Oral History

of

Richard Gritman

Retired 1994
Senior Resident Agent,
Law Enforcement
New Jersey & Pennsylvania

Oral History Program
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Conservation Training Center
Shepherdstown, West Virginia

Oral History

of

Richard Gritman

Interviewed by Jerry C. Grover

Date of Interview: May 5, 2016

Location of Interview: Grants Pass, Oregon

Years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: Total with FWS was 31 years - 1963 to 1994. I joined in 1963 after a tour of duty in the Naval Submarine Service (1954-1957 and a short time with the Bureau of Land Management. Total Federal Service - 36+ years.

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: Disease Research at Bear River Research Station NWR, Utah; Assistant Manager at Kofa Game Range, Yuma, Arizona; GS-7 at Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Texas; GS-9 Public Use Specialist/Law Enforcement at Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge; GS-9 Public Use Specialist/Law Enforcement at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge; GS-11 Law Enforcement, New York/New Jersey; GS-13, SRA New Jersey/Pennsylvania

Colleagues and Mentors: Claude Lard, Dr. Wayne Jensen, Paul Ferguson, Marie Mayfield, Bob Karges, Julian Howard, Roger Johnson, Jack Downs, Joe Mazzoni, Chris Graham, Bob Garabedian, Jerry Smith, Carmine Sabia

Most Important Issues: Wildlife diseases; public use; law enforcement, import/exporting, endangered species

Brief Summary of Interview: Mr. Gritman talks about his childhood, going to college, how he met his wife, and how he first started with the Fish and Wildlife Service. After starting out at Bear River Research Center, Mr. Gritman took a job in refuges performing different tasks from assistant manager to public use specialist, and eventually to the Law Enforcement program. Mr. Gritman shares stories about each area he has worked, people he worked for, with, or hired and describes the difficulties & successes at the projects he was on. He enjoyed his job, but feels like times and the focus of Law Enforcement has detrimentally changed within the Fish and Wildlife Service. He reflects on the trend today of LE agents abandoning field work and not doing the joint enforcement with Refuge Officers on NWR's.

Richard Gritman December 2016

THE INTERVIEW

Jerry: This is Jerry Grover, a retired Ecological Services & Fishery supervisor in the Portland Regional Office and representing the *Association of Retired Fish & Wildlife Service Employees* and also the Service's *Heritage Committee.* I am on the Rogue River in Grants Pass, Oregon, to do an oral history with Dick Gritman on his career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The purpose of this interview is part of a program to preserve the history, heritage and culture of the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) through the eyes of its employees by collecting Oral Histories.

Would you please state your full name, when and where you were born. Follow that please with when and where you retired.

Dick: Richard Gritman, born in September of 1936, in Englewood, New Jersey. I retired in 1994 as a GS-13 Senior Resident Agent (SRA), Newark, New Jersey.

Jerry: What attracted you to end up in Fish and Wildlife?

Dick: When I was a kid, we lived in Demarest, NJ. We had an area swamp and an old mill pond that I used to like to play around. At the time, I had a neighbor who was an amateur herpetologist. He had all kinds of snakes and he even had an alligator in his backyard that I used to tease. He caught me teasing the alligator one day, and he said, "You got two options. You can become his dinner, or you can learn something about him." I chose to learn something about it and that got me started collecting turtles and snakes. (The neighbor was later killed in action during WW II).

I think I was about eleven years old when, during the spring I would collect turtles and snakes and keep them in the deep end of our little swimming pool which we didn't fully fill until June. That spring, I had a collection of snakes in it One day when my piano teacher showed up, I said, "Mr. Hart, let me show you something." And being a good teacher, wanting to get in good with the student, he said, "Sure." Followed me out to the patio, I got him down into the pool, which, of course, was dry except for the deep end. He wasn't really paying much attention. I bent over and lifted up a snake and turned around and showed it to him. I've never seen a man jump backwards so high, so far in my life. He cleared the end of the pool, went into the kitchen, told my mother I was entirely too young to play piano, and left and I never heard from him again and I never touched a keyboard again.

But I still collected snakes and I even carried some specimens into the Bronx Zoo that hadn't been collected in many, many years. When I was in the Navy, the books in my locker were a Ditmars' *Reptiles of the World*, and *Reptiles of North America.* They are still on my bookshelf.

After the Navy, I started college at Nebraska State Teachers college, in Chadron, Nebraska. After a year I transferred to Utah State University, Logan, Utah, where I studied zoology and wildlife management, with minors in chemistry and math.

While I was in college I ran out of funds; I went to work as a cadastral survey aid for the Bureau of Land Management. We surveyed in southern Utah, eastern Nevada and northern Arizona. During that time I collected snakes for the college collection.

