

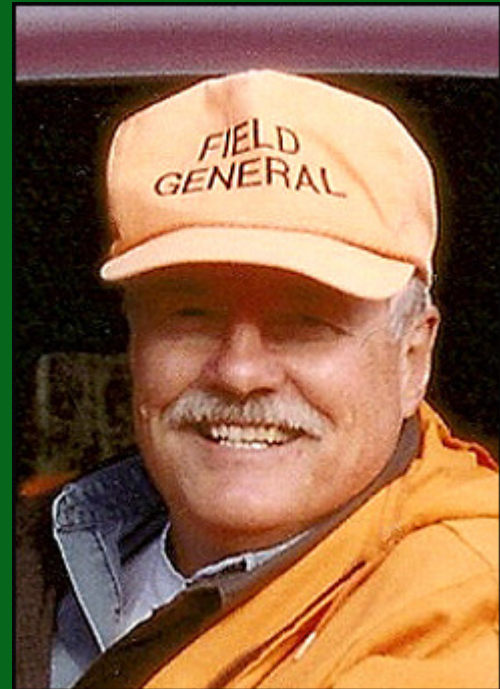
Carl Batha

I was born in East St. Louis, Illinois in February of 1947, three months premature. My twin brother did not survive the birthing process. I have two older sisters, both way smarter than me! My parents were the first generation born in this country. Bohemian was spoken at home. I didn't really get a command of the English language until I started school; some may argue that I still don't have 'much command', even today. As a youngster, much of our social time was spent at the local Czech Hall enjoying potlucks and holiday gatherings.

I was raised in a rural setting. We had a 'truck farm', of sorts, surrounded by 'real farms'. Either I was working our own land or helping neighbors with their chores. I learned at a very young age the value of team work as we partnered with neighbors when a big project came along.

My father was a talented and well respected machinist, but at heart he was a farmer. His pastime was a mega garden with Mom canning and freezing the produce. In those days I often felt like an indentured servant. As I hurried to complete my assigned chores, so I could go goof off, there would be the eventual command, ". . . when you get done there, son . . ." To put it mildly, I was raised with a work ethic - the job had to get done, and it had to get done right and getting it done might not be fun.

Although Dad introduced me to hunting and fishing, after taking me a time or two, I was left to go on my own. It was this roaming the fields, woods and back waters that kindled my interest in the natural world - OR - maybe it was that I was free from the hard work around the homestead and my escape was to love things wild.





Sharptail Grouse hunt to North Dakota with my Brittany, Starr.

As an early teen I was introduced to sports by a neighbor. He taught me how to catch, throw and hit a baseball, all new to me. My talent was just passable. In high school, I went out for football, knowing nothing about the sport except that you got to hit people or run like hell if you had the ball. I also wrestled. I eventually excelled in both of these sports. Was it because the long practices and games/matches kept me from the labors at home? The up side was that my parents took the time to travel to my sporting events - this was the first leisure time I can recall them taking.

Upon completing high school as a 'slightly' above average student I was offered college scholarships in both football and wrestling. I chose football and attended Southeast Missouri State University (SEMO) at Cape Girardeau, Missouri. My freshman year I had to take a remedial English class, which was a Godsend, helping me improve my use of the English language. Although I played football there, and even wrestled for two years, my major was in the sciences, biology and earth science. When I graduated in 1969 with a Bachelor of Science degree I knew then I wanted to continue in the wildlife field. This was the height of the Vietnam War era. Graduate school fellowships were available because so many young adults were being drafted. My work ethic must have helped because I quickly secured a research fellowship to the University of Missouri to do research on the wild turkey.

My Masters degree in wildlife ecology took four LONG years! I was working with a really wild critter, exploring it's social behavior using radio telemetry. Radio telemetry was in its infancy and when the gear didn't work I lost a field season of data. I resided in the Missouri Ozarks, when I was doing the research, and was on campus only one semester each year for course work. This experience reflects my work ethic or my stubbornness, I am not sure which? When I graduated with my

MS in 1972, I had the opportunity for fellowships to continue on for a PhD at two different schools or to go for a DVM. I was more interested in the 'applied sciences' so went to work for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as a Game Manager. Or was it because my wife, Jeanne, was expecting our first child and I needed to get-down-to-income-generating-business? I need to digress here.

I met my wife, Jeanne, my senior year at SEMO. She continued on with a high school teaching career and I was off to graduate school. Her family, although quite successful, were more leisure oriented than mine and this was a new experience for me. Jeanne was also full of 'piss and vinegar', even to this day, and that was good for me. She is no wall flower and is talented in getting me to relax and helps me out when I need it. She also helps me stay focused when 'I can't see the forest for the trees.'



Our visit to St. John, US Virgin Islands.

