



## **The Oral History of DOUG MCKENNA**

April 13, 2023

Interview conducted by Libby Herland

San Antonio, Texas



# Oral History Cover Sheet

**Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 25 years (1987-2012)**

**Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held:** 1987 – Special Agent (Region 6, Denver); 1988 to 1993 - Special Agent (Region 6, Utah); 1993 to 2001- Special Agent (Region 2, El Paso, TX and Santa Teresa, NM); 2001 to 2008 – Special Agent In Charge (Region 2, Phoenix, AZ); 2008 to 2012 – Special Agent in Charge (Region 2, Albuquerque, NM)

**Most Important Projects:** Wyoming State Department of Agriculture/Wyoming Predator Control Compound 1080 eagle poisoning case (Wyoming Eagle Poisonings II); Book Cliffs Thallium eagle and Robins eagle poisoning cases; Tony Lama Boot Company illegal smuggling case (Botas Vaqueras)

**Colleagues and Mentors:** Ed Kelly (Montana Fish and Game, Game Warden), Ron Harron (US Forest Service), Rick Branzell (USFWS, Special Agent), Steve Magone (USFWS), Dominic Domenici (USFWS, Special Agent), Monty Halcomb (USFWS, Senior Resident Agent), Terry Grosz (USFWS, Special Agent in Charge), Bob Oliveri (USFWS, Special Agent), Larry Kristol (USFWS, Special Agent), Neill Hartman (USFWS, Assistant Regional Director), Danny Marshall (USFWS, Senior Resident Agent), Nick Chavez (USFWS)

**Brief Summary of Interview:** Doug was born in 1958 in Dover, New Hampshire, but grew up in a rural area on the Montana-Idaho border. As a young boy, living in an area surrounded by the Lolo National Forest forged his love of the outdoors. A chance meeting in high school with a local game warden named Ed Kelly set in motion the events that would lead to a fascinating and eventful career in wildlife law enforcement for McKenna. Doug's career with USFWS began in 1987, when he was assigned to Region 6 (Denver) as his training station. He was later moved to his first duty station in Salt Lake City, Utah. Doug describes the plethora of investigations and cases to be made in Utah including contaminants, eagle poisonings, waterfowl, mountain lion, Utah prairie dog, desert tortoise and trophy deer Lacey Act cases. He went on to operate undercover on two extensive cases in Wyoming and Utah. Doug recounts the difficulty of transitioning back to being a law enforcement officer, after being embedded in two prolonged undercover operations. He later transferred to El Paso, Texas where he was key to uncovering a complex smuggling operation involving the Tony Lama Boot Company culminating in a multi-million-dollar seizure. In 2001, he became the Senior Resident Agent in Phoenix, Arizona. During that time, he worked with many of the Indian nations, including the Navajo and Hopis, learning a great deal about their cultures. In 2008, he moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico when the districts of Arizona and New Mexico were combined. After retiring in 2012, he did contract work with the FBI training game rangers in both Indonesia and Africa. He also worked with the US Marshals Service as a District Security Officer and did contract work for the Secret Service conducting background checks on new applicants. Today he works for the Department of Natural Resources, Pueblo of Santa Ana, teaching Native Americans about wildlife conservation.

## THE INTERVIEW

LIBBY: Hi, this is Libby Herland. It's April 13th, 2023. I am the retired representative from the Northeast Region of the Fish and Wildlife Service sitting on the History Committee. Today, I am in San Antonio, Texas, at the Law Enforcement Reunion, and I have the pleasure of interviewing Doug McKenna, who worked in the Division of Law Enforcement for 25 years, retiring in 2012. So, today we get to hear about Doug and learn about his early childhood influences in his career and his time with Fish and Wildlife Service. So, Doug, we're thrilled that you're here.

DOUG: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

LIBBY: Oh, yeah. It's great. So, tell me where you were born and where you were raised and what year. And maybe if there were any early childhood influences that led you to either criminal justice or wildlife.

DOUG: I was born in 1958. I was born in Dover, New Hampshire where I lived as a small child. Then in middle school, my family moved to Lolo, Montana, so I pretty much grew up in Lolo, Montana, where I went to grade school and middle school and high school. What influenced me is, when I lived in Montana, we lived in a rural place outside of Missoula, which was up on the Idaho border, and I used to see the Forest Service go back and forth on the dirt road by our house. They had a lot of presence in my life just because where we lived was surrounded by Lolo National Forest. So, I always thought, *I think I want to be a forest ranger*, when I was very small. Then, when I was in high school, I met a game warden. He was new to the district, and he was going around introducing himself. We had a small farm or a ranch where we had some cattle and sheep and things like that, and we were all active in 4-H and FFA (Future Farmers of America.) He pulled up, and his name was Ed Kelly. I'll never forget it. Ed Kelly has since passed away. But he was the local game warden, and he had a grizzly bear head with a seal on the side of his door and a husky dog in the back of the truck. That's when I said, *I want to be a game warden*. So, one thing led to another and, while I was in high school, I'll never forget, I walked down the hall and I saw a bulletin board with a thing posted on it and it said, if you're interested in the Youth Conservation Corps, which was the YCC program. I think I was 15 at the time, and I was like, *you know, I'd really like to do that*. Work all summer in the outdoors and cut trails and work in different parks and work in the forest. Work for the Forest Service. So, I sent in an application, and the next thing I know, they hired me for the summer. We did various things, but the big thing we did was we cut trail and used pulaskis and shovels and things like that. I don't remember now, there was probably a crew of 10 or 15 of us, but I spent most of my time on the Idaho-Montana border cutting trail, and we'd camp out at night, which they call the Old Burn area now.

LIBBY: So, my question is, was that a recreational trail or was it for part of a wildland fire management program?

DOUG: Well, it was kind of both. The trail on the Idaho-Montana border was a recreational trail, but they had us doing a lot of other things. Like, they call them fire trails or smoke chaser trails, and they were made for the Forest Service pumper crews or, what they called, the ground crews, so that when they got a report of a fire, they could hike in, and they had different areas that had potentially a lot of lightning

strikes. So, we'd cut those. And that's actually how I got to know all the members of the Forest Service on their district fire crew, because I worked with them as a YCC person. So, the next year they asked me to come back as a crew boss. So, I spent two years with YCC, and then I really got to know a lot of the Forest Service people. And then, that year we cut a few trails, but we spent a lot of our time painting picnic tables and outhouses and working in some of the Forest Service campgrounds. That's what really got my interest. Actually, the night I was turning 18, the local district ranger office called me and the fire management officer who knew me from two years of YCC, said he had two no shows on the district pumper crew. So, on my 18th birthday, I started as a seasonal. I think it was a GS-4, with the Forest Service, and I worked all summer. I was planning on going into the Marine Corps with a bunch of buddies I went to high school with, but I loved the job so much. I was like, *you know, I'm going to wait*. So, I got to know Ron Harron, who I don't think is around anymore, but he was my fire management officer, and he took me under his wing, because I was only 18. And he kept telling me, if you want to do this for a living, you have to go to college. Because of how I grew up in Lolo, nobody I went to high school with went to college. So, I took him seriously. And after I got done that summer, I enrolled at the University of Montana and their forestry program in a resource management program. So, I started going to school, and the only reason why I went to school is because of him.

LIBBY: Your parents had not gone to college?

DOUG: No, actually, both my parents were educated. My mother was a schoolteacher who taught at the local school, and my dad was a civil engineer. He was a surveyor.

LIBBY: So, they didn't pressure you to go to college?