When I got out of college in 1961, I went to work for Thiokol Chemical Corporation doing quantitative analysis. And after a year of that, (it didn't interest me that much), an opening came up with the FWS, working in wildlife disease research at the Bear River Research Station on the Bear River National Wildlife Refuge in Brigham City, Utah.

I worked at the Bear River Research Station, which was a satellite of the Denver Research Center, from 1963 to 1966. I worked for Dr. Wayne Jensen who was a great teacher. I co-authored, a paper with Dr. Jensen on the adjutant effect between type C and C botulism toxins. Dr. Jensen presented the paper in Moscow, USSR at the International Symposium on Botulism in 1966. I published a paper on fowl cholera in the *Journal of Wildlife Management* the same year.

One of the things I remember in those early years was that we had no budget, we made our own stuff; we did serial dissolutions of botulism toxin that was extremely toxic using moth pipettes. Today that wouldn't be allowed. We made our own cell grinding machine using a bicycle inner tube and glass beads. And if you ever tried that today, OSHA would go nuts, but we didn't have any money so you had to make do with what you had.

Jerry: Was this ongoing while you were attending Utah State?

Dick: No, this was after graduation (1963-66). I stayed with disease research working on fowl cholera, avian tuberculosis, and botulism, of course, until 1966. Then I had an opportunity to transfer into refuges. Lynn Greenwalt had come up to the station and after talking with him, I put in for the Kofa Game Range and I got the job. We transferred from Brigham City, Utah to Yuma, Arizona in July of '66.

Jerry: What was the title and the grade of that position?

Dick: Let's see, I went on as a GS-5, I became a GS-7.

Jerry: As a wildlife biologist?

Dick: No, down there it would be as an assistant manager position. Kofa was a real eye opener for me, it was beautiful; I loved the desert and the people down there. Claude Lard, I don't know how many people remember Claude, but he was a master politician, great human being and somebody who loved the resource. Working for him and with him, was an absolute delight. Pat and I used to play dominos with Claude and Joyce his wife, on Friday nights.

I enjoyed the Kofa. I could go out on the Kofa Game Range on a Monday and go to a waterhole, do waterhole counts. Get in a blind and count the number of bighorn sheep or deer or wild burros.

Jerry: Were bighorns the focus at Kofa?

Dick: Yes. I'd stay out all week camping by myself, and never see another human being, and that to me was a thrill. One time, while walking up a canyon I had a feeling that I was being watched. I looked up and there was a ram on the ridge above me looking down and I thought "Oh, that's kind of neat." I tracked on up the canyon and got up onto the top of the ridge and there was a band of sheep, and they weren't 50 yards from me. I just sat down. They were a little bit worried about me to start with but then they started grazing and left me alone and I stayed with them quite awhile. They walked along a little bit, and I moved a little bit and I'd sit down and it was a thrill.

Jerry: Were you taking notes or anything?

Dick: I was absolutely mesmerized; no notes and no photographs. And I suddenly realized that the sun was setting and I didn't have a clue where I was or where the truck was; I finally got back to the truck.

I enjoyed my brief time on the Kofa. In August I got a call from the Washington office wanting to know if I would lead a 3 week tour of Department of the Interior activities in the southwest, for a group of African students. I said yes, and then found out the tour had started the day before, and I had to fly to Phoenix, pick up a GSA vehicle, no air conditioning in those days, and drive to Needles, CA to meet the students the following morning.

I got a promotion to a GS 7 and transferred to the Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Umbarger, Texas. Gordon Hanson was the refuge manager and after he left and went Aransas NWR, Paul Ferguson took over.

We were at Buffalo Lake for three years 1967-70. Our daughter was born there. Most of the time we spent working with people rather than critters because it was nothing more than a wet hole for ducks and geese to come into during the fall migration.

Following the African Student Tour in 1966, I was asked to go to the DC office to rewrite the African student program, which I did, working with Fred Packard of the National Park Service, Office of International Affairs. I led the Southwest portion of the program for the next two years.

On the weekends and some evenings during the waterfowl season I worked off the refuge with the Special Agent out of Lubbock, Don Kreible. I also worked with him on waterfowl banding projects off the refuge.

At Buffalo Lake NWR we put in, I don't know how many picnic sites, but our focus seemed to be providing picnic areas with picnic tables, barbecue grills and vault toilets.

