

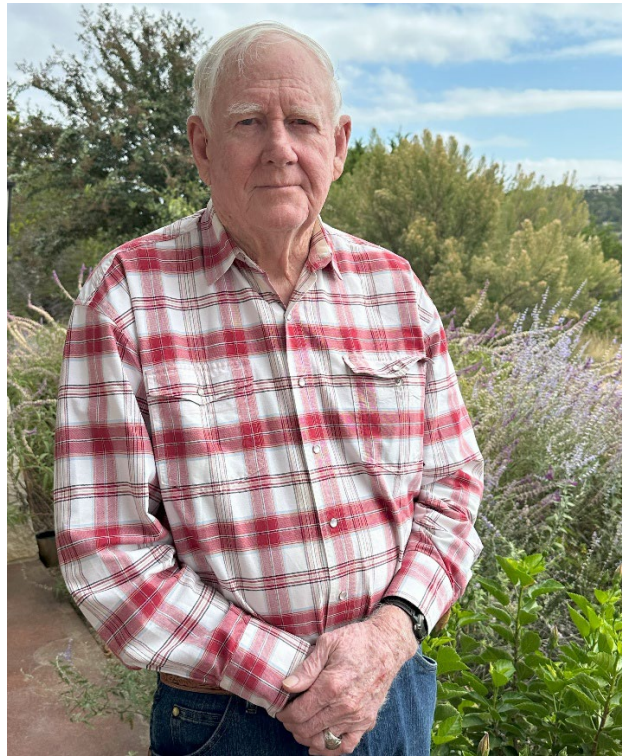


## **The Oral History of Joel Scrafford**

October 31, 2024

Interview conducted by Libby Herland

Kerrville, Texas



# Oral History Cover Sheet

**Name:** Joel Scrafford

**Date of Interview:** 10/31/2024

**Location of Interview:** Kerrville, TX

**Interviewer:** Libby Herland

**Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service:** 25 years

**Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held:**

Game Management Agent - North Platte, Nebraska (1969 – 1974)

Game Management Agent – Bismark, North Dakota (1974-1976)

Senior Resident Agent – Bismark, North Dakota (1976-1980)

Senior Resident Agent - Billings, Montana (1980 – 1994)

**Most Important Projects:**

In response to a request for assistance from U.S. Customs, Scrafford organized a task force to address the gross over-the-limit taking of fish in the Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario Provinces of Canada. American sportsmen were entering Canada and taking exorbitant amounts of fish. In a joint operation between Fish and Wildlife Service, Refuges, U.S. Customs, U.S. Border Patrol, the Canadian Wildlife Service and the Canadian Mounties, over 14,000 pounds of fish filets were seized at the U.S. Canadian border over a three-day period.

Worked with seven Montana Indian reservations, via a cooperative agreement, providing the necessary training to authorize Native American officers to be cross credentialed as Montana game wardens. As a result of this cooperative agreement, a violation of tribal law became a violation of the Lacey Act.

Commercial poaching operation, dubbed as the largest commercial operation in the history of the United States, involving hunters going into the Yellowstone National Park on horseback killing elk, buffalo, and bighorn sheep and transporting them out for sale. This undercover operation was also part of Operation Trophy Kill.

Successful investigation and prosecution of Don Lewis, an archer sponsored by Browning Arms and Lynch game calls. Lewis was convicted of killing 36 bulls in Yellowstone Park, over a nine-year period.

**Colleagues and Mentors:** Flick Davis (Regional Director), Dave Purinton (Game Management Officer), Cleve Vaughn (Game Management Agent), Jim Klett (Special Agent), John Cooper (Senior Resident Agent), Dave Kraft (Special Agent), John Gavitt (Special Agent in Charge), K.C. Fredericks (Assistant Special Agent in Charge), Andy Hutchinson (Park Service), Joe Fowler (Park Service), Randy King (Park Service), Bob Minan (Park Service), Jerry Mernin, Ralph Fries (Refuge Officer) and Will Steffen (Refuge Officer)

**Brief Summary of Interview:** Joel was born in Alice, Texas in 1940 and spent summers as a young boy on his grandfather's 7,500-acre ranch in Boerne. He recounts, in later years, spending five summers working on the Climbing Arrow Ranch in Montana. In 1965, he graduated from the University of Colorado with a degree in Zoology. He began working for the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1969 as a Game Management Officer in Nebraska. He discusses how he felt about going from being a Game Management Officer to a Special Agent.

