



The Oral History of Rich Moulton

March 7, 2024

Interview conducted by Libby Herland
in Ellington, Connecticut



Oral History Cover Sheet

Approximate years worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: 26 ½ years

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: Special Agent in the following stations: Kennedy Airport in New York; Newark, New Jersey; and Hartford, Connecticut

Most Important Projects: Lacey Act enforcement; Operation Wiseguy, Operation Berkshire, Operation Snow Cat – migratory bird and endangered species protection

Colleagues and Mentors: Clark Bavin, Clyde Bolin, Dennis Crouch, John Doggett, Bill Donato, Chris Dowd, Jack Downs, Kevin Garlick, Chris Graham, Carl Mainen, John Meehan, Kevin O'Brien, Adam O'Hara, Jerry Smith, Terry Tarr, Jim Van Wheelden, John Waters, Paul Yanus

Brief Summary of Interview: Rich tells us how, working as a plant inspector for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), he met two special agents in the Fish and Wildlife Service and was hired by Jack Downs to work at the JFK airport in New York City. After short stints in New York and New Jersey, Rich transfers to a one-man duty station in Hartford, Connecticut. He worked closely with Federal agents from other bureaus. He worked Migratory Bird Act cases, Lacey Act cases, and Endangered Species Act cases. Later in his career, Rich begins undercover work. Rich tells about his biggest cases – Operation Berkshire which involved the poaching of bears for their gall bladders, Operation Wiseguy in which a U.S. citizen worked with members of the South African Defense Force to smuggle rhinoceros horn and parts of other endangered species as well as guns and marked the first international extradition involving crimes against wildlife, and Operation Snow Cat which involved an Afghan-American known as “Ronnie the Rugman” who smuggled snow leopard rugs and later became an FBI informant on the Taliban as well as a trusted Taliban official. Rich worked at Logan Airport in the aftermath of 9-11. Rich was the recipient of the 1994 Clark Bavin Award for his work on the Operation Wiseguy case. (He was also the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s 1993 Guy Bradley Award recipient, but Rich fails to talk about that in this interview.) He also talks about being the subject of a book about wildlife agents, written for young children. Finally, after retirement, Rich became an adjunct professor at the University of Connecticut in Storrs and conducted background investigations primarily at the Groton Naval submarine base.

The Interview

LIBBY HERLAND: Hi, this is Libby Herland. I am a member of the US Fish and Wildlife Service History Committee and today, March 7th, 2024, I have the honor of interviewing Rich Moulton. Rich was a special agent with the Fish and Wildlife Service [Badge #212.] He started working for the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1975 and retired in 2002 after about 27 years of service. We are in Rich's home in Ellington, Connecticut. I'm going to turn it over to Rich to tell us a little bit about his background, and then we're going to learn about his fascinating career. Hi, Rich.

RICH MOULTON: Hello.

LIBBY: Tell me a little bit about where you were born, when you were born and your early childhood influences.

RICH: Born in Danbury, Connecticut, in 1951. I just liked to hunt and fish and work for the farmer in back of our house. I used to hunt for raccoons because I got paid. He paid me bounty for all the ones that I'd catch in the corn. I made 75 cents for a raccoon. But then in May of 1973, I graduated from University of Massachusetts at Amherst with a degree in wildlife biology.

LIBBY: Oh, wait a minute. We don't need to go to college already. Did you tell me about your family? Who did you hunt with? Did you hunt with your dad or your friends or how did that work?

RICH: Alone.

LIBBY: You hunted by yourself?

RICH: Yes.

LIBBY: How did you learn how to hunt?

RICH: Taught myself, basically. My dad used to hunt, but he wasn't hunting in those days. My grandfather was a big hunter, but he passed away when I was young. So, I guess I just carried on the tradition - going after waterfowl, pheasants. Loved to fish, loved to ice fish. Did that with my friends. A couple of friends from the town I grew up with.

LIBBY: What was Danbury like? Did you grow up in Danbury? You were born there. Is that where you also grew up?

RICH: Yes, I did.

LIBBY: What was Danbury like when you were growing up?

RICH: It's a small city. Had a lot of friends that were Portuguese. My best friend was Portuguese. They had a big Portuguese contingent. That was an influence. We used to talk a lot about that, myself and Carlos. And then, I graduated in '69 from high school and went to college.

LIBBY: You went to UMass.

RICH: UMass Amherst.

LIBBY: Why did you go to school there and why did you study what you studied?

RICH: I graduated [with a B.S. degree] in wildlife biology. I ended up there because I didn't get into the original school I wanted to get into - Penn State. That was the only college I didn't get into. The other one was Purdue, and they cut my scholarship right before I was due to sign the paperwork. So, I still had UMass on the hook, and I went there.

LIBBY: But you knew you wanted to study something to do with wildlife.

RICH: Wildlife. Yes. And then I graduated and in May of '74, I got hired by USDA as a plant quarantine inspector, and I was assigned to the Brooklyn docks in New York. And during my training with them, I had to go to Varick Street mail facility. And the one who ran that - Frank, I can't remember his last name - [Rotunda] or something. He told me there's a bin there marked F&W and anything I would think that Fish and Wildlife would be interested in, throw it in the bin, because this was stuff being imported into the U.S. through the mail. So, I would do that. Finally, one day these two young gentlemen appeared and they started talking to me and they identified who they were. Asked why didn't I come with them? I said, basically because I never heard of you before. They told me they had an opening. If I was interested in having a badge, a gun and a car, come on over.

LIBBY: So, these were U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

RICH: Yes. It was Bill Donato and Chris Graham. I knew them well. They were the first two [special agents] I ever met. They helped me get hired with Jack Downs. Jack Downs interviewed me at my parents' house in Danbury because he lived just north of there in Connecticut. He was commuting to New York City, the JFK office. He was the Agent in Charge.

LIBBY: So, they knew that you had a background in wildlife biology. Is that ...

RICH: Just in conversation. Yes.

LIBBY: Just through talking to them, they befriended you and you became friends with them.

RICH: Yep. They just wondered why I didn't come with the Fish and Wildlife Service as an agent. And I was truthful. I never heard of you guys before. And that was the beginning.

LIBBY: Well, how was it that you got the job in Brooklyn in the first place?

RICH: Well, I took the general civil service exam, my wife and I, and she to this day will tell you she beat me by one point on the exam, but I got a letter all of a sudden from USDA, telling me to rank the ten places in the United States that they listed there, where I wanted to go - from 1 to 10 - as a plant quarantine inspector. So, I picked Boston, which I didn't get. I can't remember - I ranked JFK first and Brooklyn second, or vice versa, but I was shipped to Brooklyn, New York. The docks.

LIBBY: The docks. You mentioned your wife, so tell me a little bit about your wife and where you met her.

RICH: Well, she was a UMass grad like myself. I knew her in college. We dated in college. We graduated the same day and jumped in her old VW and drove to Cape Cod, to her parents' house, and we stayed down there for the summer. I had a little apartment upstairs in her parents' house. I got a job on the wharf cooking hotdogs, hamburgers and fried clams and she was a waitress. We did that. Then I got a job with a place called "Cultured Clam" or aquacultural - I can't remember the full name of it, the other title {Aquacultural Research Corp.} But anyways, I worked with them through the winter and when I was living down there, this letter came from USDA, and I jumped at it. I moved to Danbury, to live at my parents' house for a while as I commuted in on the train.

LIBBY: So, when did you and Ann get married?

RICH: September 1973.

LIBBY: So, you graduated from college, then you got married?

RICH: Married the same year.

LIBBY: Okay. And what did she study?

RICH: Sociology.

LIBBY: Okay, so she had a job. Basically, she ended up following you in your career.

RICH: Yep.

LIBBY: That's the way it was pretty much in those days. Okay. So, you have been approached by Chris and Bill and they told you about the Fish and Wildlife Service.

RICH: They did.

LIBBY: So then tell me what happened. How did you actually get hired into the Fish and Wildlife Service?

RICH: I applied, and I talked to Jack Downs, and he said, "Yes, we have an opening, and you know, it may be tough being able to hire you because you have no law enforcement background," is what he said. But he said, "I want you and I'll talk the Regional Director into it."

LIBBY: Who was the Regional Director? Do you remember?

RICH: If you said the name, I'd remember. I can't remember now. He was a good guy, but he just didn't know if I could make it without law enforcement. But Jack went to bat for me and got me hired, and I showed up. I was on vacation with the USDA in Brooklyn. Came back from 3 or 4 days off. I walked into

their office and the supervisor said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "I'm finished with vacation. I'm back." And he goes, "You don't work here any longer." So, I called Jack up and he said, "Where the "f" are you? You're supposed to be here." I said, "I've been on vacation." He says, "Get a ride over here right now." So, USDA drove me over to the JFK office, and my career began with Fish and Wildlife.

LIBBY: That was at the airport.

RICH: That was at the airport. Hangar 11.

LIBBY: And what was your title?

RICH: Special Agent.

LIBBY: Special Agent? So, you started right out as special agent.

RICH: I was there for 2 or 3 days. Then they sent me down to Special Agent Basic - not the fish and wildlife one, but the one for criminal investigator. Criminal investigator school. That was the last class to go through Washington.

LIBBY: Oh, that was in Washington, D.C.

RICH: Washington, D.C.

LIBBY: Yeah, I know that they used to have the training there.

RICH: Absolutely. They were moving things out, but we were still going to class. I hung out the majority of my time with a guy named John Bobb. He was an ATF agent, and that's why I became close with several ATF agents during my career. We worked closely together.

LIBBY: Why did you think you'd be interested in doing law enforcement and being a special agent?

RICH: It sounded good. I always wanted to be in law enforcement. Be a police officer, trooper, whatever. But yeah, once you are in wildlife biology, how far do you go? Could become a game warden but those were hard to get in those days. So, I just stayed with what I got [USDA]. They offered me a job. I got a job. I'm working. And then I met Chris and Bill and that changed it.

LIBBY: Do you remember what grade level you were when you joined the Fish and Wildlife Service?

RICH: Oh, probably was a seven.

LIBBY: Probably a seven. Yeah.