A couple of interesting things happened there, kind of humorous. In building the vault toilets, the contractor came in to me and said we had a problem that there was a skunk down in the vault, and the toilet hadn't been put over the hole yet. He used the word "we" had a problem and I clarified that for him and said, "No, you have a problem because you still own it." I suggested he put a sort of ramp down with chicken wire on it so the skunk could come out and he said he'd tried that and it didn't work. He finally put a ladder in and went down in with the skunk, grabbed the skunk by the tail and brought it up. It didn't spray him. The skunk had been there and away from water for about three or four days. He took it down to the road where there was a trail that led down to the edge of the lake. What he couldn't see because of thick brush, were a bunch of people down there fishing along the shore. He turned the skunk loose. The skunk shot down the trail and people starting come out of the bushes like you wouldn't believe; the skunk was only interested in water though.

I didn't much care for Buffalo Lake. I felt it was a waste of resource money. It provided no hunting,it provided, really, no fishing in reality because of the severe carp infestation. It did provide some trout line fishing, but it also provided water skiing for the public. So you had trout line fishermen and water skiers and they don't get along well together at all.

Jerry: No attempt on public information, interpretation?

Dick: We did some of that, but not as much as I would have liked to have seen done. We did trap ducks and geese in the fall and put on banding demonstrations.

The lake was polluted from runoff from the 250,000 cattle in feedlots that drained into the creek the fed the lake. In

addition the lake was completely carp infested. As a result we decided to rotenone it and kill the carp. The dead carp ended up in windrows along the shoreline. Raccoons would come and feed on the carp and then climb up in a tree. We'd go down and put the spotlight on them at night, they would just lay there and open an eye and look at you because they were too full to move. I think we drew raccoons came from all over. Blow flies then started working the carcasses. Residents in the town of Umbarger three miles away, got very upset because on a hot day the whole side of their houses would turn black with flies. We had to get a crop duster to spray malathion on the lake in order to kill the flies, which we did, and it cleared up the fly problem. We took truckloads of dead carp out of there.

The office/shop was destroyed by fire. We built a new office. Our secretary at the time was Marie Mayfield. After a weekend of heavy public use, Marie would drive the garbage packer while we'd empty trash cans. When it came time to band doves, she'd go up a tree and get the doves for banding; she would get geese from the trap for banding, she was marvelous. Her only complaint with us was that when we were out in the field, and she'd be in the office by herself, when she went to the ladies room, it seamed the phone would always ring. So I got hold of the engineer from Albuquerque when he came down for an inspection while we were building a new office and I said, "You know, I think we could take one of these Princess phones and put an RCA plug on it and put an RCA receptacle in the ladies room and Marie can take the phone with her." And they did, and she was the most excited woman you've ever met. She was so thankful.

After I transferred to Wichita Mountains she was offered a promotion and went to work for the Bureau of Reclamation in Amarillo.

Jerry: Dick, let's step back for a minute, you mentioned Pat.

Dick: Yeah, well the end of my junior year in college, I went back to New Jersey for the summer. I met Pat at church at a youth group. The youth leader at the church later became my brother-in-law, but anyway, Pat and I kind of hit it off right away. That was the summer of 1960. My job that summer was cleaning both residential and commercial oil furnaces, so Pat didn't really see me until after I got home and got cleaned up because I was covered with soot from head to foot. Anyway, that fall, Pat went back to Miami of Ohio and I returned to Utah State.

The next summer, I built houses all summer. In the fall we got married and we both attended Utah State. At that time Pat was a year behind me. I finished up in '62 and Pat finished up in '63. And we've been traveling together and working together now for 55 years, which is a pretty good stretch.

Jerry: Very good. After your Texas experience, what happened next?

Dick: A GS-9 position came open in Lawton, Oklahoma, at Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge. I took the position of Public Use Specialist which involved patrol and law enforcement, as well as doing interpretive work and working with school groups. I thoroughly enjoyed that.

We bought a home in Lawton and our son was born there.

The refuge manager, Julian Howard, was an old time manager from way back. Bob Karges was the assistant manager. Bob is the father of Chad Karges who's the current manager at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. And I first met Bob by the way when I was at Bear River at the research station and he was their assistant manager at Bear River (1964?). I first met Chad, his son, when he came home with his mom from the hospital. But getting back to Wichita Mountains, Julian Howard retired and Roger Johnson transferred in. I was there for three years (1970-73) as a Public Use Specialist / Law Enforcement. We did regular patrol shifts, 8-4 and 4 to midnight. We had the normal problems from a refuge associated with a large military base, Fort Sill, and being the midpoint between Wichita, Texas and Oklahoma City. It was a good place to drop drugs. We had some problems there.

Jerry: You went into law enforcement, what kind of training did you get?