He recounts his time in Billings, describing the efforts made in elevating grizzly bear violations from state court to federal court. Violators were being fined \$50 in state court for mistaken identity killing of a bear. Because of his collaboration with several federal judges, he was able to file cases under the Endangered Species Act, where those fines were increased to \$10,000 - \$15,000 fines and revocation of all hunting and fishing privileges. He also worked with and provided training to many Indian Nations in Montana, increasing their ability to enforce state laws on the reservation. As a result, he was part of four documentaries produced by National Geographic.

Joel became an integral part of Operation Trophy Kill and a separate take-down of a commercial poaching operation in Yellowstone National Park. Tom Brokaw and NBC would later do a documentary on the take-down, dubbing the operation as "the largest commercial operation in the history of the United States."

After retiring in 1994, Joel discusses the opportunity he had to work (volunteer) for the National Park Service. He and his wife, Patty, spent 11 summers working in the backcountry in Yellowstone, living in patrol cabins and doing enforcement.

## THE INTERVIEW

LIBBY HERLAND: Hi, this is Libby Herland. I'm the chair of the Oral History Subcommittee, and today I am in Kerrville, Texas, at the home of Joel Scrafford. Joel was in the law enforcement program for the Fish and Wildlife Service. He worked for the Service for 25 years, retiring in 1994. And sitting in with us on the interview today is Jerry Smith, also from law enforcement. Jerry helped put this interview together and has been an integral part of recording and preserving the history of over, so far, about 70 special agents and other law enforcement personnel that we have interviewed. So, with that, Joel, thank you for inviting us into your beautiful home here in Kerrville, Texas. I really appreciate the fact that you're willing to do this oral history interview. It's very important. So, we're going to just start off by you telling us a little bit about where you were born, the year you were born, your early childhood influences, especially anything related to conservation, and then, we'll start talking about your life and your career.

JOEL SCRAFFORD: Okay. I was born in Alice, Texas, August 4th, 1940. I guess my major influences, my grandfather was a rancher down here at Boerne, but the ranch has been sold now to George Strait, which is called Tapatio Springs. I graduated from high school in Houston in 1958. Went to University of Colorado and started off in Zoology. After a year, I figured out that if you waited out a school a year, you could get in-state tuition, which went from about \$10,000 to \$600 a year.

I got a job as a nuclear safety inspector on an Atomic Energy Commission project run by Lawrence Radiation Lab and worked graveyard for them for seven years. I finally graduated and upon graduation while I was at Colorado, I was very active in search and rescue, technical climbing, and it kind of got me into a start to be hired at Rocky Mountain National Park.

LIBBY: Okay, can I stop you right there? Alright, I want to delve a little bit more into some of those early influences because I know, once you start talking about your career, we're going to start really focusing on that. So, tell me what it was about your grandfather's ranch. How big was it?

JOEL: It was about 7,500 acres. His dad came here in 1859 to start the ranch; got delayed fighting in the Civil War. [He was in the] Texas 33<sup>rd</sup>. He raised primarily Angora goats and scrub cattle.

LIBBY: Scrub cattle?

JOEL: Well, they weren't registered or purebred, but Brahmans and Hereford cross. They didn't have Angus in Texas at that time.

LIBBY: Okay. And you didn't live on this ranch. You just visited a lot.

JOEL: I spent most of my time, my summers [there.] When I was 14, I got a free job working in Yellowstone Park for Camp Trails, wrangling 33 head of horses through the park. After that, I was a junior in high school and I got a job working on the second largest cattle ranch in Montana, the Climbing Arrow - 350,000 acres.

LIBBY: How did those jobs come about?

JOEL: My dad was a geologist, and he knew or worked with a geologist down in Houston whose brother, Guy Warren, was a foreman up there for the CA Ranch (Climbing Arrow Ranch). So, I spent five summers working on the CA out of Three Forks. Six dollars a day, room and board.

LIBBY: You didn't get really paid.

JOEL: Got paid \$6 a day.