RICH: Right from the beginning. I believe that maybe it might have been a 9. I don't recall.

LIBBY: Tell me a little bit about some of the work that you did. Well first of all you're at school, where you took the training. Was it easy for you to get through the training successfully? And what did you have to do?

RICH: Nothing's easy. No. You had to study. I lived in an apartment [a room] in the hotel there. The only one who was nearby me was John Bobb, so we hung out together. After class, we'd walk the streets of Washington, D.C. at night. Fortunately, he had a gun, and I carried a pair of handcuffs. That was our arsenal. I graduated and went back there, got home on a Friday. Then Jack told me that I would be going to Mount Kisco, New York, with a senior agent on Monday evening, late Monday to see what I could do. Excellent! Here comes Monday. I have my brand-new gun. Brand new badge. I'm ready. We go up to Mount Kisco. I can't remember who I went with, but it doesn't matter. He said, "You go this way and I'll go the other way." He told me to see what I could find. So, I started walking, and I walked, and I see three guys ahead of me, and I look at them. Okay. I'll follow them. I start following these guys, and we go down a little path into the woods. We keep walking and something told me to pull my gun. I pulled it and held it in my hand, in the coat pocket of my jacket. I kept walking, and all of a sudden, a little clearing came up and out of the darkness, these three guys stepped out. Each one was holding a shotgun, and they said, "What kind of "effing" cop are you? Why are you following us? We're going to blow you away where you stand." And I kind of stood there saying, hmm, can I shoot fast enough to get three people that are five feet away with shotguns? I don't think so. At least two of them are going to get me. Is my gun going to even fire in my pocket? Is the cylinder going to get caught, or am I going to have a fire in my pocket when it goes off in the first shot? So, I kind of stood there and they just basically said nothing. They just kept their guns low, leveled on me, and walked away into the darkness. And I stood there saying, whoa, what was that?

LIBBY: How did they know you were law enforcement?

RICH: They just guessed. They figure I'm following them. They must have done something. I just didn't know what it was. It was coincidence. I walked into something. It could have been any type of crime. Why would all three be carrying shotguns?

LIBBY: What did you think you were looking for? I mean, you weren't told what to look for.

RICH: That was it. Some type of crime, I thought. They didn't say. Just "See what you can find" was my orders. I find the other agent later on. He goes, "I knew I shouldn't sent you off by yourself." We went back later the next day with several agents. We could not find those guys again. For many years I remembered all three of their faces. There were two black gentlemen and a white guy. That was the three.

LIBBY: Do you have any idea what they were doing?

RICH: No.

LIBBY: Never found any evidence of anything.

RICH: No. Came home. My wife said, "What kind of job do you have? They try to kill you the first day out." True story.

LIBBY: The other thing I wanted to say here is you told me that you were the - at the time that you were hired as a special agent - you were the youngest special agent that had ever been hired. So how old were you?

RICH: 22.

LIBBY: 22. So you don't have a whole lot of experience in life either, to deal with that.

RICH: But there's been younger ones since, I know that. I think Kelvin Smith was the youngest and he's no longer with us there. But he, I believe at the time he was 21 when he got hired. I'm sure there's even more out there. But that was my claim to fame for at least a short period of time. I looked so young on my original ID.

LIBBY: You do look young. And you were young. All right, tell me more about your work when you were at JFK. How long did you stay there?

RICH: I started there in May of '75. I don't remember the exact date, but Jack Downs called me into his office one day. He knew I hated where I lived, the apartment my wife and I were in, cockroaches everywhere. The night before we moved in there, a mob guy was shot in our basement, in the garage. It was a huge garage area. It wasn't my particular garage, but I did have a space down there, and she wasn't happy over that. He pulled me aside and said, "I'm thinking about putting another agent in northern Jersey. If you want the job, it's yours. The government will pay to transfer you." I said, "Put me in, coach." I didn't have to even ask my wife. I said, "Let's go." So, one day we moved over to, I think it was Secaucus, the mail facility [in] Secaucus, New Jersey. Chris Graham was in there, and Paul Yanus, who since switched over to another agency. But see, this tie-in to Chris Graham - all the time. We worked there and all of a sudden, I heard that the Hartford, Connecticut duty station was open. The officer just transferred down to the mid-South somewhere. I applied and I got it. Moved to a one-man duty station. So, in July of '76, I transferred to Hartford, Connecticut.

LIBBY: You had a couple of duty stations pretty quickly. You weren't there that at them very long. Then you moved to Hartford. I believe that's where you spent your entire career.

RICH: Yep. I was assigned to that. On loan elsewhere to other places, but yep, I was assigned there, probably because nobody else wanted to go there. And I was from there.

LIBBY: Where was your office?

RICH: In the Federal building in Hartford.

LIBBY: There are other federal employees around but no other Fish and Wildlife Service?

RICH: No. No other Fish and Wildlife. Directly next door to me was my adopted agency, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. And right around the corner was Drug Enforcement, DEA. I would hang with all those guys. And on the fourth floor was the FBI. We all kind of worked together because we did different things and sometimes, we overlapped cases.

LIBBY: So was Jack Downs your supervisor when you moved to Hartford, or did you have a different one?

RICH: No, that was a new one. I can't remember who the SAC was. Can't remember his name. I know him well. I just, I'm getting old.

LIBBY: Yeah, if you think of it, just let me know, even if it's later. Where did that SAC - where was he stationed out of?

RICH: He was ...

LIBBY: Because the Regional Office - was it in Boston or Newton Corner at that time?

RICH: I think it was in the process. It may have just [moved] that way to Newton Corner there. I used to go up there and be acting SAC several times. I just can't, I can't remember him. Older gentleman but really good guy. [It was Wayne Sanders.] He made a bargain with me. He says, "You're young. As long as you know the Endangered Species Act from working in New York and New Jersey, when we get cases in Boston, can you handle those?" I can't remember the agent who was in Boston [it was Jim van Wheelden.] He'd been there many years, and he did not like the Endangered Species Act. He didn't understand it. So, we became pals. I would do those cases and he would do the migratory bird stuff. And it worked. You know, there weren't that many cases in Boston, but when there was - import or whatever - they'd call me and up I would go.

LIBBY: Yeah, it's close enough. Did you do mostly endangered species law enforcement? Tell me a little bit more about the breadth of the work that you did.

RICH: Oh, we did Migratory Bird Treaty Act, we did Lacey Act, we did Endangered Species. What else? Worked with the states. [We] helped assist states and they would assist us because most of them were deputized under the government anyway. They had powers. They could help us. That went on for several years until later in my career, I started working undercover. That's when all heck broke loose.

LIBBY: Do you feel like your career had a couple of different phases, would you say, or aspects?

RICH: Yeah. I never thought I could work undercover in the beginning, I thought, I can't do that. I wouldn't be able to lie and keep a straight face and get all discombobulated or nervous and whatever. And then when I ended up doing it the first time I did, I said, "I can handle this. I can baffle them with BS."

LIBBY: Well, by that time you had a lot of experience and you had dealt with a lot of people who - I'm sure you had arrested many people by then. Tell me a little bit about some of the early work that you did out of Hartford.

RICH: We started a big undercover case, Operation Berkshire, which actually a couple of gentlemen from Special Ops came up [to work]; it was concerning selling bear gallbladders and venison across state lines. It was in the counties in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York - where they all met. It was all going on up in that corner. Nando Mauldin and was it O'Hara who came up? I can't remember who those two were. No, it was another guy.

LIBBY: Kevin O'Hara?

RICH: Kevin. Yeah. He did some of the work, I believe. Eventually we had state officers and undercover also. I represented the Fish and Wildlife Service at the meetings and the takedowns and all that stuff. That was our first real brush with it.

LIBBY: Tell me a little bit more about that particular case.

RICH: After all the bear gallbladder we were buying, the word got out. In the Hartford Courant the next day after the case went down, there was a big picture - comic - [what did] they called that?

LIBBY: Editorial cartoon?

RICH: Yeah. Editorial cartoon. It says, "Give us a poacher's blood [correction: gall bladder] and no one's going to get hurt" or something to that effect.

LIBBY: Right. You have a picture of it. It was a bunch of bears holding guns.

RICH: Holding guns on a game warden.

LIBBY: On a game warden. Right.

RICH: That's it. That's it right there.

LIBBY: It says, "Give us the poachers gallbladder and nobody will get hurt." The bear's turning the tables on the poachers.

RICH: That's the first time I think Fish and Wildlife Service may have made the editorial page in the Hartford Courant.

LIBBY: The Hartford Courant. Did you consider that a small operation?

RICH: No, it was a good [size]. A lot of people went down. They made a lot of it, and I believe we also used ATF because there was obviously firearms involved too - illegal firearms.

LIBBY: So, you helped organize this case.

RICH: Yes. Right.

LIBBY: You were not undercover on this case?

RICH: No.

LIBBY: But you got to see how undercover operations worked and stuff like that.

RICH: Yes. I'd talked to the guys when we'd have training and meetings and think about it. Other agents had started doing it and talking to them. Eventually I said, "Why not? Try me. I'll try." Of course, I got to get an extra grade out of it.

LIBBY: Well, who were the people? Do you remember? Not their names, but who were actually – were they importing the gallbladders?

RICH: No, they were shooting.

LIBBY: Oh, they were shooting bears.

RICH: Killing bears or they were buying them from other people.

LIBBY: Right here in the Berkshires?

RICH: Yes. That whole area. They would travel at night and the deer – they'd take them down with lights. Jack them.

LIBBY: They thought they were selling them to people who are interested in gallbladders.

RICH: To sell to the Chinese market. Right – that we're taking them to New York. I did get involved in buying some gallbladders. Not the big stuff, but some individual ones. That's the line we use - we're taking these to New York, so we've got to have them fresh. And that was really the start of it for me.

LIBBY: Do you remember what year that was? Oh, I can look at the [cartoon].

RICH: Is there a date down there?

LIBBY: Well, it's case 2206AD.

RICH: That's just the case number.

LIBBY: There's no date on the cartoon. That's okay.

RICH: I don't remember.

LIBBY: Don't really need to know, but that was still fairly early in your career, would you say?