Dick: [chuckling] Training, - we had a couple of special agents from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Gus Nunn, I think, was one of them. They came to the Refuge and provided weapons training, safety, and basic LE training. Spent a week at it, and then we were turned loose. We attended one day training seminars presented by the State Police, local Police and Sheriffs Department from time to time. I might back up also and say that when I was at the Kofa Game Range, I was issued a weapon and just for self-defense more than anything else at the Game Range, but no training there just a, "You know how to shoot this?" "Yeah."

At Wichita Mountains we did LE work and Public Use. We did interpretative work as well. We did a lot of campground patrol, highway patrol type stuff. We worked closely with the sheriff's office and with the state police. We had some violent deaths. every year. We also fought fires.

Julian Howard was the refuge manager when I first got there; Roger Johnson took his place afterwards.

Julian was an old time refuge manager. In those days we had the radios that took something like 12 C cell batteries. Great big, box type radios. When the batteries got down to

a certain level, the radio wouldn't work so we would replace the batteries.

Julian discovered that the old batteries still had life in them so he would test them and if they lit a light bulb, then they would go into a bag and he would save them and the next time we had a big fire on the refuge. When we were on the fire line at night, we were given flashlights and a big bag of these used batteries. He was an old shop keeper.

I feel that Wichita Mountains, probably the most dedicated maintenance crew I've ever had the pleasure to work with. These guys worked on horseback and they worked with long-horned cattle, they worked buffalo, they worked elk, and they really had a proprietary interest in the refuge. Really good people.

In those days we had to vaccinate the buffalo for brucellosis, and then they had to be tested. Once in a while a buffalo that would test positive, (that's true of any vaccination group), so they'd have to put the animal down to keep the surrounding ranchers happy. One cow they put down was pregnant so they decided to see if they could cut the calf out. They did, they got the membrane off the nose and they blew air into its lungs and it took, it started breathing, the hooves were still green, but we raised that little devil on a bottle, and it didn't know it was a buffalo.

Jerry: And the "we" I take it was the crew?

Dick: Yeah, the crew at the refuge, and all of us had a part in it. That calf would follow you around like a puppy dog, it'd come right into the office. It didn't know it was a buffalo, it was just another person. I can remember giving a talk to two first grade classes. Had them out at the corral and I was feeding the buffalo calf, while telling them a little about the life history of the buffalo and so forth. So I had these teachers and this whole group of kids around, and the bottle went dry. I wasn't paying any attention to it. The buffalo did what it would do to any mother it was nursing from. It put its head down and brought its head up with as much power as it could where it thought the udder ought to be. It caught me right in the crotch and just about lifted me off the ground. And while I was trying to get a breath to continue to stay upright, the two teachers were absolutely turning purple to keep from laughing.

On Friday nights, we did our Wildlife under the Stars Program for the public where we would show wildlife films. We'd bring the calf down to the crowd and turn him loose. He'd walk among the crowd, people would pet him and he was just as friendly as could be. He was a real thrill for the people.

Jerry: And he was a full grown bull calf?

Dick: He was a bull calf, but not full grown. But he got big enough to the point where it was going to be a risk so it was decided that we shouldn't do that anymore. We approached the petting zoo at Oklahoma City and boy, they said they would love to have him, so we transported him up there, so he got lots of attention.

Wichita Mountains was a good place to work, it was a good place to kind of cut your teeth in a way on a true law enforcement experience because you had all kinds of activity going on.

Jerry: What was the nature of the law enforcement action that you had to take?

Dick: A little bit of everything.

Jerry: Wasn't just hunting?

Dick: Like anyplace else, you'd catch somebody dealing drugs or drunk driving, you'd arrest them. We had beer parties we had to put up with, we had motorcycle groups that would come in. and it was a matter of communication. One motorcycle group that probably had 50, 60 people with bikes we asked them to move to an unoccupied campground and we just set some ground rules for them, said, "Look, you can do this and this, but you can't do that" and please leave the area clean. And once we communicated with them, bingo, they were fine, they behaved themselves, they left a clean area. They appreciated being communicated with.

At night, on the weekends, we had Mount Scott; you'd go on top of Mount Scott. What Brian Robinson and I would do when we paired up, is go up on top of Mount Scott and park in the shadows and watch these guys from Post that would come up with their beer. They'd get out of the car with the beer and then go sit in the rocks and look at the lights at the overlook. It was a great place to be in the evening. Brian and I worked out a system. We'd go up there and we'd see three or four guys get out of a car and they'd have a six pack or two of beer with them. We would wait until they came back to the car, and, of course, they'd come back empty handed, no empty beer cans. So we'd contact them and get their driver's licenses, ID's, and then I would start padding my pocket looking for a pen. I 'd have the ticket book out, and Brian would say, "Oh, well, wait a minute let me go back and get a pen." And so I'd tell them, "Look, Brian tends to be a little bit of a hard ass, but let's think about this for a minute; here's a couple of big, (32 gallon) black garbage bags. Suppose you guys go down and pick up your beer cans, and if you come back with those bags full, I'll bet you things will change." One night we got thirteen bags full of litter picked up, mostly beer bottles and beer cans. We didn't write any tickets, it didn't matter, we made our point. They'd come back and say, "Good Lord, I didn't realize there were that many beer cans out there."

