

*Remembrances of Richard
J. Guadagno from his
Friends, Family and
Colleagues*

*These remembrances are compiled from the
US Fish and Wildlife Service
Remembers Rich Guadagno website*





Friends and Colleagues,

Over the last couple of days, it has been expressed by many who knew Rich that he was a man of impeccable integrity and was one of the most caring dedicated employees of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System. As a former colleague of Rich, I can say his passion and love for all wild creatures was unlike any co-worker I've been associated with in my career. While at Baskett Slough and Ankeny National Wildlife Refuges, nearly all program responsibilities fell on his shoulders. Rich accepted this challenge without reservation assuring habitat restoration and management programs, visitor services, environmental education, community outreach, law enforcement activities, and administrative functions moved forward with the highest degree of professionalism. By example, he was a mentor for every new employee. From my perspective, Rich was a modern day "Paul Kroegel" as a refuge manager of the Refuge System.

Like many personnel who attended the National Wildlife Refuge System conference at Keystone, Rich and I spent some time together reflecting on the week's discussions; where we have been, where we are now and where are we going. Sitting by a resort lake with the Rocky Mountains as a backdrop, we shared our vision, hopes, and dreams of what the Refuge System could and should become. Rich commented on the importance of vision, but added we should never lose sight of challenges we've faced in the past and our accomplishments of the System over the last 100 years. As food for thought, it was a point well taken that all of us in the Refuge System should take to heart when faced with adversity or threats to resources we are charged with protecting.

As this National tragedy unfolds, we may or may not learn the full story of United Flight 93. A few Americans are becoming impatient and believe we should start taking action to defend our Nation. Although there is considerable speculation on events of September 11, I believe the defense of our homeland began during the final minutes of Flight 93. Those who were close to Rich and knew him well are comforted in believing he was one of several American's who lived their finest hour when taking actions to regain control of the aircraft from terrorists. To his credit, I have never felt more proud when viewing the "Blue Goose" symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System or wearing the uniform of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I feel privileged and honored to have known and worked with Rich and salute his life as a person, a biologist, a refuge manager, and as an American who I believe made the ultimate sacrifice to safeguard and protect this great Nation of ours.

Ralph D. Webber, Project Leader, Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge



I attended the Basic Refuge Management Training Academy with Rich Guadagno in 1988. At the academy, his nickname was "The Jersey Slug." The Jersey part makes sense, but I cannot recall the reason for the slug part. I remember Rich as an intelligent, dedicated, and compassionate young man. He was liked and respected by our entire class. I have not seen Rich for thirteen years, but we did stay in touch. No matter what was going on in either of our lives, he always had words of encouragement for me. In our last exchange, I had told him that I had recently moved and did not know anybody in my new town. He told me that he was certain that I would make wonderful new friends soon because "high-quality people attract high-quality friends." If the quality of your friends is a reflection of who you are, I consider it a tremendous compliment that Rich chose to be my friend.

There are many ways to serve your country. Some people choose the military, some the Peace Corps, and others choose to preserve the things that we take for granted - clean air, clean water, and wide, open places. Rich, by choosing a career with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, had dedicated his life to the service of his country. Although he did not die on duty, he died in defense of something else that we take for granted - our freedom to live without fear. I am certain that if Rich was in contact with the passengers who knew the intent of the hijackers, he was one of the men who brought that plane down before any more lives could be taken. He was a Refuge Officer with a strong sense of duty, physically fit and ready to do anything he could to help others. He will always live in my heart as a hero. Rest in peace, Jersey Slug. Wherever you are now, I am sure that you will be allowed to have a big, black dog. I can't imagine you without one.

Sue Bolander (Julison), former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge Manager, Region 3



Richard was a close friend and fellow manager of David Johnson, my step-son-in-law. He thought the world of Richard and his outlook and management skills at Humbolt. His picture puts a face on the senseless killing and destruction on Tuesday September 9, 2001. His wife and family members have to take solace in the fact that they were able to share their lives with this extraordinary man. Remember the wonderful times shared and the unshakable belief that he had some part in avoiding additional bloodshed by helping to down the airliner he was on even though he knew it would be his last act.