LIBBY: But you got a great place to live, and you learned so much.

JERRY SMITH: A great place to be. [laughter]

LIBBY: Well, wasn't it Montana?

JOEL: Yeah, in a bunkhouse.

LIBBY: Okay, well, I'm thinking about the location. Sorry. (laughter)

JOEL: No, we camped out down in the Madison Valley. Then, he had the Taylor grazing lease with a ranch, the Flying D, that Ted Turner owns now; 107,000 acres deeded. I spent most of my time up there riding for larkspur and lupine, which were very poisonous to cattle. And then, when I went back to school, they'd bring them off the summer range back down to winter.

LIBBY: Okay, great. Is that why, because you spent your summers in Montana, and you decided you were going to go to college somewhere, you decided to go to school in Colorado?

JOEL: The mountains? Yes.

LIBBY: The mountains really appealed to you.

JOEL: Yes, ma'am. I finally graduated from the University of Colorado with a degree in Zoology.

LIBBY: Yeah. What year was that?

JOEL: In 1965. I got hired at Rocky Mountain National Park as a 180-day appointment for park ranger. And then, when that started to end in September, I got another 180-day park ranger assignment in Carlsbad Caverns. Then, on January 11th of '69 – oh, it was before then – January of '66, I got a permanent job at Morristown National Historical Park in New Jersey.

LIBBY: I've been there. It's a beautiful place.

JOEL: It is. It was primarily rural law enforcement. Blue Ridge Parkway and Morristown were the only Park Service areas that mandated carrying a firearm as part of your duty. I got an award in '68 for 72 physical arrests. As a result of that, I got sent to Harper's Ferry for a three-week seminar. A week was "*Drugs*," by BNDD (Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs) back before [it was] DEA. A week was "*Sex Offences*," by the FBI and then a week of "*Traffic Enforcement*." While I was down there, I met an agent from U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Ed Nichols, and he says, "You ought to become a game management agent." And I said, "What do they do?" He says, "Oh, they go to Canada and band ducks, and then they

go to Louisiana and do enforcement.” So, I said, “Well, I might be interested.” Well, two weeks later, Flick Davis, the Regional Director in Minneapolis, calls and says, “You and your wife meet me at the Philadelphia airport.” So, I said, “Sure,” and went down there. Two weeks later, he offered me a GS-7 job in North Platte, Nebraska.

LIBBY: Tell me a little bit about how the work that you did for the Park Service ended up helping you in your Fish and Wildlife Service career?

JOEL: Well, it gave what we call “street time” to where you actually had some experience. Search and seizure, rules of evidence, patrol work, a lot of court work so that, when I came to Fish and Wildlife Service, I was fairly cognizant of how the court system worked and law enforcement. Many of our new agents do not have street time, and I think they're seriously lacking. But anyway, I showed up in North Platte, Nebraska.

LIBBY: Now, can I just ask you one other question? You had a degree in zoology, so that was important for you being able to qualify to be a game management agent?

JOEL: Well, yes, and also to be a national park ranger. It can be wildlife, criminal justice or zoology.

LIBBY: Oh, okay. Great. So, that helped you get the job at the Park Service also.

JOEL: Yes, ma'am.

LIBBY: That's terrific. How did you feel about going to Morristown and moving to New Jersey?

JOEL: Well, when we were primarily interested in climbing, backpacking, skiing in the Rockies, it was quite an experience.

LIBBY: Yeah.

JOEL: And I enjoyed it. Patty really enjoyed it. We got to see some of the East Coast, got to help start Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and, also, the Delaware Water Gap [National Recreation Area] with Andy Hutchinson, who was a park ranger.

LIBBY: Yeah, I managed Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge, which didn't exist when you were at Morristown, but it's in Sussex County [New Jersey.] And, I had a lot of interactions with the Park Service rangers from Delaware Water Gap NRA. We worked very closely with them. It's a beautiful area.

JOEL: Yeah. They sent me on a protection detail for Lady Bird Johnson up to Adams Historical Site. I went up to Cape Cod. I interviewed with the chief ranger, and he says, “I'm offering you a job up here.” So, I came back, and Patty and I were all excited. I got a call from the Regional Director in Philadelphia, and he says, “I'm sorry, we aren't going to offer you that job. We've got a disciplinary problem that we're going to send up there, so they have closer supervision.” So, with that, I told Flick Davis, “I'm ready to go.”