Jerry: Each are finding these beer cans at night?

Dick: Yeah.

Jerry: So after Wichita Mountains, your law enforcement public use, did you ever get back into biology?

Dick: Yes, in the public use interpretive activities. I went to Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. Joe Mazzoni was the manager, and that was supposed to be a GS-11 position but when I got there, they said no, they changed their minds and made it a GS-9, but I stuck it out. The refuge itself was okay.

Our daughter was born in Texas and our son was born in Oklahoma. Our daughter started first grade at Malheur; 11 kids, grades 1-8, one teacher, one room. That teacher was the most marvelous school teacher you could ever find. Our daughter finished up first grade with a halfway through the fourth grade education. That followed her all the way through. She graduated from college, Phi Beta Kappa, and continued on.

Malheur Refuge is a place that if you ever spend any time there, you fall in love with it; it is such a gorgeous place.

Jerry: What were you hired as?

Dick: A Public Use Specialist.

Jerry: Oh, Public Use Specialist again, as a GS-11 but it was really only a GS-9, but public use.

Dick: Yeah. And we lived right on the refuge at headquarters. Part of my job was to work with the Malheur Environmental Field Station, which I think was managed by Pacific University. There were eleven universities that supported it and taught classes there. I gave talks and programs to, I don't know, five or six thousand students and tour groups a year. School groups of all ages from basically first grade all the way through college, and it was something that I really enjoyed, and the area is just incredible.

The city of Burns is, from my perspective, was a very friendly place to live. We didn't live in Burns but we shopped there and so forth.

We enjoyed the neighbors around the refuge, Pat and I got to know and spent time with them. On weekends we herded cattle and we separated cattle or did cattle drives with them; things like that. Joe encouraged that sort of thing. We made friends there that we still know.

Jerry: You did not have your refuge officer authority at that time, or it wasn't part of the job?

Dick: Yes, it was part of the job. But we didn't do any real law enforcement, didn't need to. Went out a few times at night with Oregon State Police to work "jack lighters" in the Double O area. We did go out a few times during the hunting season on the north side of Malheur Lake, but we didn't do a lot in the way of law enforcement. We didn't really have to; things pretty well took care of themselves.

We were at Malheur for three years.

Jerry: Those three years were from when then.

Dick: 1973 to 1976, and then in '76 a Special Agent position came open at John F Kennedy airport, Lawrence, NY. I applied for it and got accepted. There were some delays caused by, I think, I can't remember his name, Dick somebody in personnel in LE in Washington. He was an ex-Air Force Personnel officer; he tried to block it. Lynn Greenwalt stepped in and said, "No, hire him." That was the end of that. We moved east to Ridgewood, New Jersey, and moved in with my mother, who was a widow at the time, because in those days you couldn't afford to live in that environment in Bergen County, New Jersey. Way too expensive.

Jerry: And what grade now, a 9?

Dick: This was an GS-11.

Jerry: An 11, okay. And of course somewhere here you're going to tell me in this interview that you went to law enforcement school for training.

Dick: Yeah, there I worked for Jack Downs. I arrived in New Jersey, the office was at JFK. Jack Downs was the SAC. They had this alligator case coming up from down south. And I had no badge, I had no credentials. Jack handed me a gun and a holster and put me on surveillance in the back alleys in Brooklyn. And I didn't think much of it at the time but later when I got thinking about it, my God, if I had been picked up by a cop, by a Brooklyn policeman, I'd have been in deep trouble, here I am armed and no ID. Several days later, I got my credentials.

Jerry: So what were you doing in the alley?

Dick: Just watching. If I remember right, the shipment of alligator hides had come up and it was more surveillance than anything else; that was my first case. Marie —- , (I can not remember her last name), was coming up with the shipment, she was working undercover. There are several people here at this meeting today, that were there then. Kenner, Ken—

Jerry: Ken Harrington?

Dick: Yeah, he was there. Jack Downs was there of course.

Jerry: Valentine?

Dick: No, Jerry Smith.

Jerry: Jim Sheridan?