Respectfully, Bruce Proctor, Las Vegas, Nv.



Having worked with Rich at Baskett Slough NWR, I am saddened at a loss of a very dear friend. We will all miss him and his positive outlook on life so very much. In memory of him, I know I will attempt to make each coming day an adventure and live life to the fullest like he did so well. I am thankful for having the opportunity of knowing him and learning from him. He would want us to keep smiling, to remember our joyful times with him, and to move on with a new zest for life. I am looking forward to

birdwatching and hiking with thoughts of him in mind. I may just look into learning how to do new things such as kayaking and surfing, stained glass making and cooking the best homemade pasta imaginable.... thanx Rich, for so many things.

Your friend always, Molly



I was lucky enough to get to know Rich when I worked as the director of Salem Audubon Society. Our Audubon chapter adopted Baskett Slough NWR and Ankeny NWR as part of National Audubon Society's ARK (Audubon Refuge Keepers) program. For five years, I had the pleasure of working with Rich to organize habitat restoration projects for our volunteers.

Rich was a vibrant human being. He had so many interests- gardening, astronomy, photography, hiking- too many to name. Rich was a dedicated conservationist who worked very hard to make the refuges sanctuaries for migratory birds. He did this in spite of the antagonism of many special interest groups. He was fair, he was a good listener, and he cared about people as much as he did wildlife. He was a role model to me- someone I admired and enjoyed both as a colleague and as a friend.

I know that Rich gave his life trying to stop the hijackers. It was in his nature to stop injustice. He was a courageous man, and I'm sure he did everything he could to keep the plane from reaching its target.

Losing Rich in such a monstrous, needless, bizarre fashion makes me angry, but I'm proud of his courage and I'm very glad he was in this world as long as he was. It's up to us all to carry forward his caring nature and to honor him by making a positive difference in our communities.

Maggie Meikle, Monmouth Oregon



In loving memory of Rich....we were just together the weekend before celebrating our Grandmothers 100th Birthday! Sept. 10th, her birthday, you sat at Nana's bedside and spent precious time together. Rich will forever be missed by your family, coworkers, friends and me. We have lost a brave heart and a courageous soul. Your heroism will be us now and always...with love, Lisa (cousin)



I met Richard in 1983 at Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and we became the best of friends. Richard had a great passion and love for the natural world, but he even had a greater passion and love for his family and friends. He was the type of person who would go out of his way to help you whenever or wherever you needed him. Richard always talked to me about his mother and grandmother and would be wondering as to what type of feast they would be cooking up for the weekend. Rich loved his food! Family meant everything to Richard and that came 1st in his life as it should for all of us.

I believe that all our lives are pre destined the moment we enter this world and Richard's was no exception. Today, Richard is a hero and I feel very strongly as many others do that Richard played a major part in keeping that plane from reaching it's target. I know Richard is with all of us in spirit and would want all of us to come together and be with our families and loved ones and tell them how much they mean to us. That's what I will remember of Rich. God Bless Richard.

Tom McFadden
Outdoor Recreation Planner
Great Swamp NWR



Rich was a former wildlife student of my husband, Dr. Len Wolgast, at Cook College - Rutgers University. I got to know him while he was at Great Swamp NWR and he volunteered to help me and Len with a variety of wildlife projects we were involved with at the time. All the statements describing Rich's character are true. He was sincere, kind, hardworking, professional, self-effacing, the very definition of a nice guy. He represents the best this country had to offer. He is sorely missed.

Sincerely Yours,
Cathy Blumig & Len Wolgast
Somerset, NJ



In Memory of Rich Guadagno:

I first met Rich in the Spring of 1986 when he was selected to be a Biological Technician for Rick Boydston at IAREC for the USDA/ARS in Prosser, WA. We both shared an office together while Rich was at this location, and became very close friends. Rich was an avid sportsman who loved to hunt. We both spent many hours in the field together enjoying the outdoors. Rich taught me a lot about game animals. He enjoyed teaching young people about the outdoors. He took my son Brad hunting many times.