RICH: I still have brown hair. [NOTE: The case was in the mid to late 1980's.]

LIBBY: How about some of the Lacey Act and migratory bird work that you did? What was that like?

RICH: Lacey Act [correction: MBTA] would be duck hunting. Duck stamps for migratory birds. Raptors being shot. [Lacey Act was the interstate transport/commerce of illegal wildlife.]

LIBBY: Were you out in the wetlands or out in Long Island Sound where people were hunting?

RICH: We work a lot. This is a one-man station. If one of our other agents weren't available, we'd work with a state officer, especially when you're getting to learn the area because they know it better than anybody else coming in.

LIBBY: You just working the rivers and wetlands and marshes?

RICH: The State had more [problems] than you would expect for a small state. Not too many guys would be duck hunting, but they'd been getting away with it for years. And then we started enforcing it, and they kind of shut it down a little bit.

LIBBY: They were hunting without their duck stamps or overharvesting?

RICH: Yeah. Over bait. So, we just did that [enforcement]. They also were shooting raptors and mounting them and selling them. There was a market for that. And eventually when I was working undercover, I got involved in one case - I was working on a taxidermist who was having the hawks and raptors shot and he would mount them. He had them for sale. I bought several raptors from him. And during the course of the undercover, all of a sudden, he told me that his company that he works for - he had another job, besides being a taxidermist - was going to be responsible for planes falling out of the sky. I said, what? So now I go back and figure, who do I contact about this? And after several calls and questions and all, I ended up with a U.S. Air Force special agent. Long story short, what it was, was they were responsible - his company - for heat treating the parachute ejector snaps that the pilots would wear, and the cotter pins that were put into ammunition and bombs or whatever explosives being shipped [by the military.] They put in these big cotter pins. Well, they weren't being heat-treated as required by the law [and military contracts.] And this company was getting away with that. That was taken care of by the Air Force. I supplied all the information because I was the undercover, and they said, "You're in there already. Keep it up."

LIBBY: You probably end up preventing a lot of accidents.

RICH: Well, he showed us how if somebody jumped out of a plane, one of the fighter planes, with these ejector snaps, they could snap at the power, when the wind picked up It could actually take their chute right off and snap the snap. That thing could happen. It [was] never reported that it did happen, but it was possible to crack them.

LIBBY: And this guy, was he concerned about this or was it boasting about it?

RICH: No, he was just saying. I don't know, we were probably drinking a coffee or whatever. I was sitting there picking his brain. Who was supplying the raptors to him? He did give me several of his sources, which we caught using poll traps and things like that. It wasn't just him we took down.

LIBBY: Who were these people that were capturing raptors?

RICH: When they see one fly by, they shoot it.

LIBBY: Just regular people.

RICH: Yes. Regular hunters out there, out there with a legal hunting license but not legal to shoot raptors. And they know it.

LIBBY: They were doing it so that they could be mounted and then sold to people who wanted them.

RICH: I'm sure he paid them a little bit to bring them to him, and then he'd do a mount and then sell it. He was making money.

LIBBY: Did he end up serving some jail time? Do you know?

RICH: No. It's hard to put somebody in jail for fish and wildlife [crimes].

LIBBY: That is true.

RICH: He did tell me that he had to be careful when dealing with the raptors, because "the feds can come in here any time and check your taxidermy license. So, I got to be careful of that. Can't worry about the feds coming." Oh, okay.

LIBBY: He had no idea.

RICH: He had no idea I was the fed that that covered the area. I was just lucky I hadn't been there yet.

LIBBY: You're not wearing a wire or anything, though.

RICH: Yeah, we had wires.

LIBBY: Oh, you did.

RICH: Not the sophisticated ones we used in the end, but yeah, a small recorder in my pocket. Over the years - that's why I have no chest hair -too many times I taped a microphone right to my chest. (laughter) True story. That's where the microphone went. And I used it a lot. The ATF would supply, when we started these deeper cases, they would supply the recorders. We'd get them transcribed and go from there.

LIBBY: Did you have a good relationship with the U.S. Attorneys?

RICH: Oh, it was wonderful. Jim Genco was a wonder. He was really interested in our cases. A lot of U.S. Attorneys aren't. They will turn you down or just put you off to the side and forget about it. But he was really into wildlife, and he really pushed things through. In fact, when the Operation Wiseguy case was over, all the hoopla was - well not over, but our part of it was finished other than the extradition - he and I went down to FLETC to Fish and Wildlife agent in-service, and we both gave a presentation on the case. He didn't have to, but he did it. Stayed over the weekend because he had to do back-to-back classes. One ended Friday and the other one started Monday. He was that into it. We flew down at the same time. He was a good U.S. Attorney.

LIBBY: How did some of these cases - I know that the agents often just - you develop your own workload. Unless you're asked to work on a special case that somebody else is working on, you're kind of just expected to find your own cases.

RICH: Find your own cases. Develop people. Some hunters are really law abiding and they hate people doing anything illegal. And they'll tell you, "Hey, I know this guy's doing this. He's selling them." Bing, bing, bing. That's all it takes - somebody [reporting] that it's being done. Nobody's just forgetting about it, and it's getting prosecuted, so they keep coming and you turn more and more people.

LIBBY: The thing I'm thinking about is you don't have that much experience. Maybe a year's worth of experience. Now you're in a one-person office by yourself with not a lot of other - no other Fish and Wildlife Service people around. I know you went to training in Washington D.C., but did you have a mentor? Did your supervisor spend time with you? How did you develop your skills as a special agent?

RICH: In the undercover that would have been working and talking to the ATF guys and the DEA guys and going from there. We basically work by ourselves. One-man duty station, unless you got something, or somebody needs help elsewhere. We had things where we all would go to a different state - Massachusetts, Maine, Rhode Island. Clyde Bolin was a good one. I mean, he was a migratory bird guy. He was the agent pilot. He was a great guy, except for you had to wait till he finished his dessert. He had to have a chocolate sundae after every meal, and he wouldn't eat fast. Anybody that knows him, God bless him, I loved him, but it was hard to go to eat with him because he would take a long time. And I'd rather, "Let's get moving. I want to work." He was one of them. John, I wrote his name down somewhere.

LIBBY: We like to know who people consider their mentors or notable people that they worked with.

RICH: John Waters. He was my first SRA, senior resident agent, when I moved to Connecticut. He was in Rhode Island. His big thing, and I always remember till the end of my career - "A good law enforcement [officer] always wonders, when he drives by a car or a truck parked alongside the road, what it's doing there? What's going on?" That stuck with me my entire career. Another I consider probably the most ultimate professional I ever met was Clark Bavin, our agent in charge in Washington. I remember my first in-service I went to for training. He wrote a word on the blackboard. He turned around and said, "I want everybody in this room to realize what this word means and make sure you do it in your career." In big letters he wrote "DISCRETION" meaning you don't have to write everybody up. There's always discretion is the better part of valor. There's always a gray area when you have somebody there. Did they really mean to do it or did they not? You cannot be the judge and jury, but close to it, when you're out there by yourself and you're going to decide. One time I had a guy who was over by the Danbury Fair Mall - where the mall is now. I saw him coming out and I went to check him. He'd been back where there's waterfowl hunting, and it turned out he had an improperly plugged shotgun. He realized he went out that morning and forgot his plug in the shotgun. You can only have three shells in, and he had to put a green piece of wood in there, a tree [branch] that he broke, and you could push on it and put another shell in. So technically it's an unplugged shotgun. But I talked to him, heard his story, listened to him, and I said, "Tell you what, I'm giving you a verbal warning. I don't want to hear anything more. If you're ever caught again." Blah, blah, the whole shebang. And he says, "Sir, can I tell you something now?" And I said, "Sure. What?" He goes, "I didn't want to tell you who I am, but I'm the judge. I'm a state judge here in this area. And I've always been known as not a friend of law enforcement. You have changed my mind." I've talked to some of my acquaintances from other agencies that were here in his courtroom later, they would tell me, "I don't want I happened to judge such and such. He's on our side all the time now."

He's great. He used to hate us.” That was it. It took a little honey. He did something wrong, yes, but that was my gray area, I thought. And my valor, my discretion - I thought you'd get more with honey. I did not know he was the judge. I had no idea until he told me. I was flabbergasted. And we never told anybody else about it, so no one knew what happened.

LIBBY: That's good, because that can be a problem for a judge if they get a citation. Even a citation.

RICH: He was not an ally of law enforcement, but he became one. I don't even remember his name anymore because I didn't keep any record of it.

LIBBY: But you treated him with respect.

RICH: That's the way everybody wants to be treated. Yeah, there's - you give a ration of crap, then you may get a ticket - a little more than you would have gotten. But if you, “I know. My mistake. I went out” Okay. We all make mistakes. No one's perfect. We all have done something that we all wish “I hadn't done that.”

LIBBY: Absolutely.

RICH: John Waters. [Another mentor was] Jack Downs, the wonderful man who fought to get me on. He told me, “Hey, they're trying to block you because you don't have any law enforcement. I'm fighting for you.” That took him a while, but I got hired.

LIBBY: So why do you think he was fighting for you?

RICH: He thought I had potential; I believe.

LIBBY: There must have been something he saw on you.

RICH: He liked the vegetables my parents gave when he stopped in my house. (laughter) No, I just think he listened to what I did in life and my experiences and figured, hey, maybe he's good.

LIBBY: How would you describe yourself when you were 22 years old?

RICH: Naive. But I learned. So yeah, that's just what happens to you. They send you to different schools and then we end up going to agent basic down in Glynco. I already had 2 or 3 years on when I went through that. We got to learn more stuff and go from there. You meet all the other agents, and you make new friends. I'm trying to think. John Doggett - I see him as an outstanding officer. He's the one that got Carl Mainen and I to go down and teach one-week international covert school to foreign agents.

LIBBY: Oh, so at some point, you were teaching at Glynco.

RICH: Glynco, for a week.

LIBBY: How much experience and how many years of service did you have by then?