Dick: Yes. I'm not sure Jim was then there, no, I don't think so.

Jerry: I just did an oral history with him, he came in right at the end, I mean the case was all over; he was put on something else but he was physically there.

In the spring I went to Criminal Investigator School in Brunswick, Georgia for six weeks. That was followed by 5 weeks of Special Agent Basic School.

Dick: Shortly after that I went over to the New Jersey office in Newark where we worked out of the mail facility. Chris Graham and myself and one other agent, who quit later. We had an agent in south Jersey, Harry Greenwald who retired a month after I came on. That was the New Jersey contingent.

When I was still part of the JKF office, they gave me a boat that somebody had bought to do law enforcement. And it was a bass boat with pedestal seats, probably the most inefficient boat to use in a bay, in a marine environment. Good smooth water lake boat perhaps but not to do any waterfowl work. The first time I was in the South Bay of Long Island Sound. Carl Mainen and I were in that boat on patrol. We were coming back just after sunset, and you know how you have a green light and red light channel markers and so forth; I had my lights line up, I was fine, and had a 50 horse motor on the back of that bass boat. Well, what I didn't see was another red light way off on my right. So the channel moved all the way over to the right and cut back to the left. So I was on a straight line, because I didn't see that light, and I hit a sandbar. Carl who was sitting in the front pedestal seat went airborne, and I mean airborne for a ways. Fortunately it was soft sand where he landed, and he was fine. That made a marked impression on me. Getting the boat off of the sandbar was a bit of a struggle too, but it was a learning experience.

Jerry: What was the focus of your duties from that office?

Dick: I'm going to say it was import/export 70%, 30 % field work out of JFK. Then from New Jersey, it was probably 50/50 field work and import/export.

Jerry: Before endangered species?

Dick: When I say import/export I mean all wildlife and wildlife products, not just endangered species. The field work involved supporting refuges when needed. It's one of the regrets that I see today. It used to be that we had a good strong, working relationship with the National Wildlife Refuge System, where refuge managers and agents could get together and they could work on common problems and could help each other. But it seems to me from today's perspective that refuge managers and agents just don't get along, agents don't work in the field anymore, they don't seem to support the refuge program anymore and I think that's a huge mistake.

The Great Swamp Refuge with their deer hunt had a big public protest, a lot of opposition, a lot of opponents marching. For quite a few years I was asked to supply LE support to the refuge during these protests.

The last time I went to help them out, I had a brand new female agent and so I told her, I said, "Look, we've got a demonstration coming up, I'm going to need some back up. You need to come with me and we're going to handle this and keep it quiet." Went out to Great Swamp and the line of marchers came up towards us. I told her to just hang back and watch. And when the protesters got to us, I walked out to the woman who was the head of the parade, opened my arms and gave her a big hug and said, "Hi, how are you?" We had done this so many times over the years that we knew each other well enough that we could do that.

Jerry: Same lady?

Dick: Same lady. And I told her, "You really have an impact on this and if you would have your people put their ears to the ground and tell me what's going on. Where do they see the night lighters and that sort of thing? What's happening? Keep me informed." She did. It was a real eye opener for this new agent.

I enjoyed New Jersey and I enjoyed the law enforcement, I enjoyed working with the state, and I enjoyed the same thing in Pennsylvania. And probably the single, biggest case that we had in Pennsylvania that to me was very, very important was the Asper Case. Here's a multi-millionaire who was the main distributor for Arctic Cat machines. His claim to fame - he had his own personal museum - was to have four of every endangered species on Earth in that museum He would go out and shoot them himself and smuggle them into the country. For years LE would try to get him on eagles and stuff, and they were never able to. He was pretty shifty. But a PA state game officer told me that one of the taxidermists working for Asper was unhappy and maybe I'd want to talk to him. I did and the guy said, "I can give you all kinds of dates and where the stuff is coming from, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. We worked with him and we got Asper. Bob Garabedian handled the case as the lead agent. We worked out of an office in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, a U.S. Attorney's office that was vacant; empty bookshelves, no secretary, no typewriters, nothing. And a brand new U.S. Attorney who never tried a case, didn't know anything about our law, and over three months

we trained him. He had to go down to the federal penitentiary library to do his research.

The opposition, Asper's attorney, was the ex U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania who had been in office for twenty years, so he knew the federal ropes. He also knew the conditions we had to work in. Aspers defense hired all kinds of people too; all of us were being dogged, being researched and everything else. And we went into court with eighteen felonies, and we came out after the trial with seventeen convictions. And, you know, this Asper, he was a Safari International member, the big game club? They gave trophies for the biggest animal, and some of those animals were endangered species. By working with the Asper case and working with Safari Club International, we actually changed the way they do business; we got all those endangered species records taken out of their books. And one of our people was put on, I think it was Dave Hall, was put on their board to work with them to keep things on the straight and narrow. Dave Hall. The judge had Asper post a $100,000 cash bond, which he did. Oh, let me back up and say that the U.S. Attorney that handled that case was outstanding.