Rich was good self taught taxidermist. I have many stuffed birds, and a deer head mount in my house that was done by Rich. It was a sad day for me when Rich left Prosser in June of 1987, to take a job with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We got together from time to time and kept in touch on the Internet.

I believe in my own mind that Rich and several other passengers on Flight 93, were responsible for saving many American lives on the ground. Rich was a take charge individual. He always believed in what was right in this world, and he gave his life for it. His favorite saying was: "Let's do it". We will miss him greatly, he was a true friend. Individuals like Rich don't come very often in one's life time. He is a real American Hero. I want to extend our condolence's to Rich's family.

Lyle M. Birch, Annette, Brad and Brenda.



For Rich, our fallen comrade

by Nancy Pollot

I think of you sometimes
and a thread unravels
leading back
to the place where you started.

The ground that stretches between us
is the same ground
that holds the animals
holds us
stirred you
like it stirs me.

We recognized it, you and I,
it spoke to you in the same language
it speaks to me.

We listened, you and I,
to the voice of the other ones
the wild ones
to the voice inside ourselves.

I see you sometimes
in the flowing of the rivers
in the water that carries time
you heard the message of the rivers
and had to act

You went before me
carving out the way
leaving tracks of spirit
for me to follow knowing
I'm on the right trail.

I want to thank you.

Honor you for courage
acknowledge you for vision
let you know I am behind you
and, like you, will not turn away.



To the parents of Rich Guadagno,

Although we have spent only a few short visits with Rich, we knew him well through our daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren. He was a co-worker with our son-in-law at Basket Slough in Dallas, Oregon. We heard them speak of him often and fondly, many times with smiles on their faces, as a supervisor and co-worker, but more importantly as a member of the community and a close personal friend. He was often welcomed into their home and, as he lived on site, was visited regular by the entire family whenever they visited Basket Slough. He was always gracious and welcoming and obviously very proud of his work at Basket Slough. Whenever he appeared at their home, it was always with gifts for my grandchildren. As young children are, my grandson is somewhat frightened of large dogs.... all except for Raven that is. It stikes us as unusual that a child who is frightened of large dogs can make friends with a large, black German Shepard being that she was such an imposing figure. We are certain that this is due to Rich's gentle and loving spirit and that same gentle spirit he conveyed to Raven and Nickolas. Rich always had time for his friends, and as we now know, always had the best interests of his friends and fellow citizens at heart. They miss him terribly.

Others knew Rich as a valued friend and a respected colleague. Now we all know him as a brave and compassionate hero. We knew him as someone who was welcoming, kind, gentle, generous and caring to our children and grandchildren. As parents, you will understand what that has meant to us. I will remember him fondly and with gratitude.

Warmest regards, Karen E. Zylman



I remember standing in Rich's backyard at Baskett Slough Refuge House. He had just purchased a really great telescope for his pursuit of astronomy. We were enjoying a late summer evening and because there were fewer lights out there on the refuge you could really see the stars very well. Rich asked me "so, what do you want to look at?" and we gazed at the sky. I spotted one star that seemed different and somehow more brilliant among the many stars in the sky. We trained the telescope on it and could clearly see the rings of Saturn!

Rich is like that a more brilliant and special person among the many millions that are out there. And for me - a very special friend. I cannot begin to even express the numerous memories of my relationship with Rich, and how special they are to me, how much I treasure all of them good and bad. Rich taught me so much about loyalty, commitment and unconditional love.

Rich lives on in me, without him and the time we shared together I would not be the person I am today.

Heidi Brunkal



My husband and I met Rich Guadagno in 1997 on a birding trip to the Baskett-Slough Refuge. Over the next two years we became very close friends, sharing holidays, trips to Malheur Refuge, family events, joys and sorrows. Rich was a man of honor and a gentleman. He was intense, honest, loyal, generous and warm-hearted. He was a man of many talents--whatever he did, he did it well--photography, stained glass artwork, taxidermy, gardening, and cooking to name just a few.