LIBBY: All right. Okay, great. So, now you are with the Fish and Wildlife Service. So, tell me about your early days. Did you have to take some training right off the bat?

JOEL: No.

(Laughter)

LIBBY: Not in those days?

JOEL: No. You know, part of my arrest record in Morristown was an individual who killed a deer and left it right there, and I ended up apprehending him. Then, I apprehended two black guys from North Carolina that were in Newark. They were out squirrel hunting with shotguns. So, I had some experience with wildlife enforcement. Then, I came in and the first thing I met in North Platte was Dave Purinton. And Dave was going to give me a ride over to his station at Grand Island to pick up a car. And Dave said, "Joel, you're going to have problems with Gus Bonde. You aren't going to like it at all." I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "Well, if you haven't been on five years, they won't allow you to eat at the same table with him in a restaurant. They play these little games." And he says, "You aren't going to like that." And I didn't like it. But North Platte was primarily a management station. I had to band 2,000 mallards in January on warm water ditches by Sutherland.

LIBBY: Was that a quota?

JOEL: Quota, yes. Mort Smith was in charge of that.

LIBBY: Well, what happened if that was a year when there weren't that many ducks around?

JOEL: Well, they're there in the winter, on the Platte, with all the corn there.

LIBBY: Oh. That was never an issue.

JOEL: No. In January, I had to fly the bald eagle survey from one end of the Platte River to the other. In February, I started in on the sandhill cranes. Jerry Pospischal was the agent pilot, and we flew the sandhill cranes survey in March. Then, I banded 2,000 doves in May and then in June went to Canada. My first assignment in Canada was in Kinistino banding there. Then, the second year I went to Last Mountain Lake with Roger Priest. Vic Blazevec is who I was with at Kinistino. The third year, I was in charge, Dean Tresch was the agent, and we always had two others, biologists from Illinois that helped us.

LIBBY: Well, yeah, I was going to ask you if there were other people there helping you with all this banding.

JOEL: There were four of us, yes.

LIBBY: So, there was usually a biologist there as well. Or were they all game management agents doing this?

JOEL: There were two game agents and then, Fred Roetker and Vic Hammer, biologists from Illinois. I think Fred became a flyway biologist.

JERRY: Yeah, I think so.

JOEL: And the fourth year I had Jim Beers. In the last year, my fifth year up there at Last Mountain Lake, I had Cleve Vaughn. Cleve was probably the most competent biologist I worked with as far as aging and sexing class one and class two ducks.

LIBBY: And did you just love this? Was this great?

JOEL: Yeah, I enjoyed it.

JERRY: Cleve was probably the second or the third, at the most, black agent that we hired, and he started out with Joel on banding, and he was, I'd say, a very, very competent agent. He spent his entire career in that part of the country. I'm not sure it was Iowa or...

JOEL: Nebraska.

JERRY: Nebraska, yeah.

JOEL: He was treated very, very poorly by Gus Bonde. Bonde would say, "I'm going to skin you out and make a wet suit. It was terrible.

LIBBY: Wow. He doesn't sound like a very pleasant person. What was his position? Gus Bonde.

JOEL: He was an Agent In Charge in Nebraska.

LIBBY: Okay. AIC. I've never actually heard that term, but that's what they were back in those days?

JOEL: Yeah, but he really didn't do any enforcement. He went around the states selling guns, trading guns. I got on the wrong foot with him when the Chief Federal Judge called me and says, "My wife's big in Audubon, and I understand that you're going to be sitting on some whooping cranes down in the Rainwater Basin. Will you give me a call, and I'll come down and bring my wife." Visited with Warren J. (correction: K.) Urbom, Chief Federal Judge. We got to talking about enforcement. Well, Bonde's idea of enforcement was to pink slip everything, the violations, and turn it over to the State for a deal. And the judge says, "Well, why aren't you using the Central Violations Bureau, the CVB?" He explained it to me so, I went back to North Platte, got ahold of the U.S. Magistrate Judge Dick Satterfield and worked out a bond system, and I started issuing CVB tickets. Gus did not like that.