DOUG: They never pressured me. No, none of us. I mean, my brother went and got a master's, and I know my dad had a master's degree. My mother, I think she eventually, later on in life got it [a master's degree] because the schoolteachers, they go to school during the summertime. But no, that wasn't the peer group I hung out with. We spent all our time in the woods. I mean, every weekend we're in the woods or we're helping on the farm. I want to call it a farm. I spent all my time fixing fence or bailing hay and stuff like that. But I loved the YCC program, I really did. And I made a lot of connections that way.

Every summer I went back to the Forest Service while I was at the University of Montana, and then I ended up being on the hotshot crews. I ended up in Helena on the Helena hotshot crew, and I was a sawyer, which is a tree faller. So, I was in front of the line, and I traveled all over the United States. I would run around the airport and the next thing you know; you're on a plane to Big Sur, California or New Mexico.

LIBBY: Wherever wildfires are happening.

DOUG: Yeah. I mean, I loved it. Yeah, I just loved it. So, I did it every summer.

LIBBY: Did you ever have a wildfire near your place? Near your house?

DOUG: Yeah, we did growing up. I never fought one there. One year I worked, it was kind of rainy. When I worked on the district fire crews, we were always chasing. They called it chasing smoke. We would jump off the pumper trucks and then hike up onto the mountain and try to put out, a lot of them were lightning fires. But then, when I was on the hotshot crew, we worked on the big fires. They'd fly us in, and then we would work on the bigger fires. Then I traveled all over the western United States.

LIBBY: You weren't a smoke jumper?

DOUG: No, I was on the hot shot crew.

LIBBY: You're on the hotshot crew.

DOUG: Yeah. A lot of people get that confused. I actually was accepted to jump school. I started to get in their training. I was on the towers and everything, and it's kind of funny because I had put in for a Montana Fish and Wildlife or Fish and Game job, and I got it. So, I left because it was full time. And that was, I think they paid a GS-5 at the time, and I had one year of college left. I looked around at the fire crew. I loved it, but everybody had bad knees, and nobody seemed to be working there over 30. I was like, *I need a career*. Then that was what I really wanted to do. My whole life I wanted to be a game warden. So, I ended up leaving that in June, and I started with the Montana Fish and Game. I was a co-op student. It was at the end of my junior year in college, and my senior year, I worked as a game warden in Missoula. It was supposed to be part-time, but they had a shortage, so ended up being full-time.

LIBBY: It was supposed to be part-time, and you went full-time. Yeah, because you still have to finish your college education.

DOUG: You sign a contract that in June you have to be graduated, which I did. As a game warden, we spent a lot of time working check stations, checking deer hunters and elk hunters. In Montana, at that time, you'd sit up on the logging roads in the middle of the night and try to catch poachers. So, I use to study. I'd sit there with a flashlight and read all my textbooks.

LIBBY: Oh, my goodness. So, you're going to school and working?

DOUG: Yeah.

LIBBY: Going to school full-time and working full-time?

DOUG: Yep. The University of Montana was on a quarter system, not a semester system, but I had a Range Management class at seven in the morning, which almost killed me because I was out until after midnight. The guy that I had met in high school that came to our place and introduced himself as a game warden, he trained me. It was Ed Kelly. He popped up in my life again and we really hit it off. He really taught me a lot about being a Montana game warden.

LIBBY: Well, that's really great.

DOUG: So, I ended up in Missoula, and I ended up staying there my whole career with Montana Fish and Game, which is now Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. They changed their name while I was working for them. But I think I stayed there about six years.

LIBBY: Tell me some of the things you did when you were working.

DOUG: Well, Montana is an amazing place as a game warden because there's lots of wildlife.

LIBBY: Big game, too.

DOUG: We had moose, lots of elk, lots of deer, so you're involved in a lot of poaching cases, trophy hunter cases. Then, of course, we had the rivers in the summertime, which are packed full of fly fishermen. The biologists at that time were converting a lot of the streams into fly fishing only, or barbless hooks. That was kind of the pioneer time of all that. So, it was a big change for people.

LIBBY: So, you had to make sure that they were in compliance, that they knew the changes.

DOUG: Yeah. I mean, they had different stretches. And some of the creeks were closed in May, so the trout could spawn. So, it was super busy. And then in the middle of the summer, we did water safety on the lakes, and we checked life jackets, not only fishing licenses but life jackets, fire extinguishers. Then they sent us to the Coast Guard Academy for two weeks to be trained and all that. But, yeah, I mean, I worked some bighorn sheep cases. One of the interesting things is the grizzly bear at that time was just listed as threatened. Montana still allowed the hunt of 25 of them on a quota, whether they were hit by a train up at Glacier Park or not. And then when they reached 25 grizzly deaths, they would shut everything down. So, what happened is the Fish and Wildlife Service came in and said they couldn't do that anymore because now it's not endangered, but it's a threatened species. So, we started doing a lot of grizzly bear enforcement because, as the population kind of moved around, we would charge people for shooting grizzly bears. And in state court we couldn't get them prosecuted. So, the juries wouldn't find them guilty. I didn't know anything about the Fish and Wildlife Service, except we had a refuge down south of where I was at. There was a refuge officer who I went to school with. But anyways, they brought a guy in, his name was Rick Branzell. He was about my age, if not a little bit older, but he showed up in Missoula, and his job was to do grizzly bear enforcement and get cases prosecuted in U.S. District Court because as a state, the locals wouldn't put people in jail. They wouldn't punish them. So, then I started working with him a lot on grizzly bear enforcement. And he started citing those people into federal court, which was a whole different story.

LIBBY: So, he probably wasn't very popular in Montana.

DOUG: Well, no. And of course, in those days, the federal government wasn't revered. In Montana, there was a lot of anti-federal government sentiment. We had different militias and John Birch societies and things like that which, they kind of accepted you as a local guy, as a state guy, even though they accepted really the Sheriff, because he's an elected official. But, you know, I only had a few problems. I remember I stopped a guy once, and he handed me a copy of the Constitution of the United States. The Michigan militia started moving into town and that started changing things. He (Rick) was popular with us. I really enjoyed working with him. Here I'm working with the Fish and Wildlife Service agent who didn't wear a uniform, who drove a nice truck, who had lots of equipment, had horses. We used to go into the wilderness on horseback. I looked at that guy as a mentor. I really do. He showed me a whole different part of wildlife law enforcement, which was federally. I knew the part on the refuges, from checking duck hunters and stuff, but I got involved in getting stuff ready for federal court and testifying in federal court as the state officer. So, he was the one that kept telling me I ought to go join the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. And really, I didn't want to leave Montana, but the pay was really low. So, I decided that I might try it. Another state game warden that was next to me was Steve Magone. We were game wardens together in Montana, and he went to be a Fish and Wildlife Service agent. His first station was in L.A., and he used to call me and tell me it was the greatest job in the world, and I ought to switch to the feds. Both those guys talked me into it. Next thing I know, I put an application in, and I was called and accepted. I ended up on an airplane on the way to FLETC. I showed up in FLETC, and I think I told this story the other day, but I got off the plane and I couldn't breathe because I was used to a higher elevation

and a lot colder weather. I was in a flannel shirt, and I got on the ramp coming up. I couldn't breathe because I wasn't used to the humidity, and the heat - it was in May, I think. I looked across the ramp and there was another guy, and that was Dominic Domenici from New Mexico. And he walked over to me, and he said, "Are you a Fish and Wildlife Service agent going to FLETC?" And he said, "Yeah, you must be like me. You must be from up above 9000 feet." (laughter) I'll never forget it. And then we got in this car, and Ruth Sherian, who was this admin lady from DC, was driving us up to FLETC, and she almost rolled the car on its side. To this day, I don't know how that didn't happen. But anyway, we showed up at FLETC. When I went, we went through Special Agent Basic with the Fish and Wildlife Service first. And then after that they sent us to Criminal Investigator school. So, after that I really enjoyed it. I got done with training, and they moved me to Denver. I was lucky. I got to stay in the West, and Denver was a great training station.