I will never forget the many pleasant evenings we spent preparing meals in the big kitchen at the Baskett-Slough house with Rich, our daughter Heidi, and often other friends. Rich loved to entertain his friends with good food and LOTS OF IT! I can still taste his real Italian eggplant parmesiana--what a treat!

He had a passion for gardening and gave away tomatoes by the bucketfuls. He was dedicated to his work and spent long hours improving the wetlands areas at Baskett. Rich reached out to other groups such as Audubon and Ducks Unlimited to join in his tireless efforts. Winston Churchill said, "Courage is the first of the virtues, because upon it depend all of the others." Rich had courage; physical courage, which I'm sure he demonstrated on Flight 93; he also had the courage to stand by his convictions. Now I see Rich in every beautiful and wild thing: the sunrise, butterflies, migrating birds, frog songs--so many reminders.

Those of us who loved and admired Rich can carry on his legacy by doing what we can, each in our own way, to improve wildlife habitat. I know many of you reading this page are in this field as a full-time job. Others can volunteer at a refuge, plant a tree, help improve or create a wetland. The opportunities are there for us to do something in his memory. Rich, here's to you. We love you and miss you. Your death at the hands of terrorists has left a knot in my stomach and a hole in my heart. May you be out there, in the Great Beyond, throwing frisbees for your beloved Lady.

Judy Brunkal
Salem, Oregon



I first met "Uncle Rich" in the fall of 1992. My father Art Duran, an Oregon State Police Fish and Game Officer, invited Rich over for dinner one night. From that point on Rich almost instantly became part of the family and my sister and I affectionately called him "Uncle Rich." Memories of him surround our family every day. From the stained glass in the window of my parent's house, to the deck that he and my father built together. Rich was one of the most generous, thoughtful, and honorable and trustworthy person I have ever met. His passion for life was immeasurable. There are so many memories I have of him, he truly was part of our family. We all loved him very much. I know that I speak for my whole family when I say that were are all very proud honored and blessed to have had such an incredible person in our life.

Nicole Duran-Harris Dallas, Oregon



On September 11, 2001, our lives changed as America became the victim of the largest terrorist attack in this country. As we all know, terrorists hijacked four planes, flying two into the World Trade Center complex, one into the Pentagon, and the fourth plane crashed in Stony Creek Township, Pennsylvania. It was the latter that led to the loss of one of our own. Richard Guadagno was among the passengers on the ill-fated flight from Newark, New Jersey. Rich was the Refuge Manager at the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Eureka, California.

While some Service family members knew Rich, many of us did not have the pleasure of meeting a man described by his family, friends and colleagues as a passionate wildlife enthusiast, a genuine and caring man. In memory of Rich, the National Wildlife Refuge System dedicates this issue of the Refuge System Update to him. In doing so, we asked a couple of his friends to offer some memories of Rich and share them with you as a reminder that we were fortunate enough to have had such a special person in our family.

Rich was a somewhat enigmatic individual....A small-statured guy with super-human strength; A quite person with deep convictions of right and wrong; Outwardly, a low-key guy but with inner intensity. The combination of these seemingly contradictory characteristics made Rich a strong, unassuming man who expected perfection from himself in all endeavors.

It's with those positive traits that convince me and many others that Rich died doing the "right thing" aboard United Airline's hijacked Flight# 93...with all his might and will power ...to the bitter end....earning him a posthumous title that he would shun but cherish....HERO !

---Dick Nugent, Refuge Manager John Heinz NWR at Tinicum



I was shocked to hear of Rich's death. Although I'm a National Park Service Law Enforcement Ranger, I knew of Rich due to my work as a U.S. Coast Guard Reservist with the Humboldt Bay Marine Safety Detachment. The Humboldt Refuge will be his legacy. He will not be forgotten.