Jerry: And this was his first case?

Dick: This was his first case. Three weeks in US District court. The defense attorney came to us while the jury was in deliberation and he said to us, "No matter which way this case goes," he said, "in all the years that I've been an U.S. Attorney and now a defense attorney, I have never seen a finer case prepared or presented." And that was a heck of a compliment.

Jerry: Yes! Wow!

Dick: And anyway, when the jury came in, in the sentencing, the judge forfeited the $100,000 to the Fish and Wildlife Service for evidence protection and for buying information and for evidence procurement. And then he sentenced Asper two and half years in a penitentiary. And since Asper had so much money, he charged him his room and board for the two and half years.

Jerry: The judge did it?

Dick: Yes, that never happened before. I don't know if that stuck, but that was the end of that one. That was a tremendous case.

I enjoyed working with refuges and I enjoyed being out in the field with them and taking on problems that they had; down at Brigantine Refuge they had problems and we'd go down there and I enjoyed working with the Refuge officers. As an agent I worked in Louisiana, on there east coast from Virginia to Maine, and I worked in Washington and Alaska, and with the RCMP in Vancouver, BC. One of my people, Bob Garabedian, I sent up to the Pribilof's on a walrus case; I'd like to have been there myself but I couldn't do it.

Jerry: So essentially you spent the rest of your career in New York?

Dick: New Jersey and Pennsylvania actually. I was the SRA (Senior Resident Agent) for New Jersey and Pennsylvania. I supervised agents in offices in Newark, and Marmora, NJ and in Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Mercer, PA.

Also in NJ I had a team of Wildlife inspectors. We worked very closely with the US Customs inspection program.

So I got my promotion, and it was something I loved doing. And the other thing was that you had a sense of accomplishment when you made a case. Jerry Smith came down to work with me. He was the SAC in New York, and my supervisor.

I had replaced the bass boat with a 16' Polacraft. I still had the 50 horse engine. So Jerry came, came down to work with me, and since it was my boat, I was the operator. We had a blowout tide and we were stuck up in the river estuary with sandbars and mud bars to get over, and each time the engine had to be lifted. I had no power tilt. And by the time we got back to the motel that night, Jerry said, "Look, why don't you take this boat over to the shop on Monday and have them put a power tilt on it." He was beat from lifting that thing all the time. Another time he came down and we worked in the same area. We didn't have the proper boat to get in the shallow backwaters where we wanted to get. So he and I went out and we bought a 13 foot fiberglass canoe and it was white. Nothing like being secretive. Jerry and I made more cases that day. The comments we'd get, "What's the matter, won't the government buy you a motor?" What the hunters saw was two men in a white canoe and thought we were from New York City, you know New York hunters didn't know anything. That was kind of fun. I Worked the Susquehanna River, Leo Badger. And then we had the task force cases down south. They don't do that anymore.

Jerry: The baiting, you mean?

Dick: Yeah, baiting and over limits etc..

Jerry: Yeah, I read about it in our papers either, that they're doing things like that.

Dick: Yeah, times have changed. But I wouldn't have traded it for anything.

Jerry: During this career that you had, is there any one person that really sticks out as being a mentor or somebody that's really helped you along, besides the piano teacher?

Dick: [Chuckles] Well, it was Claude Lard. Claude was a negotiator. I'll give you an example. When there was a push to give the Cabeza Prieta NWR to Oregon Pipe National Monument, rather than keep it as a refuge. Claude was the guy behind the scenes, had the letters written and got the Wilderness Society involved. He was the guy behind the scenes that saw to it that people got out on the area so they could appreciate it for what it really was, and you never saw his name on anything but he was the mover and the shaker. And I guess what I learned from him was, you don't have to make a big noise, you just have to know the right people and push the right buttons and it will get done.

Jerry: And he was where?

Dick: He was the Project Leader for the Yuma area NWR's.

Jerry: At Kofa.

Dick: Kofa, Cabeza Prieta, Imperial and Havasu, the whole complex of Refuges. He went on, even after retirement, they had him back as a retired annuitant and I think he passed away, I don't know ten or twelve years ago. He was a super guy. I think of Jerry Smith on the LE side of things

Jerry: Well, let's talk about the people that you hired, there's been some really exemplary folks.