LIBBY: Right. You were lucky.

DOUG: I was lucky.

LIBBY: This is 1987?

DOUG: '87, yeah. I was really lucky to stay in the West and stay in the Rocky Mountains. I worked for Terry Grosz, who was the SAC, and he's actually the one that interviewed me and hired me. At that time, you were hired out of the Regions. You had to go through interviews at the Regions. It's a lot different now. So, I started working for him. Monty Halcomb was my first, they called them SRA, Senior Resident Agents, at that time. I was in the office with Bob Oliveri and a guy by the name of Larry Kristol, who later left to go to ATF (Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms). That first year, of course, was a training year. I was home 45 days that year. Terry Grosz and Monty Halcomb's way of training new people was to send us to LAX and San Francisco for a month at a time. Sent me down to work dove hunters in Mississippi and duck hunters in Louisiana. So, I was never home.

LIBBY: Were you married?

DOUG: I was married at the time, yes, I was. So, that year I wasn't home very much, but I learned a lot and I met a lot of people across the country. So, when I went to in-service the next year, I had met a lot of the agents because I had actually worked with them maybe for a week, two weeks or even a month. And it was great training. I had no experience at import. I wasn't an inspector. I was a state game warden, so I thought it was good training. I really do. So, one of the interesting cases, though, that me and Bob Oliveri made in Denver was, they got a report that Goldie the fish, which was a fish that was very big, was stolen out of the Ennis Montana National Fish Hatchery. There was a rumor that in a place called Steamboat Springs, Colorado, a guy bragged that he had entered the biggest fish in their fish contest. And it was a white fish. It was an albino fish. And he had told someone that he had stolen that fish out of the hatchery in Ennis. So, me and Bob went to Steamboat, and the guy was scraping snow off the condos, and we called him down on the ladder. After talking to him for a while, he confessed that he stole that fish, and he said he got nervous. So, he put the fish in a big black plastic bag and went up to the pass and threw it out. So, we said, "Well, let's go up to the pass." Well, there was 20 feet of snow, and I was like, *there's no way*. So, we're walking around and we're, me and Bob Oliveri were like, "Well, where do you think you [threw it out]" He said, "I think over there." And he pointed on the top of this hill. There were tons of snow up there, but I saw a little black plastic thing fluttering in the snow. And me and Bob walked over there with the guy. We dug it up and that was the fish. We found the fish.

LIBBY: Of course it was dead.

DOUG: Oh, yeah.

LIBBY: Frozen, but oh, he led you to the fish.

DOUG: I heard...I have never seen it, but I heard at the Ennis Hatchery, there's a display that talks about that whole case.

LIBBY: Why did he steal the fish?

DOUG: He said that him and his friend were up there, they jumped the fence, went in there with a net, and they were going to steal some fish. They decided to steal this nationally known fish, and then they brought it back and entered it in a fish contest where they were at Steamboat Springs. I think it was the Yampa River or whatever. But anyways, I just think that was an interesting case.

LIBBY: People do the strangest things, right? But it's too bad because the fish died.

DOUG: I know, but they made a case, I guess, theft of government property and a whole bunch of other things.

LIBBY: Right. Absolutely.

DOUG: But it ended up being a big fisheries case which we hardly ever worked on.

LIBBY: That's right, yeah. In fact, I don't think of all the agents I've ever interviewed, I've never heard a story that had to deal with the National Fish Hatchery.

DOUG: Goldie the fish.

LIBBY: Yeah, Goldie the fish.

DOUG: So being there, George Morrison had been on a few years longer than us. He was working a huge undercover operation in Alamosa, Colorado. We helped a little bit. We didn't do the undercover work because we were new, but we did some of the support stuff on it. And I was like, *you know, I'd really like to try this. I'd like to do a big undercover case.* So, that got my interest in that. And then I was there probably less than a year, and Terry Grosz called me into his office and said, "We don't have any agents in Utah. So, you're going to Utah." So, I went to Utah as an agent. There was no other agent in the whole state, and I shared an office with Enhancement or Ecological Services, they were called.

LIBBY: So yeah, when we talked earlier, you thought it was called FWE. It used to be Fish and Wildlife Enhancement.

DOUG: Right.

LIBBY: Then they changed it, at some point, to Ecological Services.

DOUG: I think it was Enhancement then, but I don't remember.



LIBBY: Actually, I know you're right, because I joined the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1988, and I was in Fish and Wildlife Enhancement. So, it was FWE.

DOUG: Okay. So, I showed up there and I mean, I had less than a year experience as an agent, and I had the whole state. A little while longer, they brought in Dominic Domenici, who is the person I met in Jacksonville, and I went to training with. We trained together and we ended up working together. I really enjoyed him. He was a great investigator. We were a great pair there in Utah, and we had the whole state. So, there was a lot of waterfowl work there because of the Great Salt Lake, and we worked a lot of the clubs. There were a lot of private clubs, a lot of baiting issues. And then of course, we did a lot of Endangered Species Act cases from the June Sucker, from people going down to the Provo River, beating them with baseball bats and killing hundreds of them.

LIBBY: The fish? Killing the fish?

DOUG: Yeah, seriously.

LIBBY: Why?

DOUG: I don't know why.

LIBBY: Something to do?

DOUG: Something to do, yes.

LIBBY: Wow. Were people upset, because it was a listed species, you said.

DOUG: Yeah, it was. June Sucker. [I was sent to Utah] to work on some contaminant cases, some eagle poisonings out in the West Desert on the Nevada border, but a lot of waterfowl cases. Then, of course, Lacey Act cases with the state. We worked a lot with the state. The state accepted us. They had some great investigators. Worked mountain lion cases to some trophy deer cases. There was so much to do in Utah.

LIBBY: What would a mountain lion case entail? Is somebody killing a mountain lion?

DOUG: Yeah. Well, mostly they would trap them and then shoot them. Or the big thing they would do is, the outfitters would tree them in the trees and then call a client on the phone and pick them up at the Salt Lake airport and then take them out and kill them while they're in the tree. And I actually did undercover work where they would take me to the treed mountain lion. And of course, there's no pursuit or fair chase with it. It's illegal. And a lot of it was in areas that were closed. And I worked an undercover case where the outfitter would call me, and I would go down and shoot a lion out of the tree in the wrong area. So, we did a lot of that with those kind of undercover cases.

LIBBY: Just so that they could have a mount. They could mount the mountain lion.

DOUG: Well, a lot of it was money. They charged \$2,500 for the hunt.

LIBBY: Right, but the hunters wanted to have the trophy.

DOUG: Exactly. Or a rug or whatever.

LIBBY: A rug of a mountain lion?

DOUG: Yeah, so. You know, there were a lot of those cases, a lot of trophy deer cases. At that time, Utah didn't have a lot of elk. They started to, but a lot of it was waterfowl cases. And then, of course, towards the middle, while I was there, they put an emergency listing on the Desert Tortoise. Mojave Desert Tortoise. Saint George was growing like crazy. So, we would go down there with TROs, temporary restraining orders, and stop construction sites. A lot of people didn't take us seriously until we started doing that. So, we'd go down there and work those kind of cases. Then they listed the Utah Prairie Dog, so we started working those cases. We didn't have anybody at that time in Southern Utah. We really pushed to get an agent in Cedar City, which they did later on, after I left.