Ken Hay
Crater Lake National Park
(& USCGR PS2, MSD Humboldt Bay)



I got to know Rich when he was Asst. Refuge Manager at Supawna Meadows. I remember him as an intense, extremely conscientious man. The passengers of flight 93 are remembered for their courage for putting their own lives at risk to save countless other lives. I know that Rich was a part of that effort.

Bill Edwards, New Jersey Forest Fire Service



I clearly remember the first time I “met” Rich Guadagno. It was winter and on this particular day I had the pleasure of notifying him that he had been selected as the new manager of the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge in northwestern California. He and I had played phone tag that day and had not connected. It was late in the evening, everyone had gone home for the day, and it was peaceful and quiet. I was straightening up my desk getting ready to go home for the night when I uncovered a message that Rich Guadagno had returned my phone call and that he could be reached by cell phone. A quick glance at my watch revealed that it was well past “quitting time” but I know how anxious people are about knowing whether they got the job or not so I gave him a call at the Baskett Slough NWR in Oregon.

Rich immediately answered the phone with a friendly “hello” but I was pleasantly surprised to hear thousands of Canada geese in the background making a ruckus as they returned to their night roost pond. After exchanging a little small talk we were ready to get down to the purpose of my call but the geese were making so much noise that I could not hear him and he could not hear me. He excused himself, walked over to his pickup truck, closed the door, and rolled up the window so we could talk. Immediately the goose music stopped and he now had the hollow, empty, echo-like sound to his voice common of someone speaking from inside a vehicle. Before I could give him the good news I said, “Rich, go back outside, I need to hear more of that!” So he went back outside and held his cell phone up to the sky for a minute or so and I listened with my ears, my heart, and my soul. We stood side by side sharing a very special moment. While I was hundreds of miles away, I “saw” it all in my mind’s eye—black clouds spitting rain, a raw wind that allowed geese to cup wings and glide effortlessly to the ground and a sun that peaked out under that clouds just before it dipped below the horizon painting the soggy Willamette Valley in hues of orange, and pink. I had seen and heard this symphony before at Bosque del Apache, Klamath, Skagit Flats, Sacramento, Sand Lake, the Platte River, and Prime Hook. Upon hearing this music, my memory carried me back to all those wonderful places where I had seen, heard, and felt the magic of goose music.

As I stood next to Rich savoring the moment vicariously through the cell phone I knew exactly what he was doing. It was the end of the day and he was out on “his” refuge watching over “his” birds and seeing how they were responding to his latest handiwork, whether it be a new pond, a moist soil unit or a prescribed burn that was just greening up. I had done it myself many times. These are private moments that usually come very early in the morning or late in the evening when no one else is around. They are “perks” that come with the job. They are priceless and under the right conditions your brain will store those sights, sounds, smells and emotions of the moment for a lifetime of reflective enjoyment—like a video tape that you can replay whenever you want.

The rest is history. Rich said yes and came to Humboldt Bay Refuge, ready to tackle the world. In the short time he was there he accomplished much and he made his mark. He was a valued employee and friend who I will never forget. He will be missed by those who knew him and worked with him. The Service has lost one of its very best.

---David Paullin, Refuge Supervisor, Portland, Oregon



TRANSLATION
of letter to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Employees
from Institute of Ecology and Evolution,
Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow

September 17, 2001

Dear Colleagues,

Please accept our sincere condolences in the aftermath of the terrible tragedy which has been visited upon the American people, and which also affected your agency directly. We learned with great sorrow that a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employee, Richard J. Guadagno, died as a result of this act of terrorism. We wish to express to his family and to your agency our deepest sympathy.

We are shaken by the scale and the cynicism of this latest evil act of international terrorism, and support whatever measures necessary to curtail the activities of terrorist organizations, wherever they may be. We stand in solidarity with the American people, who have courageously withstood this great trial which befell them. Dear Friends, may the warmth we feel for you in our hearts help you through this difficult time.

From the Staff of the Institute
(signed)

Dmitriy S. Pavlov, Director
Evgeniy V. Romanenko, Deputy Director
Yuriy Yu. Dgebuadze, Deputy Director
Tatiana N. Glazova, Scientific Secretary
Olga F. Chernova, Scientific Secretary



I am very thankful for the wonderful memories I have of Richard. Unfortunately these memories of times together are too few, but precious. I will miss him dearly. Richard was truly an honorable man. I am honored to be his cousin.