RICH: It was getting towards the end. He knew about the bigger cases that came up and how I presented the stuff to our agents during in-service to our own people. I guess from that he said, "Hey, I think there's a thing we can do to introduce something to foreign operatives or foreign agents" they want to put undercover. I gave him credit for that. I also gave him more credit for that after he retired, and he went to be the - he was still in the service - I think he was in the Army. He became the colonel in charge of Saint Louis, where they do the personnel stuff. I was involved in a battle with the Army because my father never got an award, he was supposed to get from World War Two. I couldn't get any senators to help. No congressman. Nothing. And all of a sudden, I was told that he was there, and he was the adjutant general - whatever his title was. I called him up. Someone gave me his number. I called him up and he said, "Rich, what's happening? I haven't talked to you a long time." He had a high voice. Great guy. And I said, "I'm at war with you and the Army." He says, "What do you mean?" When I told him, he says, "Fax it to me right now, and my assistant will send you that stuff today." And he got me - it was a soldier's medal, which is high praise, the highest one given for heroism not under fire. My father jumped into a stream - [a river swollen by] - what do you call it - monsoon rains. The transport fell over and three guys were in there drowning. And my father didn't swim. He jumped in and saved the three guys. We had the original handwritten notes from his colonel about the thing and the typewritten orders and never, no medal to match it. John took care of that because he's a nice guy. That's how he was when he was working for us.

LIBBY: Had your father passed away?

RICH: No. I gave it to him.

LIBBY: Oh, that's wonderful.

RICH: He was a medic. We found a GI Joe medic doll and we attached the medal to him. He was over our house for dinner or whatever. All the whole family was there, and we said, "Oh, we got something for you, Dad." There were tears when he realized what it was. Then we took it back. We stole it back from him because his 50th anniversary was coming up, and the Army said they were going to present it to him at that. So, we're at his 50th anniversary and all of a sudden there's this bugle call, call to arms or whatever they called it. [A US Army captain] comes in and calls something like "Snap to attention, T-4 Moulton." He stands up and the captain, I believe, read the orders for the [medal] and then pinned it on him, because we had stolen it back. He pinned it on him there in front of everybody at his 50th anniversary. That was pretty cool because soon thereafter he passed away.

LIBBY: That's wonderful. That was very nice. John Doggett was in your life and a couple of different ways.

RICH: It helped more because that was right after my grandson had been killed. It helped my father.

LIBBY: That's so sad. All right, well, why don't you tell me what was ...

RICH: Carl Mainen, I got him in there, right?

LIBBY: Carl Mainen?

RICH: Yeah, all this work he did, being the international guy down in Washington. He was my help because I had these international cases. I needed to know who to talk to, who to contact, let them know

what we're doing. He took care of all that and helped a lot in the extradition. Anything I ever needed - just call up Carl and it got done.

LIBBY: We're going to talk about some of your international work in a little bit. Tell me a little bit about the endangered species work you did at Logan, because that was pretty early in the enforcement of the Endangered Species Act.

RICH: Yeah. It was just small stuff coming in. It wasn't too much.

LIBBY: What exactly did you do? You weren't a wildlife inspector.

RICH: No, U.S. Customs would stop something, and they'd call over to the office, and then they would call me, hey, we got another one up at building such and such, and I would show up.

LIBBY: You would have to come from Hartford?

RICH: Van Wheelden. That was the agent. Great guy.

LIBBY: What was his name again?

RICH: His last name was Van Wheelden. I can't remember his first. Sorry. [Note: his first name was Jim.]

LIBBY: It's all right. Maybe somebody will know.

RICH: He's got to be on the list. He was an agent. Old style migratory bird man. Great guy.

LIBBY: Customs in Boston at Logan Airport - not the seaport, just the airport?

RICH: No, there would be if it came in there. They were up on it. We put the word out.

LIBBY: It could be both.

RICH: Yeah. They got the word that now we're doing enforcement. They would be told we got a guy to come in now. He will show up.

LIBBY: They would pull the people aside. They'd have to wait?

RICH: No, they would take it away and then get the information and call me in. If there was something wrong, then we'd take care of it. If not, we'd have to ship it back. That's legal. That does happen.

LIBBY: Was it hard to figure out if something was legal or not?

RICH: No. Being young, I was into the law and I was into the Endangered Species Act. And I've been through training, at the time at FLETC, and I read it several times and I'd ask questions. That was my push - I really was more into the Endangered Species Act and Lacey Act because I wasn't an old duck

cop. I would do the Migratory Bird Treaty work. Yes, I would. But you know, we all get a specialty, I guess.

LIBBY: You have to learn how to identify something that doesn't look like the animal, necessarily.

RICH: We have experts. When I was in New York, we'd go to the Bronx Zoo, and they would say what we had there. Skin - whatever it was - they were great. We could drive right into the Bronx Zoo and right to their office. There were two doctors working there and they loved to help us out. When I used them, even when I came here, I'd still call them up. And they'd say, "Well, send it down." They'd identify it and send it back to me.

LIBBY: Then you'd know whether it was legal or illegal. I think that's all very interesting because remember now someone's going to be listening to your interview or reading the transcript, and it could be 20 or 30 years from now, and you're basically telling us about how the Fish and Wildlife Service began enforcing the Endangered Species Act, when there weren't a lot of guides to know what kind of spider is this? Or what kind of bug is it? Or fish or parrot, right? Over time, many of the agents would develop the guides so that people knew, the inspectors knew, or the agents would know if they were looking at something that was covered by CITES or not.

RICH: We'd count on state officers helping us. We'd give them ID classes and things like that, and they stopped stuff or see it and say, "I found this in a store." Or "There's a bird for sale. I don't know what kind of raptor it is." Other federal agencies, they're always looking to do something that changed up a little bit, you know. I got so much help from ATF, DEA, FBI, National Marine Fisheries Service, statewide narcotics task force. I was working on one undercover thing. It's illegal to have a piranha in this state, or it was. And we were going to a bunch of places that had them for sale. Pet stores. All of a sudden, I get a call from a young man. He identified he was an agent with the statewide narcotics task force. And he said, "Do I understand you're working on John Doe?" "Yeah." He says, "You realize he's a major coke dealer?" I said, "No, I had no idea. He's never mentioned that to me. We're not dealing [with that on] our stuff." He goes, "Do you think you possibly could introduce me in as your buddy?" And I said, "We'll give it a try." So, he shows up at my office. When he walked in, he looked like the second coming of Jesus Christ. I'm not being funny. The pictures I've seen in churches and all. That's what he looked like. It was so - my heart went, whoa. And he was a great guy. And we introduced him in, and he said, "Look, you know him well, so he'll sell to you. So, you work it in." We gave him the boloney that I was running a string of young ladies, and they would get tired, and they need coke to keep them going through the evening, etc. And he took it hook, line and sinker and guess what? We got him. That's just how it worked. Another agency heard about it. Found out we were working on it. Somebody probably saw me going in and they're probably in surveillance and they called me up and said hey. And it was a real thing. So that's how one hand, I think, one hand washes the other. None of these cases becomes a one-man operation, one-woman operation. You need help. Sometimes you can't do the work because you know somebody. The biggest, for a long time, endangered species case I ever got in Connecticut to start was I got a phone call one morning from somebody on a pier down in New London, I think it was [it was Stonington]. They're saying, "Hey, we just had a boat come in, a fishing boat, and he dragged in this big monster turtle." "Okay. Is it live?" "No, it's dead." "Okay. I'll be down." I immediately jumped in my car, drove down to the pier, and looked at it. It's a giant leatherback sea turtle. 1,500 pounds it weighed. They picked it up with the crane. The fishing boat guy stayed with it to help out and give me the information. He didn't just take off. He was another great help. They weighed it when they took it out and put it on the thing, and it was 1,500 pounds. And looking at it, it looks like it may have been shot in the head. Maybe.

What am I going to do with a 1,500-pound dead sea turtle on a pier? Starting to smell a little bit. Best thing I could do - cut the head off, and all its spines and its throat. Cut through it and made sure nobody was around - they sealed it off. And then the refuge took the carcass and buried it [at the national wildlife refuge.] I was gone, took the head, went to my contact I had set up at the University of Connecticut where they do medical research and all that. "Well, okay, we'll see what we can find." They took it, and they quartered the head and cut it down to pieces, and they found 3 .22-caliber slugs out of that, and they gave them to me and put the stuff back in formaldehyde, put it in a sealed big metal case for me, so I'd have evidence. We went and started putting the word out through the media - we're looking for this. It was killed about this time. Anybody see anybody out there shooting, using a firearm? Well, son of a gun. Didn't we get an anonymous phone call? What's the guy's name? "Hayward H. Gatch III did that on this date. We were in the boat with him. He laughed about it. He saw it coming to the surface by his boat and he just went boom, boom, boom. Got his gun and shot it and left it there and just got tangled in the net of the fisherman [correction: a commercial fishing boat.]" We got him. We eventually prosecuted Hayward H. Gatch III. And that's the way he did it. Because the pilot of the boat, the fisherman, brought it in and stayed with it and gave us the information, and the media went and put the word out for us. We're looking for any anybody and somebody stepped forward. I want to remain anonymous, but this is who did it. We got him, and he pled guilty. That just showed how it works. No one does it all alone. I don't want anyone to say he made cases because he's a braggart. No, that was all me. No, not me.

LIBBY: I know you had several other interesting cases in your career. Do you want to talk about some of them? I know there's Operation Wiseguy or an Operation Snowcat. There may be others that you told me about.

RICH: Those are the two biggest.

LIBBY: Okay, so why don't you tell me about those cases?