LIBBY: That was Gary Young.

DOUG: Right, exactly. But we spent all our time down there. And then, of course, there were a lot of issues in the National Parks because you've got Zion, Capitol Reef, Canyonlands. And of course, we had some big-time refuges there. Bear River Refuge was there, who always treated us very good, and we helped them. At that time, the Refuge Law Enforcement Program was part-time or collateral duties. So, we spent a lot of time enforcing the regulations or waterfowl regulations on the refuges because they really didn't have full-time people at the time.

LIBBY: Things have changed a lot with refuge law enforcement. A lot.

DOUG: Absolutely.

LIBBY: Were you satisfied with the way cases were being disposed? Were people getting fined appropriately?

DOUG: Well, yeah. I've got to say, in Utah we had a very big acceptance with the US Attorney's office. We had some young Assistant U.S. attorneys that accepted us and liked to prosecute our cases. And we became personal friends with some of those people. I mean, we even went to some of their weddings, even though they didn't let us in the Temple, of course, we went to the receptions and things like that. I'll tell you an interesting case we had as we were in front of the US Magistrate, and we had some swan killers that we had arrested, and we were getting ready to put them in front of the US Magistrate. But before us was the Forest Service, who had an officer that was beat up over a firewood permit violation, and the guy got probation. And then our guys came in, and they gave him the max. I think at the time it was 500 bucks a piece. And the head Forest Service guy stopped me in the hall, and he says, "I can't believe it. You got more for your swans than I did for my officer?" So, yeah. It took a little while, but we had a pretty good acceptance with prosecutions there. We really did. So, while I was in Utah, I started working some eagle poisoning cases in Vernal, which is on Dinosaur National Park. And I'm making some headway. I found a bunch of dead eagles that had died from Temic®. I think there's a video of it. I think there was 15 or 20 that we picked up. This is a kind of an interesting story. I was in the Book Cliffs with the state officer, and we're picking up eagles off four wheelers. Book Cliffs is really rugged country along the White River, and we had all the eagles lined up, and a guy in a helicopter comes by and he lands on a flatbed thing and he's working. They're getting ready to mine all that for shale. And he walked over to us, and he said, "What are you guys doing?" And we told him, and he said, "You know, I was in

Vietnam, and I wore an eagle on my patch.” He says, “Jump in my helicopter, and let's go look for dead eagles.” And we're like, “Well, I can't pay you.” He's like, “I don't want any money.” So, we jumped in and flew all over and we picked up 8 or 9 additional eagles because they were dying of - what was it? It was a restricted pesticide that the sheepherders were putting out, and it made the eagles really thirsty. So, we'd find them all under the cottonwood trees along the river because they get really thirsty and drink a bunch of water. Thallium. It was Thallium poisoning.

LIBBY: What was it?

DOUG: Thallium poisoning was used by the military in the 50's to kill rats. It was totally banned by EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), but there were caches of Thallium all over that country that the sheepherders used.

LIBBY: What did they think the eagles were doing? Were they predating on something?

DOUG: Killing their sheep. They had sheep on those ranges.

LIBBY: Really?

DOUG: Number one, they were worried about coyotes. So, they were poisoning for coyotes. And then, of course, the byproduct was the bald eagle, which is a scavenger bird.

LIBBY: Oh okay, I got it.

DOUG: But they were also after eagles because they felt the golden eagles ate their lambs, during the lambing season in the spring.

LIBBY: Oh, I didn't know that.

DOUG: Which does happen. It does. But mostly they're eating the dead animals. So anyway, I started working that case, and then I ran into another guy, a sheepherder up in the Book Cliffs that was poisoning eagles. Then he was taking the dead eagles and putting them under the rim rocks. I got him to confess to me, he took me to all the locations, and I picked up all the eagles. I turned him into an informant, who started telling stories about everyone else. And he got us into a bigger eagle poisoning case. So, I had that going on. I didn't know they were doing the same thing in Wyoming. Then, Neill Hartman called me and said, “We'd like to integrate all these eagle poisoning cases, and we'd like you to go to undercover.” So, I agreed to it, and I went to Laramie, and I worked with an informant, an informant ag kid. We ended up being friends, and we started a company called Wyoming Predator Control, which was a legitimate company. But it got us into all the people doing predator control work in Wyoming and Colorado. We would go up and shoot coyotes for money, but it always would turn to poison use and eagle feathers. And so, we started documenting a lot of the livestock producers, which were sheep people putting poisons on dead antelope and dead sheep and killing eagles. So, we would go out in this business, and then we'd see dead eagles on top of dead animals. So, we would take samples and stick them in our truck for evidence against people. We did that for two years, and then it brought us into buying Compound 1080. That was what's being turned into the Wyoming State Department of Agriculture. They had these amnesty turn-ins, and the guy that was collecting it was selling it. So, we were buying it for \$800 a can. It was from Tull Industries (Tull Chemical Company) with the serial numbers knocked off. He had safes full of it, and we were buying it. So, we became tight with him, and he was a state employee. He called it his retirement

fund. So, we were telling him we were taking the compound 1080 and selling it to the ranchers, and he was lining up people to do that. So, it turned into a big operation that me and the informant did for almost two years.

LIBBY: You said it was a legitimate business, so did you have employees who would actually go out and do predator control?

DOUG: Yeah, we would hire people to help us.

LIBBY: And of course they had no idea.

DOUG: Then we had different agents that would come in and pose as our employees to go shoot coyotes and meet different livestock producers or whatever.

LIBBY: You're undercover, but you're not the case agent on that.

DOUG: No, I was the case agent. Back in those days, the undercover person was the case agent. Because that's the only way you could get a grade increase. I had a temporary grade increase, and the only way they could do that is if I did both. Now it's different, which it should be, because we had to keep undercover books. We had business books. We had equipment. I lived in an apartment in Laramie under a different name, different license plates.

LIBBY: You had a different name.

DOUG: Everything. Insurance cards.

LIBBY: What's that like?

DOUG: You know, it's kind of funny. At first, it's really hard because you go from being a visible law enforcement officer to doing the undercover work. But the hardest thing about doing that type of undercover work, where you're in it every day, where you're not going back and forth. A lot of the agents do undercover work where they work out of an office, and they go buy something and go back. That's different. I mean, that's how we all kind of start. But the hardest thing for me was, after two years coming out of the undercover role. I struggled with that. They put me back in Utah and then a new guy showed up that I was supposed to train and I'm still prosecuting these cases where I'm driving to Colorado testifying in federal court. And they gave me a new guy. And I'm trying to transition back to being a law enforcement officer. That was really hard for me. Yeah, I think that's the hardest thing to do. It's the other way. Going into it is a little hard, but coming out of it was very hard.

LIBBY: What happened when people who knew you as your other persona realized that you were an agent?

DOUG: Yeah, that was the worst part because, just in the middle of the night, you leave. And I knew my neighbors. They all knew me as someone else. I knew the people at the cafe as someone else. You know, you befriend people. You do.

LIBBY: You're a friendly guy too, you know.