Then I get a call, and this is what really did it. I get a call from Bill Ernst, the Nebraska conservation officer down at Grand Island. He says, "Will you come down here and give me a hand?" I said, "Well, what's going on?" He says, "One of Bonde's big buddies is double bagging every day." So, I went down with him and watched Doc Green out of Grand Island, go out and shoot a limit of mallards in the morning. He takes them over, drops them off to a picker, and then goes back that afternoon and shoots another limit.

Well, I popped him and, of course, Gus went livid. So, Gus figured he was going to do a number on me. Right about that time, Gus was transferring, and he created this statement that I was doing nothing but trapping muskrats. So, with that, Ed Bosak came in as the Agent in Charge, and he says, "Gus is holding up your promotion from a seven to a nine." And I said, "Well, what's the situation?" He says, "Well, you aren't working. You're just trapping muskrats." I said, "Ed, come on out to North Platte. We're going to visit every trapper and fur buyer in the state, and you tell me where I trapped or sold one." And he went

back to Duane Luchtel, who was the ASAC, and said, “This, this is all fabricated. There's nothing to it.” But the end result was the change in administration in ‘73, ‘74, of getting out of the game management aspects. We don't have time because we have the Marine Mammal Act, the Lacey Act's been expanded, and we're going to have to drop all the banding and the wildlife. So, somebody, I don't know, maybe Dave Purinton called and says “You're pin for North Platte has been removed back here in DC. Your station is being closed.” So, for a year, I had no idea where Patty and I were going.

LIBBY: How did you feel about that change?

JOEL: I was ready.

LIBBY: You were ready for it? So, you were ready to be full-time law enforcement?

JOEL: Sure.

LIBBY: Was that change actually welcomed by most of the game management agents at that time or not?

JERRY: I would say about – the thing is there were 2 or 3 changes that came right in a row. And most of the younger agents, such as Joel and myself, we welcomed that because the management part, we enjoyed it, but it took [so much time.] Joel talked about going to Canada. You went four times?

JOEL: Five.

JERRY: Five times. I went four times. I left probably right after the 4th of July. I got back the day before dove season started in September. Six weeks. And it's not pick up your cell phone and call your wife. I mean no contact. I was sent to northern Alberta, and you were in Manitoba or Saskatchewan.

JOEL: Saskatchewan.

JERRY: Saskatchewan, yeah. But still, you couldn't contact your wife.

JOEL: And we were camping out.

JERRY: Yeah.

JOEL: They wouldn't pay for a motel.

JERRY: Yeah, we got we got \$12 because there's a certain level, I can't remember what it was – 71, no not 71 - like the 31, 41 degrees or 51 degrees. If you get above that, you get per diem. And we got \$12 a day.

JOEL: We got six.

JERRY: Yeah, because you were below that.

JOEL: I guess.

JERRY: But who knows why. They figured that it was more expensive above there so, that's what they end up with.

LIBBY: Okay. So, that's actually very interesting because I don't think that I've ever asked that question in any interview, how you felt about going from a game management agent to a special agent.

JOEL: We had some agents that really had no experience or interest in law enforcement, but they were top biologists, whether they were flyway biologists or refuge biologists. And just like many of our refuge officers, many of them did not want to become a level four law enforcement. They wanted to stay in wildlife management or land management.

JERRY: And then too, it came at the same time or about the same time, we fell under the 6C retirement, when we went to law enforcement, and we hit 6C retirement. And about half of our agents at that time, they had to retire, and they didn't want to retire. You know, like Bonde, Bosak, you know, Blazevic - all of those fell into that category, and that's why we had such a monstrous influx of new agents in the lower and mid '70s. But those other ones, the old ones, Bonde was just one of them. We heard yesterday about several of the other ones that they had it made. They were born and raised in one particular city or town in one state. That's where they stayed. They were hired for that particular place. They never left. They knew everything. I mean, but they didn't want to lose their job.

LIBBY: That could be very disturbing to some people. But your office, you're in North Platte, Nebraska, and your office is closing.

JOEL: Closed and moved to Bismarck.

LIBBY: So, it took a while before they told you where you were going. Did you have any choice in the matter?

JOEL: No, not if you wanted to work. You serve at the pleasure of the company.

