control has been under—been put under the Agriculture Department.

Nancy Yasecko: I can't imagine them having a separate meeting just for mosquito control. How long did that go on?

Jack Salmela: How long would each meeting go or until how many ...

Nancy Yasecko: How many years was it that the mosquito control had their own meeting [00:32:00] with the commissioners?

Jack Salmela: Now the law creating the Mosquito Control District was passed in 1937 but now, whether they were having monthly meetings or what back then, I don't really know. But then, it continued until shortly before I retired.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). At which point you had a pretty good handle on the problem.

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: Think people coming down from the North now just don't have any idea of what they missed.

[00:32:30] Were there any particular county legislators that you remember as being specially sensitive to your problems? You mentioned Dave Nisbet.

Jack Salmela: Yeah. Oh, gosh, Mr. Fortenberry lived on Merritt Island. He had a sawmill business and I don't know what all else. He was the first chairman of the board that I remember. The next was Arthur Dunn. He lived in Mims. They had groves and that sort of thing. [00:33:00] So he certainly knew what the mosquitoes were. Dave Nisbet, he lived on Merritt Island and later C. Sweet Smith Jr. Then, Max Rodes in the south end of the county. He lived right on the riverfront. He sure knew what mosquitoes were.

Then, later, they formed the Fifth District and Joe Wickham went in as county commissioner. And he's lived in this area a very long time and been in construction work. He's a very [00:33:30] knowledgeable person.

Nancy Yasecko: Guess he was involved in some of the dragline work around the county, some of the ditching and things like that that might have helped out with the mosquito control. Did that help when they drained some of the areas back behind the ridge?

Jack Salmela: Well, yes. In fact, mosquito control, especially in the south end of the county and some in the central, too, as we completed our salt marsh work, we did some drainage [00:34:00] work, mainly for the cities and for the county or just like where the new hospital is in Melbourne now. I have pictures where I drained the water in that area about eight feet because that used to be just a big pond just east of the hospital where all the buildings are. So we did a lot of work like that for the cities.

Nancy Yasecko: Uh-huh. A bigger job than it seemed to be. Taking over all [00:34:30] things.

Now, you yourself, in your spare time, you've continued to be interested in hunting and fishing around these areas.

Jack Salmela: Oh, yes.

Nancy Yasecko: Tell me a little bit about where you go hunting.

Jack Salmela: Where I go hunting now?

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jack Salmela: It's on a private lease, on private land. You just lease the land from the property owner.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Can you still find some things out there?

Jack Salmela: Well, deer hunting is still good and turkey hunting is fair. [00:35:00] Now, quail hunting is on the decline because much of the fine palmetto woods has been cleared.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). You've been doing that for a lot of years?

Jack Salmela: Oh, yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: And the fishing, too. Do you like to fish?

Jack Salmela: I still do some fishing.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah. There aren't many commercial fisherman anymore.

Jack Salmela: Well, there's still quite a few in commercial fishing. Still quite a bit of commercial fishermen.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm [00:35:30] (affirmative). Did you ever have much to do with the local sheriffs and police departments?

Jack Salmela: Well, occasionally, they would call on us to do some search and that sort of thing but then later years, they got their own helicopter and did it themselves.

Nancy Yasecko: Did that ever help? Did you ever find anybody that they were looking for?

Jack Salmela: In case of drownings. We weren't into, you know, like [00:36:00] catching criminals or something like that.

Nancy Yasecko: But they would call on you ...

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: ... because you had the planes and ...

Jack Salmela: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: ... guys who could fly.

There's been a lot of changes. One thing we talked a little bit about was the land values. There was a boom and a bust and a boom and a bust. How would those, the values when you were a kid compare to those today?

Jack Salmela: How would the values what?

Nancy Yasecko: Land values. [00:36:30] How have those changed compared to today?

Jack Salmela: Oh, my goodness. Well, in my personal case, like my property on Eau Gallie Creek in Melbourne is waterfront property, 800-feet deep. I bought that piece of land for \$1,200.

Nancy Yasecko: When was that?