DOUG: No, you do. Next thing you know, everybody in this small community, even the ranchers I dealt with, I knew their families, I knew their sons and daughters and wives, uncles and aunts and grandparents. Yeah, they slip you out in the middle of the night. And then, of course, they read about you in the paper because this made a huge splash. The Wyoming paper reported on this every day. So, then they know, because it comes out that you as “so-and-so” is really an agent. The thing that was hard too was the families would come with the person being charged, and I'm sitting in federal court with them. I'm sitting at the prosecution desk and they're all sitting there, and they knew me as someone else. Yeah, that was kind of hard. Then I went back to Utah, you know.

LIBBY: Did you ever feel threatened or were you ever in any situations where you thought your cover might get blown or anything like that?

DOUG: Well, on another case I was doing in Utah, the big game case with the lion hunter, I went on an elk hunt in the LaSalle mountains with him. And I did this while I was doing the other case. So, I changed wallets. I went home and I got my other undercover wallet, which was a different name, and I went on an elk hunt. And when I was there, I heard one of them say, “He might be the one.” And I was like, *what does that mean?* Then they put me in a little trailer, and I heard them outside and the guy's like, “There's an undercover Fish and Wildlife Service agent working us. We don't know who it is, but it might be him.” So, I spent the whole night laying in my bed in a trailer by myself with my big game rifle between my knees. Because I thought, if they come in in the middle of the night, I'm going to have to defend myself. But I came out in the morning, and I went and ate breakfast, and I heard one of them say, “No, it isn't him, because he would be gone by now. We would have scared the shit out of him.” So, I think they said that on purpose to see how I'd react.

LIBBY: Oh, right.

DOUG: So, I went on the hunt, and they shot an illegal elk for me. So, they weren't worried about me. But I really felt bad when I left because an older guy came in after me who was just a client, and they said, “Well, maybe it's him.” And I thought, this poor guy is paying for a hunt.

LIBBY: Oh, my goodness.

DOUG: Anyway, I had to wait on taking that case down because we took both cases down at the same time. Because they didn't want my identity blown, which I thought was a pretty good move.

LIBBY: Right.

DOUG: Right? Because all this stuff was in the paper and in magazines.

LIBBY: Did you get to pick your undercover names?

DOUG: I did, yeah.

LIBBY: So, that it would be easier for you to remember?

DOUG: Yes. Yeah, I got to pick it and, you know, there are various names you use. It's kind of funny how that's done.

LIBBY: I think in this day and age though, it would be harder to go undercover, wouldn't it? Because of social media and everything.

DOUG: I think so, yeah. Well, it was getting hard towards the end. Because with social media, you'd have to do a whole social media platform.

LIBBY: Yeah.

DOUG: You really would, because people do dig into you. They really do.

LIBBY: Yeah. You know, you say you're from this town, then they're going to look up and see if you went to high school in that town.

DOUG: They're going to, and if they don't see you, then they're going to get real weirded out because everyone leaves a trace now. I think it'd be really hard to do. You'd really have to have things set up pretty good. I mean, we had insurance in our name, and we had different things. We had checks and credit cards and all that. But yeah, now it'd be really hard, I think. Because people would check on you.

LIBBY: These guys were obviously paranoid.

DOUG: Yeah, they were really paranoid because when I went on the hunts, they had radios and they would radio - all his sons worked for him - and they'd be like, "Who's that blue car? What white car was that?" They were so paranoid. Really paranoid.

LIBBY: I can't imagine living my life that way.

DOUG: I'll tell you a funny story about that guy. Years later, I got a telephone call that he was dying, and he wanted to talk to me. So, he was down in Cedar City, and I went down there. I was on another trip, and I went in to see him and he said, "I just want to talk to you, and I want to tell you one thing before I die." And I'm like, "What do you want to tell me?" And he said, "You know, you did a really good job on me, and I guess I got what I deserved. But I just want you to know one thing." And I said, "What's that?" He said, "I'm not a poacher." I said, "All right, okay. Good luck. See you later." For some reason...

LIBBY: That was important to him.

DOUG: A big deal for him, before he passed away. So, sometimes these things go on later on in life. They really do. But anyway, I got done with the Wyoming eagle case, and it was a lot of work putting it all together. Back in those days you did a lot of that stuff by yourself. Danny Marshall came in later, who was my supervisor. He helped me a lot. He really did. I really appreciate his efforts. He had done some undercover work in his career, so he knew. That's a big thing, the people, the other agents that you deal with, if they don't have that kind of experience, they don't understand. And so, I think it was always good. I know when I became a supervisor, I always tried to push people to do even a little bit of undercover work, so that they could support undercover people, because sometimes there's misconceptions that you're out having fun. It's a lot. I mean, in my apartment in Laramie, I got to know a lot of people, and a lot of them were up in different ranches. They weren't the target of the investigation, but say their cousin was coming into town, would stop at my apartment and need a place to sleep because they lived five miles away. I would have my computer because I have to write notes, and I have to write case reports. I would

shove everything in a closet in my room and lock it. And then, I had these guys sleeping out on my couch that were bad guys. That's how crazy it was.

(Laughter)

LIBBY: That is crazy.

DOUG: Because you have to document everything. And it's not all just contacts – [it's] everything you do. I mean, we were cutting tapes on everybody back then. I cut over 200 or 300 cassette tapes.

LIBBY: So, you're recording people.

DOUG: Yeah, I had a cassette recorder in my cowboy boot, and I ran it up and had it sticking out here. The mic.

LIBBY: Wow.

DOUG: Yeah. Most of it was wind blowing in Wyoming.

(Laughter)

LIBBY: I guess the wind blows a lot in Wyoming. You can't hear the words.

DOUG: So anyway, in the middle of that, I went home to an empty house. My wife, at that time, left me because I was gone all the time. She went back to Montana with three kids.

LIBBY: You had three children?

DOUG: Yeah, I had three kids. So, she went back to Montana, and didn't ever want to come back. So, I continued the undercover operation.

LIBBY: Oh, that must have been awfully hard on them, too, for you to be gone. Not only on your wife, for you to be gone.

DOUG: Yeah, the kids were small. So, anyway...

LIBBY: Well, that's a real shame.

DOUG: Yeah. Then at my take down, I met a girl from EPA that helped me put a bunch of the search warrants together. They had a special crew that went in and did search warrants for pesticides and illegal chemicals. They were out of Denver. There was a name to it. I don't remember now, but she worked on that crew, and we met in Fort Collins where the takedown was and had a long-distance relationship for a long time because she lived in Denver, and I was back in Salt Lake. So, we looked for a place to get together, and that's when Mel Holt called me and told me to come down to El Paso. He wanted me to do a lizard skin case because of all the illegal smuggling that was going on in the cowboy boot trade. And I said, "That sounds interesting." I was kind of looking for a new project or new thing to do. I loved Utah, I really did, and I loved the people there, but it was time for a change. So, I went down to El Paso and started learning import/export work, and a lot of people thought I was crazy. I had southern New Mexico

and west Texas, and there were two wildlife inspectors in El Paso, at that time. We had one computer in the office, you could barely know what it said, but it had all the import/export stuff on it. I just started looking at it and started looking at some of the trends on the reptile skins that were coming in. And at that time, horned back, it was a caiman lizard out of South America, and they were coming in. I started looking at permits, they were a CITES permit, and then I started looking at the permits big time. And they seem to be kind of phony, which they ended up being phony. So, I started working a major boot company in El Paso. They were called boot vamps, and they're pieces of a cowboy boot. And this is before we had all this new stuff we have now. I had these boards with how many boot vamps it would take to make a cowboy boot, and then all these mathematical formulas, and it didn't make any sense. They're bringing in way too many, I mean.