RICH: Well, Operation Wiseguy, which I named after my favorite TV show called "The Wiseguy", about an FBI guy working undercover in with the mob. But I said that was a great name for this. Someone called me and told me that they heard this man had a leopard mount for sale. I called him [the seller] up and recorded it. He said, "Oh, I've already got rid of that, but I got a leopard head." I said, "Okay." He says, "Well, we'll meet. Look at it." Maybe I can buy it. He said, "Okay, where are you from?" I said, "I live up in Massachusetts." I just did that. And he says, "Oh, that's no problem. I know a place we can meet in Sturbridge, and we'll go have dinner." He showed up and it was John Lukman. He had a big booming voice. Wonderful for tape recording. A booming voice. Never missed a word when you transcribed the tape. From that, he told me all these other things he can get and who his contacts were - former Prime Minister of Rhodesia Ian Douglas Smith [who] was the contact that sent him to the leopard mount that he sold. And he said he had it in his garage when he picked it up. I was supposed to meet Ian Douglas Smith at a Soldier of Fortune conference in Las Vegas. I was going to fly out there first class and have my own suite; live first class with a huge wad of money, and then at the last second, the U.S. Attorney's Office or Washington Justice [Department] said, "We're not going to prosecute him. He's a former world leader, ally of the United States." He was there, but I had to back off. Later on, I was subpoenaed by Rhodesia to come testify against him; Rhodesia became Namibia. The State Department couldn't guarantee my safety, so I never went and did it. I have a newspaper article about him and the whole thing.

LIBBY: He did end up getting prosecuted, though, successfully?

RICH: I don't know, because the State Department said they couldn't guarantee my safety because he was the head of the white minority over there. I was told, "Don't go" by powers to be, and I agreed. I'm not going. If they said you have to go, then I would have. But no, the agency said no, and the State Department said nope.

LIBBY: That's pretty high level to be engaged in that kind of illegal endangered species activity.

RICH: Yeah. Again, Carl Mainen helped me with a lot in that stuff, back and forth with Namibia or Rhodesia. It was Namibia at that time. And then we went further with John, and he brought rugs, leopard rugs, a lot of them. And all of a sudden, one day I'm sitting at a little restaurant. Berlin Diner, that's what it was. I'm eating a bowl of soup. I'm having a bowl of soup, and he's having a hamburger or whatever.

LIBBY: Is this Berlin? Where?

RICH: Berlin, Connecticut.

LIBBY: Connecticut. Yeah.

RICH: My body wire was being monitored by ATF, not their forensics guy but the guy who did that stuff for them. Bob Clifford, good friend of mine. He's sitting out there in the parking lot eating his lunch, listening to me talking to John. Finally, all of a sudden, with his booming voice, [John] comes out with "Rick, you interested in buying any machine guns? AK-47's?" I said, "No, I'm not really into that. But my Marine buddy Bob probably is." Bob Clifford was a Marine and I put that back out so that he would hear it. I got it under control. We'll do it. When this happened, when he heard the guy offer the machine guns, Bob to this day will tell you he's just taking a bite of his salad. He almost choked to death. He couldn't believe the guy had just said that; booming voice on this tape offering machine guns. AK-47's. I said, "Okay." I called him, John, back at later time and said, "My buddy Bob's interested." He said, "Okay, come on." We go to the apartment in Newington, Connecticut, where he sits us down and he closes the blinds behind us and reaches up and turns this big spotlight on right beside myself and where Bob is sitting, right beside me. We're looking at each other like, what is going on? Something's hinky here. We had our backup team outside in the parking lot. They'd never get in fast enough because the door's locked. We'd be gone. We look over and we can see into his kitchen. And he had - there was a cupboard. He reaches up and we see him come down with a machine gun. You can see it above the sink, him standing there. [He] comes walking in with a machine gun. And we looked at each other. Holy crap.

LIBBY: Yeah. You didn't know if this was your last day on earth.

RICH: We didn't know if we'd been made. Did something go off with him? He knows? He walks over to me, he goes, "Here you go, Rick." He says, "Now, Rick, I'm selling you the gun, not him. I know you." "Okay. No problem." It didn't matter who he sold it to. I hand the gun to Bob. He field tests it. It's a fully automatic AK-47. He says, "Yes. How much?" I think it was 175 bucks. Great price. He [Bob] goes, "We'll buy it." [John says,] "Now, understand I'm not selling to you. I'm selling to him." He hands me the money. I hand it to John, and he hands us a machine gun.

LIBBY: Why do you think it was so important to him to sell it to you?

RICH: He figured, well, he trusts me. I was his pal. I knew his family.

LIBBY: How did you meet this guy in the first place?

RICH: Somebody told me that he had a leopard mount for sale. A full mounted leopard.

LIBBY: You just called him up, and you ended up becoming friends.

RICH: Cold call. Like a salesman.

LIBBY: What was his racket?

RICH: Well, his father owned a big oil company. He had millions - the father. John would work for him, but he considered himself "Shaka." That's what he called himself. John "Shaka" Luckman. You know "Shaka" from Africa? That's what he called himself. He'd walk around with his safari hat on, with a zebra band around it. He had these safari shorts on all the time. Tan safari shirt. That's all he ever wore. He had a picture of himself with Jonas Savimbi, who was head of the guerillas in Namibia. He had a picture of him with him [Savimbi.]

LIBBY: He really had bought into the whole Africa thing.

RICH: Yeah. He had a picture arm and arm with Ian Douglas Smith at his house. We seized that when we did the takedown. One day John called me up. He was going to sell me a rhino horn. I said, "How are you going to get it in, John? Are you going to fly to Africa?" He goes, "No, I got a guy who's flying into a parachute outing in Chicago. He's coming in as part of the South African Defense Force parachutists. He's a specialist. His name is Waldemar Schutte. "Skitter" he calls him. S C H U T T E. He goes, "He's going to smuggle it in, and I'm going to go meet him out there in Chicago and I'll bring it back." Okay. So, we set it up. Well, we had nobody out there available, so, the FBI did the surveillance. They got it all. They even had a [FBI] guy go right in with Waldemar Schutte, sitting there, arm and arm with him, throwing the bull. They saw the rhino horn. John shows up out there and gets it. We had him under surveillance all the way in through Chicago, up onto his plane to Bradley. As he arrived at Bradley, he's photographed by Customs - coming through, carrying his known elephant hide bag which he carried everything in - which we seized when we took him down. We took that away from him. He opened it up and it was in there. He didn't show it to anybody. He didn't have to go through customs. The next day, he called me. He said, "Rick, I got it. Come see me." I go down to his condo, and I'm sitting there talking to him. He hadn't shown me the horn yet. And his two kids - he was divorced, but he was seeing his kids. They're playing in the kitchen dinette area where we're sitting, and they keep banging into my chair. They're playing with something. I couldn't see what. Boom, boom. They were just playing. They're kids, two little girls. I finally looked around like this and I couldn't see what it was. He goes, "Don't worry. They're deactivated." I said, "Oh crap." Worse than that. They were hand grenades.

LIBBY: Oh, my goodness.

RICH: He said, "Don't worry. They've been deactivated." Okay. So, they're still playing. They're rolling around. If they went off - kaboom - we're all gone. He called me back 3 or 4 days later to tell me, "Well, remember those grenades?" I said, "Yeah." He says, "They weren't deactivated. I sent them to my contact

down in South Carolina”, where he would sell them for him if they were deactivated. He says, “He said they weren't. He had to blow them up in the woods in back of his house to get rid of them. “True story.

LIBBY: I believe you. You've skirted death a couple of times, at least so far in this interview.

RICH: Now he wants to sell it. He's going to go to South Africa and meet the major in the South African Defense Force. His buddy Marius Meiring, who's the supplier of the machine guns and the hand grenades and the rhino horns. He needed money. I had to advance him some money. I needed \$50,000 to get him to get the horns for us. U.S. Fish and Wildlife put up \$30,000. I had that in cash with me and Customs was putting up \$20,000. But the Customs agent had to drive from Connecticut to Boston to their office, get the check for \$20,000, go and cash it at the bank, jump on a plane at Logan, and get to JFK before John and I arrive on our flight from Bradley. Then we had a whole surveillance team set up. Every time we left with John; we'd go a certain way right past some kind of coffee place. So, the team was sitting there waiting. Then we made a big mistake. We found out nobody'd ever checked to see if everybody had the same radio [frequencies.] We had ATF, we had Customs, we had our people. As we're leaving, John says to me, “Rick, turn right.” Now, I'm carrying \$30,000 unarmed. I never turned right with this guy before. I was not happy. He goes, “I found a new way to get the highway.” “Okay.” I can't have a wire on either because I'm flying. He takes me there, and we drive up, finally get to JFK [correction: Bradley Airport.] I keep looking behind me. I don't see any surveillance cars. Nothing. And finally, he says, “Turn into this parking lot.” He was looking for some kind of cough medicine, looking if there was a pharmacy. We did four quick left-hand turns. Well, it turns out there was one ATF agent behind us. He says four turns by an undercover agent means you're in trouble. That wasn't the reason. He said there's only me, so I better wait and follow him. We drive over to Bradley, park the car, and we go to board our plane with my \$30,000; still carrying it. We're walking down the walkway, and he looks over and jabs me in the side with his elbow and says, “There's the enemy.” I look up. Here comes a Customs inspector who I knew well. I did several cases with her on imports, and he says, “The enemy.” I said [to myself], oh my God, she's reading something. She's walking now. She's going to turn up and she is going to say, Rich, and she's going to hug me. I know she will. I know her. She's walking, reading these papers. And just as we got even, she turned right and went into an office and never looked up from her paperwork. Oh, my heart was pounding because there goes the whole case. We got on our plane, and we fly down to - oh a week later, I see her. I run into her, I said, “Hey, on this day, did you see us?” She goes “No, because if I had, I would have hugged you.” She would have. So now we fly to JFK and I'm worried. We don't have any surveillance down here. I don't have any up here in Connecticut. We land and we're walking out and walk into the [waiting room], and he goes, “Jesus. I got to sit down. My back's hurting.” He had a bad back. I said, “Okay, why don't you sit over here?” I look over and I see a guy reading a newspaper and he kind of gave me a little smirk. It's John Meehan [one of our agents.]

LIBBY: Oh yeah. I knew John.

RICH: And doesn't John Lukman sit right beside him, and he (John Meehan) gives me a little “Got him.” Now I can go find Pete, the Customs agent. I said to John Lukman, “I've got to go find Pete” who was our contact getting the money from the Chinese, because he thought they were buying the horns from us. I start going through and here comes Pete Harrington, the Customs agent. There he is. He's got the money. It worked out! So, then we talked to John; I introduced Pete to him, and John says, “Let's, get the money work over with.” What are we going to do? We're in JFK airport? Where are we going to do this? How am I going to have you count out \$50,000? “Come on”, he goes. He walks into the men's room. “Come on in, guys.” He walks in the stall. “Come on in.” He closes and locks the door. Now we're in this busy

restroom, JFK airport, three guys standing around the toilet, and he's counting money. He counted \$50,000 out. Then, when it was all over, he puts it in his bag. He says, "Okay, let's go." And then, we're looking around - oh my God - these people are looking at us.