LIBBY: All right.

JOEL: So, I showed up in Bismarck with Terry Grosz. We got along great. Had a lot of good times. Our families got along well. He became a very, very good friend of mine.

LIBBY: Terry Grosz?

JOEL: Terry, yes. Terry got transferred to Washington, I think, in '82. And he recommended me as the SRA for North and South Dakota. And to cut things short, most of our work was easements over in the Devil's Lake. You understand what an easement is?

LIBBY: Yes, I do. But why don't you tell us for the record because I know what they are, but the readers may not.

JOEL: Back in the late 1960s, the Wetlands Office of U.S. Fish and Wildlife went to farmers and signed an easement in perpetuity that you will not drain, fill or burn a wetland. And we're giving you up to \$300 an acre. And, in many cases, I felt that this was not presented faithfully to them. So, when Terry and I came in there, the refuge, Ralph Fries over at Devil's Lake says, "We've got to do something. They're

draining all the wetlands.” So, I said, “Well, the first thing we have to do is have an avenue to get to court.” So, we went over to Fargo, met Lynn Crooks, the Assistant US Attorney, and he says, “I’m very busy now. We just had two FBI agents killed down on Pine Ridge, and I’m prosecuting Leonard Peltier. But you bring in the cases to me, and I’ll look at them and, possibly, I’ll be able to help you.” So, we started spending most of our time over there with the wetland people. One of us would go out with them. They had got quite innovative on their draining. They’d get out there as the ice went out of the fields and drive their four-wheel drive or eight-wheel drive Steiger tractors, making a 12–15-inch rut to drain. One of the interesting things that we had over there was Audubon got ahold of me, and says, “You’ve got to do something with exposed bait trapping here in North Dakota.” I said, “Well, what’s the situation?” He says, “These guys are going out and they’re killing deer and antelope around a slough and putting a whole mess of three and a half, four jump traps around. They’re catching bald eagles.” So, I went out and looked at a few of them. I got ahold of Jim Britton, who was the U.S. Attorney for North Dakota, and I said, “Can you get a TRO (temporary restraining order) to prohibit North Dakota Fish and Game from this exposed bait trapping? He says, “Yeah, I’ll help you.”

LIBBY: Oh, the State was doing the trapping.

JOEL: No, it was legal with the state.

LIBBY: Oh, it was legal. Oh, it was okay, I get it.

JOEL: So, I went into Russ Stuart, the head of North Dakota Game and Fish, and told him that this was his options. Two days later, headlines in the Fargo-Grand Forks-Bismarck paper, “*Federal Agents removed from State Credentials.*” So, we got home, and realtors are calling, “You’re being transferred” and this and that. And the next day, Al Olson, who was the Secretary of State – and I know Al. He called and said, “You get that Agent Cooper out of Minot, get him down here at my office at 10:00 in the morning.” So, I said, “Okay.” So, John and I walked in there. We had no idea what was happening. He says, “Raise your right hand and swear.” And we swore. He says, “You are now North Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation agents, and you have authority to enforce every law, including fish and game, in the State of North Dakota.” So, I said, “Well, how would we put this in the paper?” So yeah, that all came out in the paper. You know, your federal agents are now DCI agents. (laughter)

LIBBY: That was kind of gutsy on his part, wasn't it?

JOEL: Oh, not really. Al became, in his next term, he became governor of North Dakota.

LIBBY: Really?

JOEL: Yep. But the last thing about being in Bismarck - Customs was calling and having problems with American sportsmen going up into Ontario and Saskatchewan, Manitoba and coming back with horrendous amounts of fish. And he said, “Joel, we have 2,000 regulations we enforce. We’re not biologists. We can’t identify these fish.” So, I got ahold of Coop, and I got ahold of half a dozen refuges out of North Dakota. And I said, “Let’s go up to Pembina.” And I got ahold of Gene Whitney, the enforcement officer for Canadian Wildlife Service. I said, “Can you get a couple of Mounties to come down and help us?” Well, they came down, and in three days we seized 14,000 pounds of fish filets.

LIBBY: Oh, my goodness.