LIBBY: They don't need that many skins to make the boots.

DOUG: Yeah, everything was off. So, I went and visited the CEO of the company. And there was the CEO and the assistant CEO, and they're behind a big, big famous desk. And they had cowboy boots...

LIBBY: And which company is this?

DOUG: Tony Lama. They had cowboy boots for the Pope and for the President of the United States. So, anyway, I'm sitting there, and I started laying out all these permits, and I'm like, "Well, this doesn't make any sense," and "Can you explain this or that?" And these were two big, heavy guys like 350, 400 [pounds.] They were brothers. And how I knew I had a case is I watched one try to smoke four cigarettes at once. I knew it. I just knew it.

(Laughter)

LIBBY: That's a tell.

DOUG: So anyway, I started working and got some informants on that case, and they started telling me they're smuggling. The hides are coming into Mexico and into Juarez, and they're stamping out the boot vamps and they're smuggling them in suitcases every day. So, I started working that document, put it all together, and it ended up being a huge seizure. A bunch of guys from Argentina got indicted, and it ended up being a pretty good case. Yeah, I think a couple million-dollar seizure. So, I went to the Tony Lama Boot Company with the U.S. Marshals, because they're the ones that do the court asset forfeiture, and we showed up in a semi-truck and took all the boots.

LIBBY: Wow.

DOUG: And the Marshals were all happy because it wasn't a dope case.

LIBBY: Yeah, it was something different. Wow, that's huge.

DOUG: Yeah.

LIBBY: Now, you just told me about that in a few sentences, but how much time did it take you to do all that?

DOUG: For that case? Oh, it probably took two years, maybe three.



LIBBY: Right.

DOUG: Yeah, it really did.

LIBBY: A really long time.

DOUG: Yeah. Because I interviewed a lot of people, and I had a Wildlife Inspector there that knew Spanish, and I used him as an interpreter, and he was a lot of help. Then, he later on became my boss.

(Laughter)

LIBBY: Who was that?

DOUG: Nick Chavez.

LIBBY: Okay. That's funny.

DOUG: I actually used him as an ID because he had a uniform. He had a badge. But he did a really good job on it as a Wildlife Inspector. He was very helpful. And, of course, he went on all the interviews with me. So, they contested it, and then I ended up going to U.S. District Court. I testified for three days straight.

LIBBY: What happened to the company?

DOUG: The company lost all the cowboy boots, and they ended up indicting the middleman. They never indicted anybody at the company, even though they knew.

LIBBY: I do remember Tony Lama boots.

DOUG: Yeah. They were owned by Justin Boot Company out of Fort Worth, which was owned by Footwear Management out of Hartford, Connecticut. Kind of takes the Western flair out of it. (laughter)

LIBBY: That neck of the woods, yeah. It does, doesn't it? Are they still around?

DOUG: Yeah, they're still there. Yeah.

LIBBY: Making legitimate boots, now?

DOUG: That I don't know.

LIBBY: As far as you know.

DOUG: I know Special Ops worked all that, long after I left. You know, they did pretty much the same thing, but they did it in undercover mode, and I went and helped them on a couple of takedowns, but I don't know what ever happened. I think they were looking at other different skins. But it was pretty interesting because track those caiman lizard skins, which ended up being horned backs. They paid the trappers in, not Belize, but British Honduras, the north part of the Amazon. They paid the trappers a buck

for each animal, and they'd chase them with dogs up trees and then shoot them in the head and then skin them. And then the whole thing went, and then they go into Mexico. And then they were being smuggled into the United States, but they were using fictitious CITES permits from Japan. They were trying to multi-layer everything like they were being bought out of a place in New York, going to Japan. It was all this layering stuff. And we didn't have the technology. We didn't have the computer stuff that we have now. So, it was all done with putting in requests to the Washington Office for them to send us the permits.

LIBBY: Very time intensive.

DOUG: Yeah, it really was. And then when we started developing informants, they would tell us, "Hey, go look at this. This isn't right." And that's kind of how you do those kind of investigations.

LIBBY: What would be the motivation for the informant in this case? Somebody who felt like it wasn't right?

DOUG: Oh, no. They are very competitive. The exotic leather cowboy boot business in El Paso is very competitive. They're all competing against each other.

LIBBY: Oh. But *they* weren't doing anything wrong though *themselves* (sarcasm).

DOUG: Oh, I'm sure they were.

(Laughter)

LIBBY: Wow.

DOUG: Yeah. So, I did that. Then, they moved me over to Santa Teresa for a while, which was a new port in New Mexico, because they brought another agent into El Paso. He was a newer agent. And I worked mostly southern New Mexico. And then they brought in the wolf. They brought in the Mexican Grey Wolf back in the late 90s. And that's when the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service released the wolf in Arizona on the Arizona - New Mexico border.

LIBBY: Who was that Director?

DOUG: Mollie Beattie.

LIBBY: Mollie, okay.

DOUG: I think. I'm almost sure it was. So, we lost five wolves the first week; they were shot. Congressional delegations were all over the Service to do something. So, I spent all my time in the Gila Wilderness in that part of New Mexico, trying to make wolf cases. They were hard to make, because sometimes there wasn't a bullet in them. Sometimes there was, sometimes there was a witness, sometimes there wasn't. Got lucky. I worked on a case for almost two years. Found a wolf up in New Mexico. It looked like somebody jammed its nose into a stump. Looked like it had been transported there, so I picked it up. It was called the Jim Smith Peak wolf. I just started interviewing all the people. It was during hunting season. I went in all the hunting camps and got the hunting lists. I went all over New Mexico knocking on doors. And I made a lot of elk cases for the state, because I'd knock on the door and I'd say, "Here I am from the Fish and Wildlife Service. So and so from the New Mexico Game and Fish. You

were up in a certain place. What did you do wrong? You know what you did wrong?" "Yeah, I shot my uncle's elk." That happened a lot. "Oh, I shot my wife's elk. I know why you're here."

(Laughter)

LIBBY: That's not why you were there, but...

DOUG: Yeah. Anyway, the state loved it. They made a lot of cases. I got a call one day about a kid that was bragging about killing the wolf. Put two and two together. I went up and interviewed him, and he kept lying to me. He was an adult when I interviewed him. It was in Springerville, Arizona, and he said to me, "Let's go to the rodeo grounds," because I was going to take him home. And he confessed to everything. He wrote an affidavit how they killed the wolf with an SKS rifle. It was in Escudilla Park, which is kind of weird because Escudilla Mountains was where the famous wolf that Leopold wrote about. The wolf that changed his whole life. It was shot there.

LIBBY: When he saw the light go out of the wolf's eyes.

DOUG: Same exact place. They drove it to New Mexico and dumped it out. And so, I got an affidavit from him. He was helping with it. He did shoot at it, but there was a main player. So, I went to Holbrook, Arizona, and the guy was scrubbing the sulfuric acid out of the power {plant chimney.} They were closed. And so, it was funny. I pulled up and I had a little bit longer hair and a bigger beard, and the security guy, I told him what I needed to do, and if "so and so" was there and they're going to bring him to the security trailer and he says, "You're a bounty hunter, aren't you?"

(Laughter)

But anyways, I put him in the trailer. He didn't confess for a while. Showed him the affidavit that his buddy wrote. Then we started talking about McKittrick. McKittrick was the guy that killed the wolf in Montana, and I said, "He's famous up there. They got t-shirts, writing books on him." And he's, "They're writing books on that guy?" I'm like, "Yeah." And then he's like, "I shot the damn wolf." And then he wrote a big statement, and we ended up...

