

Tom McClure interviewed Marshall Hall on April 16, 2024, in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

Tom McClure: The interview we are conducting today is a part of a joint project between the Pryor Center and The Ozark Society to document some of the history of the protection of wilderness areas in Arkansas during the last 50 years. I am Tom McClure interviewing Marshall Hall for the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Oral and Visual History Project. The interview is being conducted in Fayetteville, Arkansas on April 16th, 2024. Marshall, all I need you to do now is to state your name and indicate that you are willing to give the Pryor Center permission to make the audio file and related material available to others.

Marshall Hall: My name is Marshall Hall, and yes, I give the Pryor Center permission to use this interview as they see fit.

TM: Thank you, Marshall. Today we're visiting with Marshall Hall, who is joining us by phone from Langley, Washington. Just a few things about Marshall. She was born in Searcy, Arkansas. She received a BA in political science and English at Harding University. She is retired from the US government, specifically the US Department of Agriculture, where she worked from 1983 to 2004. She worked for the USDA in the Science and Education Division of the USDA. Marshall also served on

the staff of Congressman Ed Bethune from 1979 through 1983. Earlier, she was a teacher of civics, English, and world history at Searcy Junior High School from 1971 to 1978. Marshall, once again, welcome and thank you for being with us here today.

MH: Great. Well, thanks for having me.

TM: We have some questions for you to consider, but we also want you to feel free to include other things beyond the four questions that we're going to mention or anything that you would like to say beyond that. The first question is, will you please describe your involvement in efforts to protect wilderness areas in Arkansas?

MH: Okay. Well, I was a legislative assistant for Representative Ed Bethune when he proposed the Arkansas Wilderness Bill, which was H.R.2719. My legislative duties included any bills reported to the House Interior or the agriculture committees so that meant that the Congressman's draft bill landed on my desk. Now, Ed Bethune was very, very knowledgeable about the issues going along with designated wilderness areas, but I had to catch up and it was a pretty steep learning curve. I had never heard about issues like hard versus soft releases or RARE II or PILT or air quality, et cetera. But thank goodness, I really mean this, I had two amazing organizations to go to when there was any hurdles thrown into the path of H.R.2719. And

those resources, they're lifesavers, were the Arkansas Conservation Coalition and the Library of Congress' Congressional Research Service. I had both of those on my speed dial and used them often. So there was definitely this hair on fire aspect for me on the wilderness bill, but there was fun work as well, and I need to mention that. Number one, working with fellow Arkansans who were strong supporters of H.R.2917, it was a treat. Working with the interior and agriculture committee staffers was fun because they were not used to having a Republican introducing a more expensive wilderness bill. And then I have to say working with the Forest Service for a field trip and a flyover of the designated areas was a nice perk, even though I was very nervous about the air turbulence because I'm pretty prone to motion sickness. And it's that way, that field trip went well. Ed Bethune and I learned a lot about what was going on in those areas. Then there was a normal work that I did for the congressmen, like drafting speeches and hearing testimony, but he was so knowledgeable that those writing assignments were pretty easy. So that's kind of my involvement, Tom.

TM: Well, thank you, Marshall. The next question is, will you please describe how you feel about protecting wilderness areas personally, and also what value you think these areas might have for other people in Arkansas, both now and in the future?

MH: Okay. Well, I can say that about 40 plus years ago when I was working on Capitol Hill, I wasn't probably thinking about population growth in the areas that were near the proposed wilderness designations. But I have family that live in Benton, Pope, and Washington counties. So I do know now that these towns and cities have experienced a population explosion. But it makes me smile to think about all these new people and my family included, who, by the way, they send me pictures of hiking, camping, and fishing trips in the wilderness areas. Well, those people, my family and future generations, all of whom can enjoy Arkansas and natural beauty preserved for them in H.R.2719. Like I said, that makes me smile. And without the Arkansas Wilderness Act, I would say that roads would have been built in the forest, there would be timber cutting, mining, loss of wildlife, ecosystems degraded, and people not connecting with nature. Yes, there should be economic growth within our forests, but there should also be a balance of nature for all to enjoy. And that was the lesson that I learned on working on the Arkansas Wilderness Bill.

TM: Thank you, Marshall. The next question we have has to do with stories, and it is, do you have any special stories that you would like to tell about your experiences or the experiences of others regarding efforts to protect wilderness areas here in Arkansas?

MH: Well, the best part of the legislative experience for me on the Arkansas Wilderness Bill was working with fellow Arkansans who like me are so proud of our state's natural beauty and we want it to be preserved so that we can live up to our state motto that Arkansas is a natural. I've traveled in every state in the United States, and I believe that we have the best motto, the best of any state, and more importantly, it deserves that distinction.

TM: That's a good thought. Thank you very much for your comments on that. Do you have any other stories before we leave question three about wilderness efforts or do you have anything else that you would like to add about the history of wilderness protection in Arkansas that you think the public should know about or that they should consider?

MH: Well, I don't have any more stories, I guess, but the main thing I do want to emphasize, if I didn't get it said before, was that Congressman Ed Bethune did a lot of heavy lifting to get this Arkansas Wilderness Bill enacted into law. And he knew what had to be done and he knew how to counter the myths that come with additional wilderness designations. It wasn't easy. It was kind of uphill most of the way because all the other members of the Arkansas Senate House delegation and plus the Forest Service supported different bills. But he got it done. I want to emphasize that. So I'll end my remarks with a

big thank you to Congressman Ed Bethune and all the Arkansans who worked so hard to get this bill passed. I'll also thank the University of Arkansas's David and Barbara Pryor Center for doing this project and allowing me to share some memory. Thank you.

TM: Thank you very much. I'm just going to ask you. I know you sound like you may not have additional comments, but if there is anything else, or I'll just ask you before we close, is there anything else you would like to mention that I have not asked you about, or would you like to add anything to your earlier comments?

MH: No, I think I'll let it stand as it is, but if I think of anything, I'll call you.

TM: Okay. That sounds good. And some people have submitted some extra written thoughts about this or expanded their comments or something, and they can be kept on file here at the Pryor Center for people to use as well. So if you think of anything that you want to write down, that would be fine. And I'm sure they would be glad to get it.

MH: Okay.

TM: Marshall, well, thanks again for participating, and I'd like to thank you on behalf of the Pryor Center and The Ozark Society for being here today to share with us your perspective and your memories of wilderness protection efforts here in Arkansas. The Pryor Center also

will be providing you with a copy of this audio recording at some point in the future. So thank you again, and I'll say goodbye for now.

MH: All right. Thank you.

TM: Thank you.