Dick: The people that worked for me, Steve Tuttle, he worked for me, is a good example. Carmine Sabia, who was one of my wildlife inspectors, and I talked to him about becoming agent. I think others did also. He became an agent and worked out of Long Island and ended up filing my position in Newark as the, I guess they call them RAC's now, but as the SRA. And he is a super guy. Who else? I had a lot of really good people and I had Kelvin Smith and that was a problem, a serious problem.

Jerry: Which was this?

Dick: Kelvin Smith. Yeah, he came to work at JFK and then they moved him over to my office; well, actually, they moved him over to Leo Badger's office in Pennsylvania and then I inherited Pennsylvania and Kelvin. I won't go into all the problems with Kelvin other than to say he got in with the wrong crowd, was investigated by the FBI and went to prison.

Jerry: Besides headaches.

Dick: Oh, I had a terrible time with it. I knew him; he and I were roommates at CIS, but then something happened and he got tied in with the cleric in Jersey City. And I suspended him 60 days for insubordination and an unauthorized use of a government vehicle. So he filed an EEO complaint and that complaint followed me for, I guess, four years, three of them in retirement. I had to call U.S. Attorney's office once a week, check in with them; always had a suit in a cleaner bag and a shirt and tie and stuff ready to jump on a plane and fly to the east to testify in court. It finally made it to the district court level and the judge looked at it and basically said, "Are you kidding me? Out!" Threw it out.

Jerry: Were there other similar issues?

Dick: Newark was a port of entry, so we would strip containers in Newark where we thought there was contraband being smuggled, usually Chinese medicinal or shoes and purses, that sort of thing. You're dealing with union shop people, so in order to strip a container you had to have a high/low operator and two laborers and that cost the importer $1500 on average, which is a pretty steep expense when you think about it. But for the Chinese medicinal's, I could do the same thing by sealing the container and having one inspector run into the city with it and be there when they unload it; the same time factors involved and it didn't cost the importer that much and my costs were the same. But what I gained out of it was the respect between the importer and us and what we were doing. It seemed to work rather well.

In Philadelphia, which is another huge port of entry for container cargo, the plan was I would send an inspector down periodically to do spot checks but if they had stuff in the paperwork that we would have to clear in Newark, they'd have to transship up to Newark to be inspected and then transship it back to Philadelphia for distribution. Well, they had the transportation cost and then they had the stripping cost, and that put a rather severe burden on them. I got together with Senator Lautenberg and Customs, because Customs actually approached me first and said, "Isn't there something we can do about this?" I said, "Well, if I can get a sub-office in here, it would work, and hire two inspectors, we could probably make it work." And so Senator Lautenberg said, that sounds like a winning move to him. And I'm trying to think of the other senator; I think it was Heinz from Pennsylvania. And they signed on and gave me additional add-on funds to locate office space and equipment and everything. And then the next year, they renewed it. The third year it would have became a regular part of the budget. I retired at the beginning of the second year and the agent that came in behind me didn't pursue it, so it was dropped and they never did get an office down there, which was a disappointment for me, but times change.

Jerry: What have been the major changes that you've seen in the Fish and Wildlife Service, good or bad; particularly, has it affected part of your life that you've given the Service?

Dick: First of all, I think the fact that the Fish and Wildlife Service has taken law enforcement and made it sort of the adopted child, it's no longer a fundamental part of their operations, from what I'm seeing. They're more paper shufflers than anything else, dealing with import/export exclusively and not looking at the problems that we have here in the United States. And there's more to Fish and Wildlife than import/export, we have our own resources that we have to protect, we're not doing it. And currently, like with the National Bison Range, when the annual funding agreement couldn't meet the necessary legal requirements, and they couldn't find a way to go around that, the Service, as I understand now, has entered into quiet negotiations with the Confederated Tribes to give them the refuge and entrust it to the BIA.

But I think in terms of the money involved, we're going to give it to them, I don't know, somewhere between six and ten million dollar investment in terms of the fencing and everything that's been done. We're going to give it to them to manage, and since they're a sovereign nation, we lose control over what happens. They could say, well we're not going to let you on anymore, we're not going to let the public see the bison anymore, or we're going to hunt the bison, or we're going to build a casino above the visitor's center. We lose control of it completely, and we have paid for that land twice. It belongs to the American public. And once this occurs, I think we're going to see it happen to many other areas where we have tribal interests and/or State interests standing by the door. I see the Service as being unrealistic in their approach, and unwilling to do anything about it. That's not just law enforcement, that's the Service as a whole.

Jerry: Okay. Richard, I want to thank you for taking your time for this oral history.

Dick: Yeah, my pleasure.