LIBBY: Was that true or was that a trick?

DOUG: That was a trick.

(Laughter)

DOUG: Then, he ended up going in front of the magistrate in Flagstaff, and they put him in jail for six months.

LIBBY: All right!

DOUG: Which some people weren't happy with. They thought he should go to jail more, but they didn't realize under the Endangered Species Act it was considered a threatened species, and the total amount of time you can get is, it's a petty misdemeanor, which is six months. A lot of the biologists didn't understand that, because they don't understand that part of the law.

LIBBY: Well, I know that a lot of the fines and the penalties are not really sufficient for wildlife crimes.

DOUG: So yeah, we probably did 200 interviews on that case before we finally found them.

LIBBY: So, you're obviously very organized.

(Laughter)

DOUG: So, then after that, I ended up going to Phoenix to be the Senior Resident Agent.

LIBBY: Okay. Can I interrupt you for a minute?

DOUG: Yeah. Go ahead.

LIBBY: So, from 1993 to 2001, you're in El Paso?

DOUG: Yes, and Santa Teresa at the end.

LIBBY: Now, this woman that you met from EPA. What happened to her?

DOUG: Oh, okay. I guess I'll back up.

LIBBY: Did she move to El Paso?

DOUG: She did, she did. She was from Santa Fe. She went to school at New Mexico State. She got a job with the government in El Paso. So, we ended up going there together.

LIBBY: Okay. Great. All right. Good. And was she more suited to your lifestyle, then?

DOUG: Well, she knew about my lifestyle, so we've never had a problem because I was gone all the time then, too. I mean, I'd go into the Gila for 10 or 14 days. And then we started doing wolf patrols, and we organize those kind of things. I was gone all the time. But she understood that because she came from that kind of background.

LIBBY: Okay. Did you end up marrying her?

DOUG: I did.

LIBBY: Oh!

DOUG: Yeah. I had two kids from her.

LIBBY: And still married to her?

DOUG: I am.

LIBBY: All right. Congratulations.

(Laughter)

DOUG: I hope I am.

LIBBY: Is she here?

DOUG: No.

LIBBY: Well, that's good. Well, congratulations.

DOUG: She talked me into going to New Mexico, because I lived in New Mexico, even though I worked in El Paso.

LIBBY: Okay.

DOUG: That was part of the deal when I came down.

LIBBY: Alright. So now you're moving to Phoenix.

DOUG: I moved to Phoenix.

LIBBY: And you got a raise. You got a promotion.

DOUG: I did. 2001. So, I walked into the Phoenix office, and I had Arizona. So, I had field stations in Flagstaff, Springerville, Nogales and Yuma for a little while, but they closed it down.

LIBBY: Right. So, you were the Senior Resident Agent?

DOUG: I was. Had a great crew over there. We did a lot of great things there.

LIBBY: Okay. Want to share some of them?

DOUG: A lot of them were wolf stuff because the wolves were in Arizona. Worked a lot with the different Native American tribes over there, including the White Mountain Apaches. The Navajo, of course. I spent a lot of time up there.

LIBBY: So, that part of your job was really different because now you're really working with a lot of Native American tribes.

DOUG: Yeah. I mean, I worked with the Mescaleros when I was in El Paso because that was part of my responsibility. But no, I think there was 20, 22 different Indian nations in Arizona. But the bigger one was the Navajo. We spent a lot of time on the Hopi, because the Hopi would get permits through the Fish and Wildlife Service to take eaglets. And they would go on the Navajo, which the Navajo would give them a permit to take 12, but they could only take one out of a nest. So, we'd go up and mediate between the Hopis and the Navajo, because the Navajo didn't like the Hopis taking eagles out of their traditional golden eagle nest. They'd shoot at them and everything else.

LIBBY: And what would they do with the eaglets?

DOUG: The Hopi would take the eaglets and take them back to the Second Mesa, put them on their rooftops for a couple of months, feed them. They'd either chain them or they'd put them in dog kennels until they did their different clan dances, I think generally in July or August, which is a secret, right?

LIBBY: Right. But would they keep the eaglets alive?

DOUG: Later on? Well, they kept them alive until they did the clan dance.

LIBBY: Just until the dance? Then they can keep the feathers, afterwards.

DOUG: Yeah. They collected quite a bit of them. The Regional Director gave them a permit at one time for over 40 eaglets. But the problem is with golden eagles, it was always thought that if they have 2 or 3 eaglets, they'd kick a couple of them out and only take care of one. So, that's kind of why they gave a permit for so many. But the problem we had at that time is the Hopis were cleaning out the nest. They were taking all the eaglets. And they'd come off these big, big pinnacles and they'd repel down with ropes, and then they'd leave offerings, and they'd go back up. So, we served quite a few search warrants on the Second Mesa, if they didn't, number one have a permit or number two, they had too many eaglets. So, we spent May and June mediating that, which at first was hard, but as the years went by, it got a little bit easier because they were used to seeing us.

LIBBY: And you were used to their culture.

DOUG: Yep. Learned a lot about it. The Hopi did teach me a lot about their culture. And of course, the Navajo did. We always had a great relationship with the Navajo anyways because, at that time, they had a pretty progressive fish and wildlife enforcement program or game warden program. We actually use some of their people to do undercover work buying eagle feathers at powwows and things like that because, we did that too. So, yeah Arizona was an interesting place. Again, lots of wildlife. Lots and lots of wildlife issues. At the same time, they had released condors in the Grand Canyon, and we were losing those. So, at that time, we investigated every wolf that was killed and every condor that was killed. So, I spent a lot of time in the Grand Canyon picking up dead condors and investigating that.

LIBBY: Were people shooting the condors?

DOUG: Yeah. We had one guy that shot one from a raft with a handgun, even though it was illegal at that time to carry a firearm in a national park. Then one was killed with an arrow from a bow and arrow at Jacob Lake. I worked on that case, which made it pretty interesting.

LIBBY: Wow, your career so far is just amazing. And you're in all these cool places, and you're working with all these cool animals and saving them.

DOUG: Well, that was at the time, the condor was just released, so the timing was kind of cool.

LIBBY: And you're also doing a lot of paperwork, right? Because you're the Senior Resident Agent.

DOUG: Yeah.

LIBBY: Was that okay?

DOUG: Yeah, I liked it. I hear a lot of people didn't like management. I loved management, I really did. I liked working, but I tried to get out with agents. I loved it. I'd go down to Nogales and we'd work big operations. They had never stopped U.S. hunters coming back with Mexican deer. They didn't have the right centillos [tags] and they smuggled a lot. And of course, Customs didn't care, at that time, because it was wildlife. So yeah, it was a lot of fun. Then, of course, duck hunting - we worked that on Roosevelt Lake. There was always lots to do. I enjoyed getting out, and I did. I tried to anyway.

LIBBY: So, you were there for seven years.

DOUG: I was there seven years. Then, they moved me to Albuquerque. The SAC at the time combined Arizona and New Mexico together as one RAC district. Then they wanted me in Albuquerque. So, I came to Albuquerque, and my family was really happy because they wanted to return back to New Mexico, because that's where the relatives live. So, familywise, it worked out really good. I love New Mexico. I had been here before; I knew a lot of the state people. I knew everybody at the US Attorney's office. So, it was a pretty easy transition.

LIBBY: Did you hire any people and help mentor any people?

DOUG: Well, I don't know. You have to ask them.