Jack Salmela: What would it be worth now? Gee whiz! It'd be in the hundreds of thousand.

Nancy Yasecko: [00:37:00] Guess a lot of the old timers wish they'd bought more, huh?

Jack Salmela: Well, money was hard to come by back then.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah.

Let's see what we haven't touched on. What about hurricanes and big storms coming through. Do you remember any when you were little?

Jack Salmela: Oh, yes. [00:37:30] In the 30s, we had a series of hurricanes that were quite severe and did a lot of damage to the fruit. Not too much damage to the buildings.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Would you know when they were coming?

Jack Salmela: Back then, really not. No, the old timers were pretty good about predicting storms just by observing the weather, but we didn't have a very good warning system.

Nancy Yasecko: So, you'd be caught unawares.

Jack Salmela: [00:38:00] Well, not completely but when that northeast wind started blowing, you better start boardin' up the house.

Nancy Yasecko: And I guess you were probably working in mosquito control when Hurricane Donna came through.



Jack Salmela: Yes. Now, Hurricane Donna did quite a bit of damage to some of our recently constructed dikes. And we had to go back and rebuild some of those on account of the washover.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm [00:38:30] (affirmative). It pushed a lot of water around.

Jack Salmela: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: Let's see what we can talk about here. The kind of fun things that you all would do when you were younger and coming up, did you have dances and ...

Jack Salmela: Oh, yes. [00:39:00] I never did get involved too much with dancing myself but, boy, my present wife sure did.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Would there be live music or ...

Jack Salmela: There was sometimes.

Nancy Yasecko: Would they have—were there special places people would go? Where would you go for fun when you were a teenager around here?

Jack Salmela: Here in Sebastian, this big building right over here was kind of a community center. [00:39:30] Later, the hotel down on the river, they had a dance floor. They would have live band.

Nancy Yasecko: Uh-huh. Were there—what would you do for the Fourth of July? Would there be any special ...

Jack Salmela: There'd be parades and that sort of thing. In fact, I think people participated in things like that more back then than maybe even now. It was a big event.

Nancy Yasecko: [00:40:00] Indian River regattas. Do you remember when they used to have races out on the river?

Jack Salmela: No. Not here.

Nancy Yasecko: Not so much. Do you ever go over to the beach for--?

Jack Salmela: Oh, yes but spent a lot of time over at the beach but the way we got there was mainly to rowboat across to the peninsula when we were kids.

Nancy Yasecko: Then, hike over?

Jack Salmela: Yeah. Not too many automobiles when we were kids.

Nancy Yasecko: It must have taken you all [00:40:30] day, then. Go over there.

Jack Salmela: Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: Did your mama worry about you? Where were you?

Jack Salmela: Well, I don't think so.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah. Not so many automobiles. What were the roads like?

Jack Salmela: Just in our lifetime, see this was a dirt road here when that was old US 1. Then, down by the rivers, all right, then that was a new [00:41:00] US 1. Now, it's back here again. So it's moved three times in our lifetime.

Nancy Yasecko: I have heard that the old road was just a couple of ruts.

Jack Salmela: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Shell.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah. You had to be kinda careful if you met an oncoming car.

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: Did your family get a car?

Jack Salmela: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: Can you remember that first car?

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: What [00:41:30] was it?

Jack Salmela: Oldsmobile.

Nancy Yasecko: Boy, that was freedom. I guess you can get farther out of town than you had otherwise.

Jack Salmela: Yeah but then during the Depression, my god. Just they were not able to keep the car going and just jacked it up.

Nancy Yasecko: And waited for times to get better?

Jack Salmela: Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: Did they manage to get the car back on the road later on?

Jack Salmela: Oh, not that one. They might have bought a Packard then.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). [00:42:00] The roads were a little better by that point?

Jack Salmela: Yes. Oh, yes.

Nancy Yasecko: It was after the war they started to really do a lot of paving and things like that.

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: What about the railroad? Did you guys ever ride on the railroad to go places?

Jack Salmela: Oh, yes. Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. We'd even ride a train from here to Vero. I think it was a dime.