LIBBY: Three guys coming out of a toilet. (laughter)

RICH: Now we're walking down further and here comes another guy, Terry Tarr, comes walking the other way, because at that time he'd been assigned to Albany. I didn't know that they had brought him down for surveillance. I thought he was going to walk up to me. "Hey, Rich. What's happening? I haven't seen you for a long time." Just by coincidence, there he is. No, he just kind of looked at me. Oh, he's part of it. So, we did have a surveillance team down there. Pete and I sat with John the entire time because we had to prove the money left the country without being declared. John said, "It's time to go to my flight." As he's going to the boarding gate, we stayed right there. Talked to him the whole time, never lost contact with him. He's going up, and several different airline employees were asking everybody, "Anybody have any money over \$10,000 to declare. Anybody have over \$10,000?" He was asked several times and each time he said no. Well, what he did not know, they were not airline employees. They were Customs agents just verifying. And once he was in the plane and they sealed the door, it's considered an international flight. So as soon as that was done, we had him on the money charge. He flew to South Africa and did his thing. Met up with Meiring. He told me the day he was coming back. In between - there's always glitches. Turns out that CBS-TV - the TV show "48 Hours" - had stumbled on a piece of our [investigation.] It was an offshoot of our case, but it could have caused it to blow up if it was shown. The head of the ATF in the office, their senior resident agent, used to be their guy who handled publicity and all that for them [for the ATF] and in the media. He says, "I'll take care of it." He called, set up a deal with CBS that we would give them exclusive rights to the takedown. They could be there and film it, and as long as they didn't show this [other] thing until afterwards. They promised to do that. It was okayed by the powers that be. Now they're going to film it and ATF is filming it also. They find his [Lukman's] car parked out that parking lot. I found it walking out with them. It's raining. It's November, raining. Cold, cold mist coming down. Walking to his car, he opens the trunk and he's showing me everything that he smuggled back, including holding up the rhino horns a little bit higher so I can see. Oh yeah, that's a rhino. Meanwhile, I'm looking around. Where's the surveillance van? I can't find any surveillance vans. I can see nobody. But once we had everything shown, I had to give the signal, which was take my hat off and run my hair up and put it back on again. As soon as I did that, out of the air, like ants, here they come. "John Lukman, you're under arrest!" They slam him up against the thing. Chris Graham put the cuffs on him and he's looking around. "I didn't do anything."

LIBBY: Who did he think you were?

RICH: I was a rich old guy, well not that old!

LIBBY: And he called you Rick. Your name is Rich, but Rick was your undercover name.

RICH: He thought my name was Rick Moore.

LIBBY: Rick Moore?

RICH: Rick Moore. He thought I had lots of money to spend, and I was making money, too.

LIBBY: What happened with John Lukman in terms of a penalty?

RICH: Well, it goes further. There's more. Now they're going to take him away, take him down to the federal building for processing and all that. We're also doing other search warrants, and other people were being arrested at the same time, that were involved. [Prior to the arrest, I kept looking around in an attempt to locate the surveillance cameras wither from ATF or CBS. I couldn't find them.] I don't see the video. Well, it's got to be here somewhere. Everything was all done. Everybody's locked up and searches all done. Paperwork's finished. We went down to the Polish national home. That's where the feds in Hartford go afterwards, when things go down, like a big case. They get Polish pancakes and whatever they call them - golumpkis? They celebrate some. They have the TV on CBS, and all of a sudden, "Turn it up." And he goes, "This is Dan Rather, CBS Evening News reporting. Hartford, Connecticut, Bradley Airport, man is arrested." It's all on video. The whole arrest - perfect thing. And there's John being arrested, slammed up against the van or car, whatever it was. You could hear everything. All the body wire stuff was there. They did get it. They're showing the whole thing, and everybody is cheering at the Polish national club, even the people working there were going crazy. "Yeah, that's us." What they didn't know, and we didn't know that John went and got two additional people to be financial backers on his trip so he could buy more stuff. And one of them, we found out later, happened to be all nervous. He knew John was coming back and he's hoping to make sure nothing goes bad. He said, "I'm going to go to bed" to his wife. His wife says, "I'm going to watch the news, then I'm going to go to bed." So, she's in there watching the news. He's trying to go to sleep. And here comes "Suddenly. Hartford, Connecticut. Arrest made." Guess he basically crapped his pants. We got him. He was arrested the next day because John gave him up. He and the other guy both got taken down. But how do you like to ruin that guy's night? Only because he had the news on. But it worked. [During the search warrants being served, the original full-size leopard mount that began the case was seized in Massachusetts.]

LIBBY: Well, congratulations. How about how long do you think that case took from the time you started undercover?

RICH: It never ended. It was called "The Case That Would Never Die." When we went for the extradition of Meiring and his wife and Skitter and somebody else, I can't remember who, those warrants were all put in there for extradition. They were out there for the longest time. The case was closed here, and we're still getting calls. "Do you want this guy arrested?" "No," we said. "We gave up. It's too late." Blah, blah, blah, blah. [That was] the US Attorney's office, it wasn't me making that decision. It went on for years afterwards. It took 3 or 4 years just for the extradition of Meiring. South Africa has several levels - a level above their Supreme Court. We beat them all the way into their Supreme Court. We won that and we had one left to go. And it's going to take at least another year delay. And finally, I said to Jimmy Genco, the U.S. Attorney, I said, "Here's the deal. Why don't we see if he'll stand up and take the fall for this?" He and his wife have been arrested. Now, this whole time they're sitting in a South African prison. Both of them. They have two young children, which maybe the grandparents must be holding. It tugged at my heart. That bothered me. And I said, "Why don't we offer him, you come back here, plead guilty, and we'll drop charges immediately on your wife, and she can go home with the kids." And he took the deal, and he didn't appeal. He came back and he got a year, I think it was. When he was in prison towards the end, I'd pick him up. He'd called me. "Can I come over to your office today?" [We would bring him to the Federal Building for interviews.] We'd handcuff him, bring him over. He wanted to use my phone. In the prison where he was locked up, they had no phone that could call international. His wife didn't even know he made it back here after a month or so. He didn't tell me at first. I talked to the U.S. Attorney; he says, "Yes." You don't keep him incommunicado. He can call his wife. It's only a phone call. He did that

2 or 3, 4 times. They were home and the kids - she got released as promised. He didn't even know if she got released. It all worked out. But then, one time he said, "Rich, can you take me shopping? Rick? Rick, can you take me shopping?" He had that South African Boer accent. I said, "No, I can't do that. They won't let me take you out. I'll take you to the Federal Building handcuffed. We can't go shopping." I said, "Why?" He goes, "My boys think I'm out on military maneuvers. Whenever I go away, I bring them a present back. And they don't know I'm in prison in the United States." Oh, so, soft heart. I went on a shopping spree myself and bought them, I think, Batman and Robin or a couple of those type of dolls and one other, a couple other things. I said, "See, kids like this." "They love that." He couldn't stop crying and thanking me for giving it to him. He says, "When I get back home, you're going to come over for dinner." I said, "Yeah, your wife is going to poison me if that happens." So, I didn't go. Meanwhile, back to John. He got sentenced. He had a year, but he didn't serve it because he had a bad back. It was really bad, and he needed special surgery, and they couldn't do it in the prison where he was. We agreed to let him out early [from prison] to have the surgery done. It wasn't that much after that, he passed away. But he stood on the steps in the federal building in New Haven, telling the media how everybody was so fair to him, that the agent did a great job. "He was doing his job, and he did it wonderfully. I admit, I was guilty." His attorney said he's never pled anybody out in his career. He always fights except for this one. And he says, "You had no wiggle room. You had him write down everything. Everything's on tape. What can I argue?" That's what happened to John and Meiring. We dropped the rest of the extraditions, but it took - that was in the 1990s. That was still going on.

LIBBY: Would you say that was the most satisfying case of your career?

RICH: One of them. "Ronnie the Rugman." The snow cats.

LIBBY: Okay, so tell me about that one.

RICH: Kevin Garlick, new agent, got information that a place in New York had, I think it was, a leopard rug for sale. What he told me, nobody in New York wanted to do the case. "Take it over," he said. "Would you do it?" "Me?" I said, "Sure, I'll do it, as long as Donato knows I'm doing it." I called Bill up. "Okay, if you want to." So, I call the guy up and he agrees to meet. Go down there, and he had it for sale. I forgot what we paid. Then we continued contact. He said, "I get you all this other stuff." We realize, we're not taking this down to "buy bust." We're going with this thing. You never know after Wiseguy, what else could happen? This guy was Afghan. He was an Afghan citizen running a rug store, high class rugs. And he called himself Ronnie, so we called him "Ronnie the Rugman." We dealt with him for quite a while on the phone, visiting him, etc. and one night he called me up and said, "I got to see you right now. You got to come down to New York, I'll take you to dinner." I had just got home to Connecticut. I said, "I'm not going back to New York." I've got to come up with an excuse. I said, "I got a hot date tonight." "Bring her along. I'll pay for it." Now, Kevin - we introduced him as my bodyguard, my driver. I said, "Kevin's got a hot date tonight, too." "I'll pay for her and him too." I'm running out of excuses. My last excuse was, "There's no place to park in New York City at night. We're not going to be able to park. And I don't want to walk around." He goes, "No, there'll be a spot right in front. Here's the address." Afghan restaurant. Okay. He really wants to see me for some reason. So now I had to find dates and make sure Kevin was free. He was free. And I called one of the SACs. I asked Jerry if it was him, and he said no, it wasn't him - Jerry Smith. One of the SACs we called, and he says, "I'll get you two." There were two brand new young agents. I hadn't even met them - DeeDee and Nancy. I don't remember their last names. They had just been hired on. They had only been on a very short [time]. DeeDee had heard about me. She goes, "Since I've been on, I've wanted to meet you and work with you. I want to do the