LIBBY: If they felt like they were mentored? (laughter)

DOUG: I felt they did. I always kind of enjoyed that. There was a lot of people that are agents today that I picked up as co-op wildlife inspectors. They're working today. A lot of them are in management today. I hear from some of them. Sometimes they do welfare checks on me to make sure I'm okay, which makes me feel good, you know?

LIBBY: Oh. That's nice.

DOUG: It's kind of nice to get a call from a guy that you helped out, and he did a good job. And you supervised him. Then later on, they're a SAC, and they pick up the phone just to say "Hi."

LIBBY: Yeah.

DOUG: No, that's pretty neat.

LIBBY: It is very neat.

DOUG: And I'm getting older, so I know less of them, you know. Because they're leaving.

LIBBY: You retired in 2012. So, it's been 11 years.

DOUG: Yeah, it has. 11 years ago. It's hard to believe.

LIBBY: It goes by fast, doesn't it?

DOUG: I can't believe it.

LIBBY: Is there anything else you want to talk about with the Fish and Wildlife Service? Did you retire when you did because of mandatory retirement?

DOUG: No, I did not. I'll tell you why I retired. I was going to Africa training game rangers, and I met some FBI agents in Botswana, and they had a contract business where they were traveling internationally as contractors – contract trainers. And they had told me [that] the best advice they could give me is *get out as soon as you can and start another career. And why don't you come and do some contract work?* Which I did. I left the Fish and Wildlife Service. I did some contract work in Indonesia and again in Africa. So, I did that until my kids were in high school, and I thought that maybe I should be around a little bit more. So, I ended up being a high school baseball coach to stay home a little bit for a little while.

LIBBY: And did you say something earlier about, not in this interview, but on Tuesday, about working with the Secret Service?

DOUG: I did. After I retired, I did a couple of things. I did OPM contract work for a while doing background investigations, and I did that in the afternoon. But in the morning, the U.S. Marshal had called me a couple of months after retiring, wanted to know if I was interested in coming to work for them as a District Security Officer, which isn't a CSO. They're called blue coats. So, I worked for the Marshals [Service.] I did all kinds of things, from moving prisoners to courtroom security to working bigger cases, too. So, I did that for quite a while.

LIBBY: Were you happy with that?

DOUG: Yeah, I loved it. I loved the guys. Guys and girls.

LIBBY: Sounds like you love everything you do.

DOUG: They're a great organization. They treat their people so good. The US Marshal is a lady. She's from New Mexico, retired FBI agent. To this day, I love her to death. She was a great manager. I hated leaving the Marshals, I really did. I liked it, even though I was a lot older than they were. A lot of them could have been my kids, but they treated me good. I went on transports with them. I went all over the place.

LIBBY: Were you collecting a pension from the Fish and Wildlife Service?

DOUG: Yeah, I was.

LIBBY: And then you were earning extra money.

DOUG: Yeah. Then what happened is the Secret Service was looking for returning annuitants that were 1812s or 1811s or whatever. We were both when [I was working for the FWS.] They called me and offered me a job as a returning annuitant to do background checks on their new applicants. Any relations in New Mexico, and there was a lot, because a lot of them were in the Air Force and went to Kirtland or Clovis or whatever. So, I did that. It was only a two-year thing. And, again, great group of people. Different than the Marshals. The Marshals are the blue-collar enforcement group. They chase fugitives, and they're really good at what they do. Secret Service, of course, they protect the President. So, I helped with that, and I really liked that. But my two years was coming up, and then I got a phone call from a guy



that was leaving. He was-the head of the conservation part of this Pueblo of Santa Ana. He said, “I think you’d do a really good job out here. I’m leaving, and I want to leave it in good hands. Would you be interested?” So, I went up and spent a day with him driving around, and he showed me things and I said, “You know what? I’d love to do this. This is great. This is all brand new, and I think I’d like to teach what I know about conservation and fish and wildlife enforcement, and this would be a great place to do that before I really retire.” So, next thing I know, I started with them. When I started with them, there was three of us, and now there’s ten of us.

LIBBY: Wow.

DOUG: All right. Am I out of time?

LIBBY: No, you can keep going. We’ve got time.

DOUG: So, that's what I do today. I teach Native Americans wildlife conservation. I love every minute of it. I'm going to Alaska in two weeks to the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society meeting. Another great group of people. They're just great people. They treat me so good.

LIBBY: There's a lot of good people in this world.

DOUG: Oh, there is.

LIBBY: Which is nice.

DOUG: I met a lot of bad people with the Marshals, but you know what? Life is full of choices. And I kind of learned, moving the bad guys around, that sometimes it's a bad decision you make in a couple of minutes that changes your whole life. No, seriously. I did meet some really bad people, but a lot of people just make the wrong decision, for whatever reason.

LIBBY: Would you say that the time you were in that trailer, with your rifle or your shotgun – I guess it was a rifle - between your knees thinking that you might have been busted as a Federal Agent, was the scariest experience you ever had?

DOUG: I would say, yes. I don't scare off very easy, but I think it was my being a Montana game warden working all by myself on the Idaho-Montana border. I used to say, I learned to tap dance. Because you're all by yourself, and you're taking people's stuff and their animals and writing tickets at midnight in the middle of nowhere. Usually things would go okay, but sometimes they wouldn't. So, I used to say, you learn how to tap dance with people, you know? You try to de-escalate. And that was in the 80s. Now, that's the thing they want to teach everyone now. But we were doing that 30 years ago, because you had to, because you had no backup.

LIBBY: You had no backup.

DOUG: Absolutely none. That was a big change, when I went to work for the Marshals. You had backup in three seconds. Same thing with the Secret Service.

LIBBY: They have a lot more funding, don't they?

DOUG: They have a lot more people, and they have a lot more money. Boy is that true. And really with them when you left, your shift is over. It's over until you show back up again. With Fish and Wildlife, the big thing that I tell the new people is "your shift never ends." Because there's not enough of us and you can't hand it to someone else. You might be the only person or there's two or three other people you got to share or work with, but it's up to you. And your phone rings all the time.

LIBBY: Well, I'm glad you have a smile on your face.

DOUG: Oh, I do. Yeah, absolutely.

LIBBY: It's all worked out that you got good advice.

DOUG: I did.

LIBBY: Your entire life. Your entire career.

DOUG: I really did. As I said in the meeting, everyone has ups and downs. I always enjoyed it. I had some highs and lows in this outfit. Everything wasn't all cherry. But I've got to tell you, it's all in your attitude, and it's all how you handle it.

LIBBY: I bet your parents were really proud of you.

DOUG: Oh, I don't know. They're all passed away. My mother passed away early. She was the mayor of Helena, Montana.

LIBBY: Really?

DOUG: She was a strong lady. She taught second grade. They said she taught everyone in town. Then she retired and ran for mayor. And she won by a landslide victory because she taught everybody in town.  
(Laughter)

LIBBY: How old were you when your mom passed?

DOUG: Oh, man, Maya was 20, she's 26 now. Let's see. I was probably in my early 40s.

LIBBY: So, she knew that you ended up in the Fish and Wildlife Service as an agent.

DOUG: Oh, yeah, she knew that.

LIBBY: That's good.

DOUG: I would think so. I hope so.

LIBBY: All right. Well, I think on that note, we'll end this interview.

DOUG: All right.

LIBBY: Thank you so much, Doug. It was so much fun.

*End of Interview*

Key words: endangered species, fires, fishing, game wardens, hunting, law enforcement, national wildlife refuges, native Americans, tribal lands conservation