JOEL: And it put a stop to a lot of the foolishness. We had Mounties stationed two miles back into Manitoba. And these people would come in with their Winnebago's and open their coolers and throw them in the ditch and the Mounties would say, "I've gotcha." It was funny. Gene Whitney was a great big six-foot six Canadian officer. We had a riot going on there, and Border Patrol came out, and we had nightsticks. And he walks up to this woman that's giving us a bunch of garbage, and he says, "Hey!" He says, "Keep your mouth shut or you are going to go back to my country. You haven't been admitted to your blessed United States." She says, "Who are you?" He says, "I'm a Canadian officer," and asks the customs officer, "Have you admitted her in?" "No, we haven't, officer." So, boy, that just shut the riot down like quick.

Well, the last statement is that about two weeks later I get a call from Customs. He says, "Joel, get up here and get rid of these damn fish." I said, "What's the problem?" He says, "Well, you were packing fish filets in so fast that the ones in the center of the freezer never got frozen." And he says, "We can't even get into the Customs Office, the place smells so bad." So, I go down, and Cooper and I get two refuge trucks out of Devil's Lake, drive up, winch the coolers in there, come back down to Sully's Hill Refuge, back it up, slam on the brakes, the cooler goes out and all these fish. So, as a result of that, I went up to Manitoba and said, "Here's our problem." The Manitoba Outfitters Association, I addressed them. He said, "We don't like this business of you requiring one square inch with skin on the filets that they're bringing in." I said, "Well, what they're doing, they're bringing in 32 walleye, but they're claiming that some of them are perch, some of them are pike, and Customs can't tell." About two years later, they called [the head] and he said, "That's the best thing you ever did for us." He says, "Right now, our lodge owners and our outfitters are all happy." People aren't going farther north and farther north because they're all fished out. They catch their eight walleye and they're happy to come back. Anyway, that was the end of Bismark.

LIBBY: That's great.

JOEL: Okay, Billings.

LIBBY: Well, before you go there, you started off in Bismark in 1974. You were a special agent. And then at some point, you became the SRA (Senior Resident Agent) there. Is that correct? While you were in Bismark?

JOEL: In Bismarck, yes, in '82.

LIBBY: In 1982, you became the SRA? No, not in 1982 because you left there in 1982.

JOEL: 1976.

LIBBY: In 1976 you became the SRA. Did you actually have to compete for that job with others or did they just promote you?

JOEL: I was there, and it was a cheap move. I already had a house.

LIBBY: Yeah.

JOEL: No, I didn't have to [compete.] Terry went back and convinced them that Bonde sold me down the tubes. You know, it was a bunch of lies, and Joel is doing a good job. He gets along with the state, with the tribes, and they just said, "Okay, you're now a GS-11."

JERRY: That was a time when we had a reorganization, and we went to 13 districts. We went from AICs to SRAs, and many people had to compete because they had to move to get new people that had been in other places for a long time, get them into places that needed some new blood, some new help. And with 13 districts versus regions, that made a lot of difference also. In my particular case, we had four of us went to Louisiana and none of us had ever been there. Sometimes you need a turnover or you need new blood. Somebody that goes in and, just like you went with Bonde. Bonde had been there for years, and he was set in his ways and his ways weren't always...and you came in a new kid on the block, with new ideas, new energy and everything. And that's what happened with the SRAs under the organization.

*Phone rings in the background and there is general discussion while it is ringing.*

LIBBY: Okay. So, now you are moving to Billings? How did that move come about? Why did you leave Bismarck?

JOEL: I'm trying to think. The agent in charge of Billings – I'll think of his name here eventually - Bob Freeman, had a heart attack. So, for my last year as the SRA in Bismarck, I assumed his workload over in Montana. So, I was commuting back and forth, and at that time, they had the 55 mile an hour speed limit. So, it was a long, long time. Ralph Fries had transferred from Devil's Lake over to the head of CMR.

LIBBY: Right, Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge.

JOEL: He got ahold of Harry Stiles and Tom Striegler, and they convinced him that Joel is interested in getting over there. He's done a good job for us here in the Dakotas. We still have Cooper to handle things, so consider him. Well, next thing, Harry Stiles the SAC calls and says, "How would you like to go to Billings?" And I said, "Cut the paperwork, and I'm on my way."