So . . . we arrived in Wisconsin with a brand new baby in June of 1972. My home station was Wisconsin Rapids but during this probationary period I was all over the state learning what Wisconsin was all about. This was a very rewarding time, experiencing the wildlife program from the local and statewide perspective and learning about the other programs and making professional contacts.

In May 1973, I was assigned to the Spring Green station working for Area Wildlife Manager Lew Myers. It was a real eye opener. There was lots of public land to manage, but no resources such as equipment or manpower. So I learned to buy land and plant trees and get along with the natives. I also had some influence in starting a wild turkey restoration effort, making the argument we should focus on getting wild trapped birds from Missouri, where I still had strong contacts, rather

than partial game farm lineage birds which were used in the past and were still in vogue, especially in Pennsylvania and New York.

In June of 1974, I transferred to Nevin as the Wildlife Staff Specialist for the Southern District. Here I had to hone my skills as an 'advisor' to Area Supervisors/Area Directors and District Directors in running the wildlife management program. There were constant issues with deer and goose damage with farmers, deer and goose quotas with hunters and the public. Affairs were complicated with Avian Cholera die offs in waterfowl and game-farm pheasants, lead poisoning with geese and winter starvation die offs of deer in southern Wisconsin! Goose Management at and near Horicon Marsh became very contentious. It was an international resource that had been left to run amuck, by both the Federal government and the state. There was sound biology in reducing the bottleneck of migrating geese in east-central Wisconsin, but the application of this knowledge to landowners, the hunting and non-hunting public was a challenge.

Worse was working with the US Fish & Wildlife Service bureaucracy. They would give edicts and then run off to the Twin Cities or Washington. The local DNR staff were left to pick up the pieces of credibility and implement the edicts. Dealing with an incredibly difficult line-staff organization in DNR just added to the mess. I felt like half of the time I was dealing with internal ego and power-trips of key players, rather than educating the public and proceeding with a uniform plan to move forward.

In the mid-to late 1980's I became a line supervisor at the District/Region level for the Wildlife Management, Endangered Resources and Game Farm programs. I wish I could report that leadership and effectiveness took a giant leap forward. Here in the south, most of the wildlife resource resides on private lands. The internal improvement tenants of the State of Wisconsin State Constitution prevented us from spending state funds on private lands. But, with the advent of the Habitat Restoration Program (HRA), first in Dodge county and then later in Dodge-Fond du Lac-Columbia counties, we were able to improve habitat for pheasants, nesting ducks and grass land non-game birds.

Through the 1990's The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) a federal agriculture initiative to protect ground water and habitat, offered meaningful incentives to landowners to practice conservation measures. Wildlife managers helped and it was an opportunity to improve private land habitat.

In the mid 1990's I lost my job as a Regional Wildlife Supervisor due to the reorganization of the Department. I had to compete for a new job and became a Land Team Leader for the Grant, Platte, Sugar and Pecatonica Basins. I had foresters, park managers, wildlife biologists and endangered resources biologists

reporting to me. I was immersed in new and interesting programs, but got nothing earth shattering accomplished. Worse, I was expected to lead staff who had expertise in areas I had no experience or competency.

The Basin Leaders were challenged to work with citizen advisory groups to accomplish good things for the resource. These citizen groups grew weary when we, the agency, could not move fast enough to meet the new challenges and opportunities. They soon lost interest. The field staff were stuck with a hierarchy of generalist leaders who had little specific expertise in any given specialty. During this era I thought it was mighty strange that none of the programs at the central office were combined and re-shuffled like those in the field.

In 2002, Chronic Wasting Disease in the deer herd was discovered. I was assigned to implement the response at the field level. I also lost my job (again!) as a Basin Supervisor during 'the son of re-org' and had to compete for the job I had prior to the first re-organization of the agency.



American Bison hunt in Wyoming.
This was a gift from my employees when I retired.

In the ensuing years Jeanne and I had two daughters. Both have college degrees, are married and have children. We now have five grand children, and gleefully, we are young enough to be active with them. We like to travel and camp in the west. I have had the extreme pleasure to introduce sport hunting to my son-in-laws, taking them antelope and elk hunting in the western states. I am looking forward to similar adventures with my grandsons, ages 5, 8, 12, 12, and my granddaughter age 9.

Jeanne and I are leisure or recreational oriented. We like to garden and enjoy our country living in southwest Wisconsin.



Jeanne and I were recently in Costa Rica.

I think the work ethic that my parents instilled in me helped me with my career.

I learned:

- That work can be hard and not much fun, but you have to do it
- A team approach is much more fun and productive
- There is more to life than work, have fun too
- Trust your employees, help them to excel
- Be loyal to the boss (employer)