Susan Tant Union, NJ.



I am overwhelmed by the thoughts and memories posted by so many who knew my cousin Rich through business and social activities. This tragedy has affected so many people, but to know that this has brought us all together, is a comfort. I thank you, from myself and my family.

Jennifer Tant Union, NJ



I knew Rich from my time in Refuges in Region 5 in the late 80's early 90's. Although it has been years since I have seen Rich, I remember him as a very personable guy, the guy that everyone liked. Most of my time spent with Rich was during our annual law enforcement refresher training for Refuge Officers. Rich was a very good officer and from the first moment that I heard he was on that ill fated plane, I have felt a deep sense of loss. I know in my heart that Rich was among those passengers that fought off the hijackers and prevented an even greater tragedy from occurring. VIOS CON DIOS, My Friend

Kenny Kessler, Special Agent
Topeka, KS



It's amazing how just one person can touch so many lives and make such a huge difference. I knew Rich back when he was managing Basket Slough NWR in Oregon. I was a volunteer for a time with the refuge system. I gave him his first western bird IDguide. He gave me a stuffed deer butt. After I left the refuge to attend college, Rich and I kept up a Christmas card/e-mail friendship. I was happy to hear that he had gotten the job at Humboldt, although it meant I'd see him even less. I wish I had had more time to get to know him even better. He was the kind of person you always wanted to know more about. He was a gentleman, a good cook, always polite, had a good sense of humor, and was not at all an early morning person. Rich wanted to do the right thing, and was always looking for, and conscious of, meaning in his life.

It occurs to me that perhaps his life had more meaning and worth than he knew. Even his last act on this earth was to save lives. Richard Guadagno was a special being who was meant to be where he was on the day after his grandmother's birthday. Thanks, Rich, for everything. It has taken me weeks to come to grips with his death, to realize he is really gone. Although he is very much missing from among us, when we look up at the stars or gaze at the ocean, we will remember him.

I lost my 36 yr-old husband several years ago to a tragic violent death, and I know most of what the Guadagno family is going through. You are all in my prayers. Time will help, bad memories fade a little, but the good memories will stay strong. Rich was a fine son, brother, godfather, cousin, and friend. He left a wonderful mark upon this earth and in our hearts, and he will not be forgotten.

In deepest sympathy,
Cathy Stahr McBride



Thank you for providing a wonderful memorial for my high school classmate. It's been 20 years, but the descriptions and images you provided make it feel like it was only yesterday that we sat in biology and marine science classes and on the bench for the baseball team.

I wish our paths had crossed again, since we both chose careers that emphasize environmental science and conservation. In this saddest of time, my thoughts and prayers go to Rich's family and colleagues.

David J. Stout



I first met Richard Guadagno at law enforcement training sessions in the late 1980's. I noticed then that he was a quiet, but intense man. He had very strong feelings about certain issues and was not afraid to speak his mind. I was partners with him on several occasions doing law enforcement. He was professional and took his job seriously. He was also fair, just, and compassionate.

In the 1990,s I worked more directly with Rich at Basket Slough Refuge in Oregon doing prescribed burns for endangered species. Rich valued wildlife and the outdoors. He was very passionate about wildlife management and the need to enforce wildlife laws. He loved to spend time in the wilderness and enjoyed gardening, something that I find therapeutic and rewarding also. He was a generous man, giving his excellent tomatoes to friends and coworkers. Most of all Rich valued people. He wasn't above doing hard, manual labor with fire crews on the refuge. As a partner in law enforcement, Rich was the kind of guy you could trust with your life. If things went bad, you knew Rich would put his life on the line for you. Friends who share common values impact us in positive ways that last forever. Rich is gone, but his influence in our lives remains. His passion for life goes on in and through us.

Rod Blacker
Fire Management Officer
Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, Oregon