Nancy Yasecko: Kids just go by themselves [00:42:30] and get on the train?

Jack Salmela: Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: Would there be a conductor?

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: He watch out for you a little bit?

Jack Salmela: I don't think there as any problem.

Nancy Yasecko: You weren't spray painting graffiti on the ...

Jack Salmela: No. Mm-hmm (negative).

Nancy Yasecko: No.

Do you remember any of the first planes that came through here? There must have been a few when you were a little kid.

Jack Salmela: Oh, gosh. When I was a little kid, if I heard an airplane [00:43:00] coming, man, I'd practically tear the screen door getting out to see it go by. So they were few and far between.

Nancy Yasecko: Do you think watching them when you were a kid make you want to be a flyer? Why'd you decide to go into aviation yourself?

Jack Salmela:

Well, I guess, just like you say, just seeing an airplane fly by was quite intriguing. Then, occasionally, they would have an air show at one of them like down at Vero. That was [00:43:30] just a grass field then but they would take people for a ride.

Nancy Yasecko: Did you ever get to go for a ride when you were a kid?

Jack Salmela: Yeah. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: It must have been exciting.

Jack Salmela: Oh, very much.

Nancy Yasecko: Where would they fly you? Over your house?

Jack Salmela: Yeah. Just circle around a little bit.

Nancy Yasecko: Things look different from the air.

Jack Salmela: Yup. Yeah, there was even a Ford Trimotor that came to Vero one time prior to the war.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). What were the air shows like?

Jack Salmela: [00:44:00] Well, not a whole lot. It was just the fact they had some airplanes. They might be able to do a little bit as far as aerobatics but mainly take people for a ride.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That was enough to get everybody out?

Jack Salmela: Yeah. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: What early businesses do you recall when you were young? Where would your family go for their food and staples?

Jack Salmela: We soon [00:44:30] had a small store right here in Sebastian. In fact, Betty's folks built a building and they ran a store. We had some groceries right here in Sebastian but then maybe once a week, they would travel to Vero and do most of their shopping there.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I guess it was closer to Vero than to Melbourne.

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: Which was bigger at that time, Vero or Melbourne? Which was a bigger city? About the same?

Jack Salmela: Melbourne might have been a little bit bigger but about [00:45:00] the same.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I don't know. I think we're doing pretty good here. Do you remember any memorable court cases?

Jack Salmela: Any memorable court cases?

Nancy Yasecko: Mmm (affirmative).

Jack Salmela: No, I don't think so.

Nancy Yasecko: Okay. We talked a little bit about when you went to elementary school. Where did you go to elementary school?

Jack Salmela: Betty and I, [00:45:30] we weren't the first class at what we'll call the new school. That's where the city hall is now but it had not been open long when we went there. That's out on Main Street where city hall is now.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And for high school, where'd you go?

Jack Salmela: Then, we had to go to Vero.

Nancy Yasecko: Uh-huh. Were you on any sports teams?

Jack Salmela: Well, no. It was difficult. See, we had to ride the bus. If you stayed on to participate in that, you had to have a ride [00:46:00] home, which we didn't have.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah. Too far away. Did you play sports around here? Did you have ...

Jack Salmela: Oh, yes.

Nancy Yasecko: ... a little baseball team?

Jack Salmela: Mainly baseball, yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: I've heard there were some semi-pro baseball that was played around. Did you ever see any of those games? Organized teams with uniforms and everything?

Jack Salmela: Well now, Betty's brother was a real good pitcher. He got involved in some of that but it was out of town. [00:46:30] It wasn't here.

Nancy Yasecko: Uh-huh. That makes sense. What about newspapers? Was there a newspaper that served this area?

Jack Salmela: The Florida Times-Union from Jacksonville and the Miami Herald from Miami. Then, the local Vero paper, I think they publish once a week.

Nancy Yasecko: But the train would bring in the other papers? Wonder how they got here?

Jack Salmela: I think they came by bus.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). [00:47:00] That makes sense.

What about church life? Was there a church around here that your family attended?