undercover stuff.” “Well, you're in it now, baby.” We're going to do this. You've got to be careful what you ask them to do. I asked, “Can you dress provocatively?” Because I knew what Ronnie was. He was sexist or whatever you call it. I said, “Let's boggle his mind.” She says, “Not a problem.” I was worried. What do you ask? I'd never asked somebody that before. And I checked with the U.S. Attorney. He didn't think it would be a problem. She had no problem. Nancy too. She talked to Nancy, and we met them all together. Got Kevin, all three of us, and picked up the car and we drive to the restaurant. We get in front - there's not a space in front. There's two spaces. Kevin pulls forward, starts backing in the back space. There's a guy standing at this end of the cars and a guy at the other end - turn out to be Afghan guys, and they said, “Whoa, whoa, no, no, no, no, no. You park in the middle. Those are for you. Both of them. No one will touch your car. We're standing right here. Nobody will go near your car.” He put it right in the middle. We get out; walk into the restaurant. Beautiful restaurant. We walk in and there's Ronnie waiting. He's all excited. Mr. Big is here with the money. He calls the owner over and he introduces me, and the owner turns around automatically and says, “We're closed. Everybody leave.” Okay, I have to go. “No, no, no, no, no.” That's the owner. He says. “That's your table right there, all ready for you.” Big table in the main dining room all set up for the seven of us - Ronnie, two girls. Five of us. Sorry. He's throwing people out of the restaurant, and they had food. “Get out!” Then he locks the door. I sit down and then he says, “Ronnie, I got to have wine.” “I thought you guys didn't drink wine.” He says, “Oh, got to have wine. The owner sends one of his underlings out to the package store and comes back with wine. I hate wine, but the new young agents, they were all legal age, but they had never have been undercover and wouldn't drink. And I hate wine. I drank a little bit of it just to keep him going. Loosen his tongue up. We kept watching people coming to the door, trying to get in. It's locked. They're banging on the door. “We have reservations.” “We're closed”. What are they doing? “We're closed.” Every time. Now, he [Ronnie] wanted to talk business, but he would not talk in front of the young ladies. That's just the way they are. So, Kevin and I would go out and we talked business with him. He'll be smuggling some stuff to us. “We'll have a party afterwards.” “No, we got our own plans.” He goes, “When you're done with DeeDee, you give her to me.” Oh, yeah. “Okay. No problem.” He really did say that. I told that to DeeDee. She whacks me and says, “Don't you dare give him my real name.” I'm not that dumb. But I did tell her. Now it's time to leave. I'm saying I'm not going to make Ronnie pay for all this, all these dinners. We had everything from appetizers, wine to dessert. Everything. I have no idea what we ate. Half I didn't eat. But now it's time to go. I said, “Ronnie, I'm paying.” I said, “These are my people, and you'll be my guest.” He [Ronnie] goes, “No, I'm paying.” He calls the owner over. He goes, “How much?” He [the owner] goes, “No charge.” At that point, we knew we had what we called the Godfather.

LIBBY: The restaurant owner was the Godfather?

RICH: No, no, no, no, no. Ronnie! We've seen his people bow to him. And these people were basically bowing to him. The way he treated them, that was like a scene from The Godfather when he says, “No, no charge.” Just like if the Godfather walked in, Robert, whatever his name was in those movies. The only thing - we didn't know what we'd call it in Afghan, it's the only reason we used Godfather. It wasn't trying to be stereotypical or anything. We knew we had Mr. Big. Now he tells me he can get me snow leopards. One of the rarest mammals out there. “How many you want?” He says, “I'll get you at least five.”

LIBBY: You think you're going to be getting snow leopard skins?

RICH: Snow leopards, from him. He's going to meet me. “I'll meet you.” “Okay. Call me when you got them.” But now, he called me after that for something else. He says, “I got to see you.” I showed up with Kevin. My driver is always there, my bodyguard. We're talking. Ronnie says, “I got to meet you upstairs.

No one else”, meaning no bodyguards, because he kept his down there. He didn't really - there was more upstairs, I found out later, but he stated that to Kevin. I turned to Kevin.” I don't know what the “f” is going on but watch these guys.” I was wearing a body wire. We had six agents outside in the car listening to the body wire, maybe two cars. Now I'm behind him. I knew which way he'd gone. I'd never been upstairs with him. He'd gone around the corner and ran up the stairs. I'll do the same. I run around the corner. Run up the stairs. Well, there was a drape hanging down, and I ran through it. There was a metal bar right across the top above my nose, and I hit that solid on the move, going up the hill. I went down like a sack of crap. I said, “I hit my head. I hit my effing head.” We do a lot of French talk when we're undercover. You can understand that. The guys outside in the car heard the smack and heard me fall. And they started to come out of the car with their guns. I got my head back and said, “I hit my head. I hit my own effing head.” I said, “I was being clumsy.” They went back in the car. To this day, nobody called NYPD about guys trying to run down the street with guns. I go upstairs. For the next 2 or 3 hours, to this day, I have no idea what I did. I sat there. If you listen to the body wire, which I had on, and the entire body wire, my part of it was going “Uh. Uh?”

LIBBY: Are they giving you something?

RICH: No.

LIBBY: Oh, you had a concussion.

RICH: No. I had a bad concussion. And he's talking away. He was hanging himself, but I could see shadowy figures up there, which was a concussion or was more of his bodyguards. But I remember he had me sit on the floor. I think we were supposed to eat lunch on the floor, but when I'm leaving, finally, I don't know how I made it down the stairs. I had no idea. I can't remember. Get outside, and Kevin grabs me, and he says, “Rich, you don't look good. Your eyes are spinning. I'm driving you back to Connecticut tonight.” He drives me back, stay overnight in a motel, meets me the next day, and we start going over the body wire. When it came to the smack, I got sick. So, he took me to the emergency room. We happened to know the guy on duty, the doctor. I had a high level - they used to rate them like one to whatever - it was the second highest concussion. And I said, “Well, can I still work?” He said, “How are you going to carry a gun? You're going to shoot the guy in the middle?” He says, “You can't go to work.” On the body wire was fortunately, it was all him [Ronnie] being clear. If I ever had to testify to what he said, I couldn't testify because I was out of it.

LIBBY: Good thing you had that wire.

RICH: He calls me. Now, he's got the rugs. A week or two later, whatever it was, he says, “I'll meet you.” “Where do you want to meet?” “I'm coming up towards Connecticut. I said, “Okay, how about maybe the first rest area in Darien?” “Okay.” So, we set up out there. We had unmarked troopers waiting there. We had DEP, we had Customs, we had our people. No ATF because we had no guns. We're waiting for him. He was being followed up, once I saw his car. He pulls in. I walk out and we hook up and talk for a while. He says, “Okay, come on, I'll show you.” And he starts to show me the snow leopards in his car. I'm picking them up, looking around so they could film it. And I said, “Okay. Well, let's go get the money” “Okay.” Then I'm making the signal again and bang, they hit him. And he didn't know what hit him. He was under arrest. We go through court. We had a closed courtroom for him. The judge said, “I'm going to sentence you to five years, whatever it was. And what's going to happen to you? He goes, “The Taliban's going to slit my throat when they found out what I've been doing.” She goes, “I

see. Well, it's your lucky day. See those two agents standing in the back of the room?", from an unnamed federal agency. "Yes." "How'd you like to work for them for the next five years? Then you won't go to prison. But if I find you're not cooperating, you're going to prison. What do you want to do?" He goes, "I'll take that." That was FBI counterintelligence.

LIBBY: Wow. FBI counterintelligence.

RICH: When we finish, I'll show you the paperwork. I can say it now. I wondered if the word was out that he was working for the FBI as an informant on the Taliban in New York City and the terrorist stuff going on. That was a true thing. That's the informant we got for them.

LIBBY: That's amazing.

RICH: Talk about amazing. That was a major takedown and helped in the war on terror. We hadn't started yet, but they were our enemy. And this was the first shot across the bow. We had them. We had a guy who became the acting ambassador to the UN. That was his title. I'll show you the paperwork. You can actually write it down. I didn't tell this [before] because it wasn't out there. It's in print now. Yes. That was Ronnie the Rugman.

LIBBY: That's fascinating. You must have been able to project yourself in such a way - both of these people - Ronnie the Rugman and John Lukman, they had a lot of experience.

RICH: We were pals. They loved me.

LIBBY: Yes. They had a lot of experience with people, and they end up trusting you implicitly.

RICH: Bob Clifford gave me the nickname, "Mickey the Mope" because "All you do is listen. You go. Yeah. Ha ha ha. What? No. Yeah. That's how you say. That's your whole vocabulary. These guys keep talking and you just let them talk." I know when to shut up and just let the recorder go and it works. Then to the fellows I became known as "Electric Head."

LIBBY: Electric Head?

RICH: Electric Head.

LIBBY: Why? (laughter)

RICH: Because the first time we noticed it on the CBS Evening News, [during the takedown and arrest of Lukman,] the undercover operatives face was blurred, so he can't be recognized or whatever. And it was electronically fuzzed out. So, you could see me there, but you couldn't see who it was.

LIBBY: That it was you.

RICH: It became – hey, that's Electric Head. I went to in-service. "Hey, Electric Head!" Then the book came out.

LIBBY: What book?

RICH: Risky Business Special Agent.

LIBBY: Okay. Want to show it to me and tell me about the book?

RICH: It's out of print.

LIBBY: [Holding a book]. This is a book. It's called "*Risky Business Wildlife Special Agent Protecting Endangered Species*". And this is written for young people?

RICH: Yeah, third and fourth grade. It was okayed by the Washington Office. I said I wouldn't do it unless it was okayed. And then they came back. They got the okay from whoever was down there, and they came in and interviewed me, took photos and wrote that book.

LIBBY: It's a 32-page book with full size color photos of you.

RICH: Yeah, I know. This was before Ronnie the Rugman. He didn't know who I was.

LIBBY: That's amazing. And this was published in 1977 [correction: 1996] by Edward Ricciuti.

