

## A CAREER AND A HALF

By Dale A. Jones – TWS member for 65 years

In 1942, I graduated from Los Gatos High school in California and had no idea what I wanted to be when I grew up! San Jose State was in my hometown. My folks suggested I go there and take on a business degree. I found college to be quite a bit different from high school. I really didn't know how to study, and the courses I took were so unlike me: Bonehead English, psychology, economics, and algebra that I was fed up with college after the first quarter!

I talked my parents into giving their consent to enlist in the Marine Corps at 17 years of age. They did, and I spent three years in the Marine Corps with 30 months of that time in the Pacific.

In 1946, I found my soul mate in the person of Lois Wolfe. I still did not know what I wanted to be, and Lois encouraged me to take some tests to find where my interests lay. I did; Wildlife and Forestry stood out like a sore thumb. I took a two-year pre-forestry course at San Jose State and then wrote to the University of California, Oregon State, and Utah State to see if one of them would take me under the GI Bill to attend a forestry school. Oregon State said they were full. University of California and Utah State Agricultural College said they would accept me.

I had lived all my life in California until I went overseas; so I decided to go to Utah State. Lois Wolfe became Lois Jones on August 28, 1948, and we headed for Logan, Utah. For some reason, college became much easier. With Lois' help of putting me through college, we were ready to find an employer. I had been interviewed in the spring of 1949 by the game bird supervisor of the Utah Fish and Game Department, and given a summer job at the Price Game farm in Price Utah. I was never sure whether it was my interview or my wife's good looks that got us the job. That was the start of a great career.

I finished college with the spring quarter of 1950, and I was given a permanent job with the UF&G Department. I had nine wonderful years with the Department and ended up as Chief of Game Management.

The US Forest Service offered me "30 pieces of silver" to join their ranks on the Shoshone National Forest. I was so in love with the job I had that it was my inclination to refuse the offer. Some of the facts involved were: The Director of the Department was making \$7,000 a year, and the Forest Service offer was \$9,000 a year to be a biologist in the greatest country that God ever created. Lois told me we had three children to put through college – SO WAKE UP! I did, and I enjoyed 30 years with the Forest Service serving on the Shoshone NF, in the Denver Regional Office, on the San Juan National Forest, in the Albuquerque Regional Office, and in the Chief's Office in Washington, DC where I had the

privilege of serving as Wildlife, Fisheries, and Endangered Species Director. It was also during my time in the Chief's Office that I was elected as President of The Wildlife Society (1982-1984).

Retirement came. Lois and I returned to the home we had rented out when we went to Washington, DC. The only problem was in the 8 years we were in Washington; Albuquerque had grown to where it was a big city. That was not where we wanted to retire! We looked at land down in the Belen area near the Rio Grande River. We decided on 18 acres that would put us in the hay business and provide for our horse herd. Lois drew up some plans for a solar home, and, with the help of a fellow FS retiree, we built her house. We had 10 "golden years" of being a farmer.

It was during this time that the other half of my wildlife profession took place. A neighbor asked me if I might like to play a role in the Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District as they had an opening on their Board. I didn't know much about their priorities, but I knew they were associated with the Soil Conservation Service, and that meant "CONSERVATION"; so I joined up. It wasn't long before it was evident that livestock and irrigation were the priorities of the Board, but that was still interesting to me. If I could influence improved management of livestock and reduce erosion of soil, I would sleep well at night.

Then the Chairman of the Board retired, and I was elected to be the Board Chairman. Now I had a real opportunity to see what we could do about noxious weeds, including the invasion of Russian Olive and Salt Cedar in the riparian areas along the Rio Grande River. We wrote up a grant or two that were successful, and we were in business. We treated approximately 10 miles of the river that became a showplace for many folks to see.

About this time our attendance at every County Commission meeting paid off. The County turned down an application for the Whitfield property (100 acres of wetland) to be used as a subdivision. The owner had purchased this property as an investment. When he could not use it for a subdivision and with some "encouragement" from our Board, he donated these 100 acres to us, and he got a write off on his income tax.

This was a perfect site to improve as a waterfowl area. The biologist from the Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge was extremely helpful in designing what we needed to do to fulfill our dreams of a miniature Bosque Del Apache right there in Valencia County including an educational building that the Valencia Co, schools could use in their conservation education classes. As we agreed with the Whitfield family when they gave us the land, we named it the Whitfield Wildlife Area. We had a little problem convincing the local farmers adjacent to this area that we would not be bringing more cranes and geese to raid their alfalfa fields. They were told we made this area into good wetland habitat, and we would attract the ducks, geese, and cranes that were now using their fields

onto the managed wetland. We put in four wet soil management areas, two permanent ponds, planted hundreds of trees in the fringe areas, and constructed an educational building that now has an educator to supervise its use.

At 80, our farm and the hay work looked a little over whelming. Lois and I said goodbye to our "Golden Years", moved close to our son in Utah to have some help if we ever needed it. Two years later, we needed it! Lois suffered a stroke, and I became a full time caregiver that took me out of the wildlife game for 5 years. I lost her in 2011. Now I really needed my son. He retired after thirty years with the Utah Fish and Game Division, and is now a wildlife consultant. He has been kind enough to include me in many of his assignments. I have gone with him to look for burrowing owls in prairie dog towns, golden eagle nest surveys, and deer classification counts. At 9", I am back being a wildlife field biologist! Just what the tests back in 1946 said I should be.