Jack Salmela: Our main church was a Methodist church just across the railroad track on Main Street.

Nancy Yasecko: That's been here a long time, I guess.

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: Your parents might have been some of the first people to attend that church, huh?

Jack Salmela: My parents did not attend a church. See, my dad worked at night but then, of course, Betty and I, we would go to church there.

Nancy Yasecko: [00:47:30] Mm-hmm (affirmative). Tell us about your work with the wildlife service.

Jack Salmela: All right. When NASA bought their part of the land, which was a huge piece of property, it included a lot of marsh land. And they, I don't know, at that time had already bought but they were planning to turn that part over to the US Fish and Wildlife Service and let them manage that part. And to begin with, looked like there was [00:48:00] going to be conflict between what Mosquito Control wanted to do and what US Fish and Wildlife Service wanted to do but NASA, well, I had to ask the question, which is more important? Mosquito control or wildlife? They said, "There's no question. We've got to have mosquito control."

But anyhow, I did not use that as a mandate to do whatever I saw fit. I wanted to prove that mosquito control [00:48:30] and wildlife were compatible. And I think I was very successful in doing that.

Nancy Yasecko: Tell me some of the ways that you worked that.

Jack Salmela: After we had built our mosquito impoundments, it just made a wonderful place for ducks and wading birds to feed but then, we still had a problem where those vast marshes were excluded to the estuary. So we installed culverts [00:49:00] with flat gates so that the fish could go and come. Then, the following year, just go ahead and open those culverts so that they would be open to the estuary. That's proved to work real well. These impoundments are just wonderful nursery areas for snook and tarpon and all sorts of marine life.

Nancy Yasecko: Lot of people like to fish out there now.

Jack Salmela: Yes. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Now to begin with, our local Department [00:49:30] of Natural Resources was not at all cooperative. They didn't want to cooperate with us at all. They'd prefer that the dikes not be there but now, in more recent years, the St. Johns River Water Management District, they have certainly gotten interested. And they've been able to provide funds to buy culverts to add to what we already have. That's been a great benefit.

Nancy Yasecko: In a way, it sounds like they're going back to some of the things that were done [00:50:00] early on.

Jack Salmela: Or just adding to it.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Well, I know you were recognized for your contribution to wildlife.

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: Maybe you could tell us about that.

Jack Salmela: Well, after I retired, I got a message and invited to go to Washington DC to receive the Distinguished Service Award, I believe it's called, from the Department of Interior and expenses [00:50:30] paid. And that was great. It was really wonderful.

Nancy Yasecko: This was from the Department of the Interior, right?

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: Well, it seems curious that the Department of the Interior would be honoring someone who had been involved in mosquito control.

Jack Salmela: Well, as far as I know, I'm the only such person to have received such an award.

Then, later, in fact, I guess it was next year, within the state, [00:51:00] our local state organization, they gave me the first Provost Award. That was named after the late Dr. Provost that was a head of the lab in Vero.

Nancy Yasecko: And this was because you were sensitive to the environment. You were trying to balance things.

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: That's not an easy thing to do. A lot [00:51:30] of people telling you how they want it.

Jack Salmela: Yeah. And my job was literally in jeopardy doing those kind of things because I had to take risks but I knew I had the organization that could back what I wanted to do and I felt safe in doing it but I served strictly at the pleasure of the board. And I could have been fired at any time, you know, if something went wrong.

Nancy Yasecko: You had some hard decisions [00:52:00] to make.

Jack Salmela: Well, you have to think about that. No other person serving on that committee was under that kind of pressure.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah. So, you were always trying to deal with keeping the mosquitoes down but doing it in a way ... Yeah.

Jack Salmela: With least harm to the environment, yeah and-- or better yet, to enhance the environment.

Nancy Yasecko: Well, you'd grown up in the country. When you knew how nice it could be. [00:52:30] You know, at least you had an idea what you were shooting for maybe better than somebody who'd come in lately.

Jack Salmela: Well, possibly.

Nancy Yasecko: Didn't have a sense of it.

So, what would be sorta a harmful approach?