RICH: [Background talking with his wife]. He was the author. It was Black Birch Printing, they called themselves.

LIBBY: What was the response to this book? Do you know?

RICH: Overwhelming. My fellow agents, when we were having in-service, when I was going down there, they'd all call and order several copies each. I bought cases of them, at my price, \$10 a book. And they sold for \$20. I sold them for \$10 a book, and all the shipping charges I kept myself. I paid them myself. I never made money; I lost money on this. But the guys wanted them, the girls wanted them. I agreed during class and breaks and after class, I signed them. Anybody wanted them signed, I signed them. Everybody wanted them signed for their children, to their family. Whatever.

LIBBY: I'm going to check with Mark Madison, our historian, and see if he has a copy of this book. And if he doesn't, we need to get one for the archives.

RICH: I even buried one with my grandson.

LIBBY: Pardon?

RICH: I even buried one with my grandson.

LIBBY: Oh. That's sad.

RICH: He was 18 months old.

LIBBY: Sorry to hear that. Life can be challenging and difficult sometimes.

RICH: Oh yeah. We're getting towards the end.

LIBBY: We are getting near the end. I'm looking at my notes.

RICH: I got [assigned] to Logan airport.

LIBBY: Logan airport? What about Logan?

RICH: After 9-11, when all government agents, not just us - everybody was called in to the actual crash sites of the planes or to run major passenger terminals. Everybody was scared of flying at that point. Who knew what was going on? I was assigned with the U.S. Marshals, two deputy marshals to Continental Airlines - the afternoon to night shift. That's what I worked on every day. And those were the days of anthrax. We had several, it turns out, false reports. There was white powder coming on planes, found on the ground. We always had to call the people in, the experts, the ones that handle it. We actually did have a hit list, the names to be looking for. We got a call from a Miami flight coming in, that one of our guys with the same name was on that plane, so we were waiting for him. When he came off the plane, he came in with his hands up saying, "I'm the guy you're looking for. I've already been checked in Miami. I have the same name of the guy you want, but it's not me." He says, "Please let everybody go on their connecting flights. I'll miss my flight. Don't worry about it. I don't want anybody upset that I held back a flight." We would check it out with Miami. "Yes, he's been checked out. He is fine." He was more worried about people on the flights being upset with him. He was a very great gentleman about that. That was what we had to do. That was our job. That was where I got the biggest heartwarming [experience] of my career. We'd get tired of taking the bus into the airport every day from the hotel. Several of us wanted to walk every once in a while. We're all in our full regalia - the jackets, raid jackets, hats, Sam Brown belts, handcuffs hanging out, the whole shebang, boots on. Walking down the streets, heading towards Logan, people are standing there clapping and cheering us. They were just happy to see law enforcement, that we're out there doing something. Never before, never again in my career has that ever happened. They're sitting there cheering you. That's how upset people were. We actually had one guy, a pilot on one of the flights who showed up [and appeared to be], shall we say, inebriated. He was screaming he wasn't going to go through the checkout. We said, "You're not going to fly this plane unless you go through with everybody else. Everybody on this plane goes through this." Finally, Continental came down and took him away and brought a backup pilot to take the flight. They said, "What do you think? Everybody on this plane sees this crazy guy when they walk in. They're already worried about flying, and you're in the pilot's seat? They just saw you going wacko there?" They probably fired him, I guess. I don't know. He may have been inebriated, I don't know, but something was going on. He was screaming. We had a hard time handling him until they came down and brought the backup pilot. They took him up to their offices and we got rid of him. But it was stuff like that.

LIBBY: You retired shortly after that.

RICH: That's it. Part of this last thing - we had a break; you sit in the back of the newspaper kiosk one night and let your mind wander, drinking a soda. All I could read was these copies behind glass, and all I could read was one thing on it. And I said, "Oh my gosh." I said worse than that. I got each of the deputy marshals, separately - I knew them well, they're both from Connecticut - and I had them sit in my seat, separately, and let their mind wander, and they both saw the same thing. And they both said to me, "If you don't listen to that, you're always going to regret it if something happened." In big letters, it said,

RETIRE RICH. I took that to be an epiphany. That told me to retire. I finished the detail, and I came home and said, "I'll be done in January of 2002."

LIBBY: That was a newspaper?

RICH: Magazine.

LIBBY: Magazine. Fortune magazine?

RICH: No, Money magazine.

LIBBY: How to retire rich.

RICH: Retire rich. Big letters. That's all I could see. I couldn't see the "Fortune", or I didn't notice it.

LIBBY: You were fairly young then, weren't you?

RICH: I was 50. Yeah, I was eligible.

LIBBY: You were eligible. You had the time in, the years.

RICH: I think I went when I was actually 51.

LIBBY: Before we talk about what you did after you retired, I wanted to just follow up on a couple of things. You told me that you met Jane Goodall. Tell us about that.

RICH: People are going to think I'm bragging of awards.

LIBBY: Nope. Tell us about your award. *

RICH: I had to pick up the Clark Bavin Award at a CITES conference in Fort Lauderdale [in 1994, for his work on Operation Wiseguy.] There was ten of them issued - five to Americans and 5 to foreign nationals. Jim Genco got one - my U.S. Attorney for the case. It'll say my thing who else got one. I can't think of the name. There was another U.S. Fish and Wildlife agent. [Actually two - Special Agent Rick Leach was recognized for Operation Renegade and Special Agent Robert Standish was recognized for Operation Whiteout.] One of the presenters at the program when we were there was Jane Goodall. She was clapping for us and afterwards shaking our hands. And, you know, they all say, "Oh, great job. Just don't shoot my gorillas." But no, she didn't say that. We did meet her and - what was her name? The female Secretary of Interior - no, the Fish and Wildlife.

LIBBY: Mollie Beattie.

RICH: Mollie. She actually handed me my award and helped me get it back in one piece. Get it shipped back to Connecticut. She took care of that for me. Well, another one I did meet during my career. I had to go do security for - what was his name? James Watt. He was controversial.

LIBBY: I remember him. Secretary of Interior.

RICH: He was going to be up at a thing in Massachusetts, and he had no coverage [protection], so I was his bodyguard.

LIBBY: I don't think he was very much liked in Massachusetts either.

RICH: We had no problem. But I did meet the Secretary of Interior over that, and he didn't fire me.

LIBBY: Anything else you want to share about your career?

RICH: I had a lot of good times, worked with a lot of great people. I can't remember them all. I can't remember some names - I'm getting old and starting to think I'm starting to go senile. But it was worth it.

LIBBY: When you retired, you were still fairly young, and I'm assuming you kept working for a while.

RICH: Yeah, either that or go panhandling. One of the two.

LIBBY: What did you end up doing?

RICH: Well, first off, as I was retiring, I got a call from the University of Connecticut asking if I'd be agreed to be a - there's a name for it - an adjunct professor. Junky Professor. I did that for six years. I had an upper graduate - all graduate [class].

LIBBY: What school was this?

RICH: University of Connecticut.

LIBBY: In Storrs?

RICH: In Storrs. Last year's basketball national champs. Maybe this year. I didn't go there. I lived nearby.

LIBBY: That's a good college.

RICH: They are a rival of UMass Amherst. I did that for six years and had one guy going for his doctorate. I did allow one freshman to take the class. I didn't care about freshmen coming in, but he really wanted to get in. The school said, okay, they'd change the policy if I didn't mind. I let them take it and did that for six years. And several of those people got jobs in wildlife law enforcement. They told me about it, including the first young lady who was the number one student the first year I gave the class. She was a junior. She came in number one, and she came back to me the next year and said, "Professor." I said, "Don't call me professor. I told you, I'm not a professor. Just call me Rich. I'm poor, but just call me Rich." She wanted to tell me that she took my class as a lark. She needed three graduate points. Never thought of anything like law enforcement, but she thought it might be interesting. I'll take it. And she said, "You changed my mind." I said, "I changed your mind to what?" She goes, "I've got a job in law enforcement when I graduate." That wasn't my game. I was just telling them how to do it, if you're interested. And she did. I met a couple others down the road that made it also. Some became local police,

but they were using that to work their way up to become Federales if they could. So that meant a lot to me.

LIBBY: Anybody joined the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as far as you know?

RICH: Not that I'm aware of. One guy became a state conservation officer, but I don't know - he could have. I lost track once I retired.

LIBBY: That's got to make you feel good.

RICH: Yep. Then also, as a lot of our people do, I did security background checks. I spent a lot of time down at the [Navy] Subbase. I was on every submarine down there doing background [investigations.]

LIBBY: That's in Groton?

RICH: Subbase Groton. I even did the admiral of the base; did his clearance. It's a lot of trainees, but that was fun. A lot of times I meet a lot of kids, young guys coming in. Did a guy who was just retired as a [Navy] Seal; got to interview him. That was really neat. I had an excellent time and made good money doing it.

LIBBY: Do you stay in touch with anybody from the Fish and Wildlife Service?

RICH: Once in a while I talk to Jerry.

LIBBY: Jerry Smith.

RICH: Just to see what's going on, because he keeps up with everybody. We have no agent here. Tom Ricarddi wanted to be my successor. He moved in, but I never saw him once. I don't know what ever happened to him. I heard there's no office any longer, so I don't know. Everybody goes their separate ways once you retire. Even my good Marine buddy, Bob, moved over to Massachusetts, so he's not even around any longer.

LIBBY: Well, I guess that basically wraps it up, doesn't it? You've got some paperwork here and I'm going to take a look at it, and I think we will see if we can get some of the magazine articles and newspaper articles that you showed me down into the archives. They're very interesting. Really fascinating, and they talk a lot about your work, protecting rhinos in particular in Africa.

RICH: I was lucky.

LIBBY: It sounds like you had a terrific career.

RICH: I had luck. And that's all it comes down to.

LIBBY: It's more than luck.

RICHL Well, lucky finding the right dumb guy who's dumber than I am!

LIBBY: (laughter) Well, I really appreciate this. And thank you so much for taking the time to share your conservation career with us. Thank you.

RICH: I hope it does some good for somebody.

LIBBY: It will. Thank you. Bye bye.

*Rich was also the recipient of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Guy Bradley Award in 1993.

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