Jack Salmela: Well, the way we first started was nothing but aerial spray with DDT for both adults and larvae.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And that did have a bad effect, I guess. What did that do to the rest [00:53:00] of the wildlife?

Jack Salmela: Well, I'm not sure that I could really answer that but DDT is a very persistent compound. In other words, it doesn't break down rapidly. And they have accused DDT of being responsible for the thinning of the egg shell in eagles and that sort of thing but see, I'm not positioned to answer to that.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). But now, when they spray, they're using ...

Jack Salmela: Altogether different material. It's [00:53:30] not wide like in the marshes. It's not just spraying the whole marsh. It's going out with a helicopter and finding exactly where the larvae are. In most places, spraying real small holes, seldom a place much bigger than this house. It can be done very precisely. And we were the first district in the state to use helicopters in mosquito control. I was able to do that through our agreement with NASA and the Air Force, [00:54:00] which provided funds.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Gee, that was a good match, then. They had the interest and some money to spend. And you were able to refine your approach.

Jack Salmela: Yes. They even added two drag lines to our list of equipment to accelerate the program. And that was a big help.

Nancy Yasecko: I've heard from some of those old Cape workers. When they first went out there, they would dress like the hands [00:54:30] you talk about in the groves.

Jack Salmela: Yes. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: I guess they got extra pay because the mosquitoes were so bad or something.

Jack Salmela: I don't know about that.

Nancy Yasecko: Okay. Maybe you can just read to us a little bit from what this says here.

Jack Salmela: This is an award from the United States Department of the Interior. And it's called the Conservation Service [00:55:00] Award. "In recognition of honorable ..." Well, I can't quite read it from here but anyhow, it's the highest award given by the Department of Interior to an ordinary civilian. In other words, not one of their own employees.



Nancy Yasecko: "Maurice W. Provost is the person being memorialized by this association [00:55:30] in the form of an award to an outstanding person meeting certain criteria and because it carried the highest recognition and prestige, great care must go into the selection process.

"The outstanding person who has been selected this year is Jack Salmela who retired a year ago as Director of Brevard Mosquito Control District. I'm sure we all agree that there is no one in or outside of this organization who is more deserving to receive the very first Maurice W. [00:56:00] Provost Memorial Award than Jackie. It is fitting also not only because of Jack's great accomplishments and contributions throughout his career but because he and Maury shared the same high values as great human beings. Their philosophies meshed perfectly in applying available mosquito control technology while holding in reverence the promotion of wildlife conservation.

"Jackie is a student, a wildlife conservationist, [00:56:30] a scientist, a dedicator of self, a cooperater, an organizer, a doer, a moderator, a teacher, a lover of family and good values, an appreciator, a friend who will never stop being these things because these and many other attributes demonstrate what he stands for and they comprise and influence his outlook on life."

Jack Salmela: That ought to be enough.

Nancy Yasecko: Okay. That's [00:57:00] great.

Tell us, if you will, about the story of the seaside sparrow.

Jack Salmela: Yeah. Well, the story of the dusky seaside sparrow's a very sad story.

When we began flooding the marshes on NASA land where most of the duskies were, we were doing what were called phase one. Just build a dike and capture as much rainfall when we could to carry us through the fluctuations [00:57:30] in rainfall. And consequently, the water level at times was high enough that it was reducing vegetative cover. And that was cover that the dusky seaside sparrow needed for nesting and feeding. We knew this was happening. We had good friends like Allan and Helen Cruickshank advising us. We had Dr. [Kao 00:57:56] down at the lab, Dr. Provost down at the lab, Paul Springer with the US Fish and [00:58:00] Wildlife Service. It was not something we were unaware of.

But now, when we got far enough along that we could go into phase two, we started setting areas aside that we could lower the water level and restore the vegetation just for the dusky. And it was working but very slowly but we made one big mistake. We were counting on [00:58:30] quite a large colony of dusky seaside sparrows in the St Johns Marsh, both north and south of 50, knowing that once we restored the habitat on NASA land, we could reintroduce the dusky. But--the US Fish and Wildlife Service even bought a large tract of land out there just for the dusky seaside sparrow.

But several bad things happened out there and that population just went on a [00:59:00] terrible decline. In no time at all, gee whiz, they no longer had a female dusky seaside sparrow. Just nothing but males. And those few were finally taken to Disney World and just keep hoping and keep hoping that maybe they'd find a female. They just died out.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Lot of people were paying attention to that.

Jack Salmela: Oh, yes. So Mosquito Control definitely is [00:59:30] partly to blame for the demise of the dusky seaside sparrow but we had nothing to do with the decline of the dusky in the St. Johns Marsh.

Nancy Yasecko: That was a whole 'nother set of problems out there.

Jack Salmela: Yeah. In this book, *A Shadow and a Song* by Mark Walters, Mosquito Control took quite a beating. And it's mainly because my file on the dusky seaside sparrow could not be found. [01:00:00] And I would have been able to show that Mosquito Control, because I led the meetings and always put it on the agenda that dusky held high priority on every meeting we ever had but either we just relied too heavily on the reintroduction or what we were doing [01:00:30] was just too little, too late.

Nancy Yasecko: A lot of people were trying but maybe it was too late.

Jack Salmela: Yes. It very well could be that maybe we loved the dusky to death because so many people were working on it. They were banding the birds and maintaining a census and the bird was such [01:01:00] that it did not like to be—did not like interference during the breeding season. And during the breeding season is about the only time that you can locate that bird. So I'm not too sure what that didn't play a big part.

Nancy Yasecko: I know all kinds of people were focused in on that. It must have been hard to ...

Jack Salmela: Just like the bobwhite quail, if you disturb that bird when it's first starting a nest, it will abandon the nest. The [01:01:30] other birds are the same way.

Nancy Yasecko: A number of bird populations have come back. One of those are the eagles. Tell us a little bit about how the eagle and the osprey can get along.

Jack Salmela: Well, it's common practice, I don't know if you see it so much now but when I was a kid, you'd see it quite often. When the osprey would go out and make a catch and when they were headed back to their nest, then the eagle [01:02:00] would intercept them and dive at them and make them drop their fish. Then, the eagle would catch the fish in mid-air. So, they were really stealing the fish from the osprey.

Nancy Yasecko: I didn't realize eagles did that. Well, they'll catch all kind of things, the eagles themselves. They go for little rabbits and things, too, don't they, or just fish?

Jack Salmela: I don't know so much as that but an eagle is also like a vulture. They'll feed on carrion.

Nancy Yasecko: Really? [01:02:30] There are quite a few of those out there on the Cape now.

Jack Salmela: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: They've had some successes there. You were mentioning something about the bobwhite or the quail. What can you tell us about that?

Jack Salmela: Well, I've done a lot of work on the bobwhite quail. And I followed mainly what Dr. Stoddard at the Tall Timbers Research Center developed back in the 30s on how to increase the [01:03:00] bobwhite quail.

At that time, those big plantations, they relied heavily on quail hunting but when they discontinued cotton farming on account of the boll weevil and planted pine trees, the bobwhite quail population declined drastically. So, they hired a forester by the name of Herbert L. Stoddard to make a study and find out what they need to do to bring the quail back.

He determined at a very [01:03:30] early age or probably already knew that the lack of controlled burning was a big part of the problem. So he reintroduced what we call prescribed burning to open up the area and get a diversity of plants. And, oh, gosh! It just immediately started restoring the quail. So I've done a lot of that in our local area and at our hunting club to [01:04:00] restore the quail population. And it's very effective.

Nancy Yasecko: How do you manage a controlled burn?

Jack Salmela: Well, that's almost a profession in itself. Number one, you have to study and pass an exam and be certified to even get a permit to do that 'cause it has to be done safely and in the right manner with the right temperature and the right time of year and all that [01:04:30] sort of thing.

Nancy Yasecko: I know they do that out on the Cape, different ...

Jack Salmela: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Right. US Fish and Wildlife Service does the same thing.

Nancy Yasecko: How do they limit where it's going to burn. Is there a way to do that?

Jack Salmela: Well, you have to have a baseline. It either has to be a plowed strip or some natural barrier, which is on the downwind side of the area you're going to burn. And when I was saying downwind, you had to pick the right day so that you know the wind's [01:05:00] going to stay from the same direction. You don't want to start a fire here and then have the wind go around, come in from another direction. So you start at the downwind side and establish a baseline with a backfire. It just backs slowly into the wind. Once you get your baseline wide enough so that the fire won't jump, well, then you can move up and you can either start head fires or flank fires to finish out the area.

Nancy Yasecko: What does the burn actually [01:05:30] do?

Jack Salmela: All right. The main thing the burn does is to reduce the organic cover that just smothers out the plants that you need for quail or whatever you're working for.

Nancy Yasecko: Does it affect the trees that are in that area?

Jack Salmela: No. See, if you picked the right time and the right wind ... The best conditions for burning is when it's so wet until it required a strong wind to carry the fire. [01:06:00] Then, the temperature at ground level is not very high. They call that a cold burn. That doesn't quite make sense but it's a low heat burn. All right, then, the wind is taking the heat and dispersing it without it going straight up. And most of the time, you can burn underneath pine trees without even scorching the top.

Nancy Yasecko: That's quite an art form.

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: Well, the early ranchers used to do some of that.

Jack Salmela: They still do a lot [01:06:30] of that, yes.

Nancy Yasecko: Their purpose was to get some, I guess, new grass.

Jack Salmela: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah. I don't think they were as careful as y'all are now.

Jack Salmela: Well, maybe not.

Nancy Yasecko: They had big open plains and nobody around. That was a different thing but I know they do that out at the Cape. You see the smoke sometimes. Must be a burn because it's too big for anything else.

Jack Salmela: Yeah. They [01:07:00] do an excellent job.

Nancy Yasecko: Well, mosquito also carry disease. Did you ever feel the effects of the things that were borne by mosquitoes?

Jack Salmela: Oh gee. When we were kids, malaria was very common. And it's a very devastating, debilitating disease. It takes a long time to get over.

Nancy Yasecko: I don't think people much know what [01:07:30] that's like. How do you feel when you have malaria?

Jack Salmela: Oh, just a fever and ache.

Nancy Yasecko: Kinda like a flu?

Jack Salmela: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Very similar to the flu.

Nancy Yasecko: But with mosquito control, that's pretty well been taken out, hasn't it?

Jack Salmela: It's been pretty well ... In fact, I can't even recall the last case of a malaria in this area.

Nancy Yasecko: There are other things around, too, that you probably picked up as a kid.

Jack Salmela: Well, gosh. [01:08:00] Back then, we always went bare footed. Gee whiz! Every summer, we would get ground itch. That's nothing but the hookworm larvae that come from human fecal material.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). How would your mom treat you, take care of that?

Jack Salmela: Locally, about the only thing you could do is prick it and dose it in iodine or kerosene or something like that, hoping to kill the larvae. Of course, if you could do that, it would not go on into your intestine.

Nancy Yasecko: [01:08:30] Did you all use a lot of home remedies or did you go to the doctor when something like that happened?

Jack Salmela: Like I say, we had a local doctor, Dr. Rose.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). One of the other people we interviewed said the doctor'd come out and worm all the kids once a year whether they needed it or not. Did--was your mother a believer in castor oil?

Jack Salmela: Castor oil, yes.

Nancy Yasecko: [01:09:00] Not very tasty, was it?

Jack Salmela: It sure isn't.

Nancy Yasecko: And cod liver oil?

Jack Salmela: Yes.

Nancy Yasecko: We don't do that much to kids these days, I guess.

Jack Salmela: No but, well, with our food supplements, we get vitamin D from other sources.

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Was there a public health department or was it just pretty much everybody took care of themselves or how [01:09:30] would you deal with when oh, flus would come through or ...

Jack Salmela: Well, I don't remember any public agency that would take care of the public. Like I say, we had our local doctor.