LIBBY: We didn't talk about your family, but you're married because you mentioned back when you were in Morristown, you were married to Patty. When did you get married and where did you meet?

JOEL: Met at the University of Colorado. I've been married 62 years.

LIBBY: Congratulations.

JOEL: And Patty is the talented one, which is why my boys did so well in sports. She has run full marathons, half marathons and was the number two downhill skier in NASTAR in 1994.

LIBBY: Wow.

JOEL: And she's the coordinated one.

LIBBY: So, you have two sons in Bismarck, and they are still young when you move to Billings, Montana.

JOEL: Bruce, our oldest, was the head of the senior class, and he stayed with his high school coach. Kirk is four years younger, and he moved with us over to Billings. Bruce went on to become a trial attorney, and Kirk played nine years in the National Football League, the last four for the 49ers.

LIBBY: Oh, my goodness. Congratulations. So, was that hard to leave your son in Bismark?

JOEL: Oh yes.

LIBBY: But it was best for him.

JOEL: Oh yeah. You know, he was head of the high school, and he was First Team All-State in basketball as a center and track. It wouldn't have been fair to take him off.

LIBBY: Okay, great. So, you moved to Billings, and that's where you stayed for the rest of your career?

JOEL: Yes, ma'am.

LIBBY: Okay, so [from] 1980 to 1994, you were in Billings. I know a lot of great stuff happened in Billings.

JOEL: Okay. Is this recording?

LIBBY: Yep, we're recording.

JOEL: Okay, moving to Billings. The first problem I had was the grizzly bears were under the Endangered Species Act. And what was going on was the state was taking them to JP court for a \$50 fine for a mistaken identity bear. And Hank Fischer, Defenders of Wildlife and the head of Audubon, got on me and said, "Why aren't you guys doing something under the Endangered Species Act?" So, in order to try to get things going, the first thing I did was – Pete Dunbar who was the U.S. Attorney - I went in and talked to Pete. Pete was an attorney that was a former FBI agent in Bozeman. I explained the problem. He says, "Well, you're going to have to sell this to the federal court system, because right now they think that fish and game violations belong in state court." Well, it took me some time, but eventually I became on a first name basis with Judge Battin, Judge Lovell and [Judge] Jack Shanstrom. In fact, Jack Shanstrom says - I'll get into some of the stuff he did – he says, "You bring me your four best cases, and I'll guarantee you we'll get them into federal court." And this kind of turned the state around. The first grizzly violation that I took in, we got a \$10,000 fine. Well, that stopped a lot of the mistaken identity shootings. I had seven Indian reservations that, under the Lacey Act, a violation of tribal law became a violation of the Lacey Act. I ended up working on [those] and put on 40-hour schools with them.

LIBBY: What were those Nations, if you can tell me?

JOEL: The Crow Res, Northern Cheyenne, Blackfoot. We had the Flathead, Salish Kootenai, and the Rocky Boy Sioux and another Sioux nation. And the objective was to try to provide enough training that under the Supreme Court decision of *Arizona v. White Mountain Apache*, if we could bring their enforcement up to that level, they could enforce state law. Also, the Arapahoe and Shoshone on the Wind River Reservation. The Salish Kootenai, if you went into their tribal council, you wouldn't say there's any Indian blood here. There are doctors, dentists, attorneys. And they finally got enough training that the

State of Montana cross-credentialed them as Montana game wardens. It's a checkerboard reservation as most of them are. So, that worked well.

LIBBY: So that was a big accomplishment.

JOEL: Well, it got things going.

LIBBY: Had that happened for any other tribes in the country, do you know?

JOEL: I'm not sure.

JERRY: We had, probably in the late '70s into the '80s, we started emphasizing cooperative agreements. And we actually did training, like he did, of Indian officers, Native American officers, whatever they are called. At that time, most of them were called Indian wardens. They didn't know what they had to do, so we provided training for them in many places across the country. How good the training, how much effort was put into it on an individual agent basis, I don't know. But I know that we encouraged that all the way from headquarters on down and through the regions and everything else. And some people, just like a lot of things, took more interest in doing it. Like Joel, he took a lot of interest in that because cooperation gives you information. They give you information and information is what we lived off of.

LIBBY: Right. That's fascinating. Okay. That's great. I didn't know that.

JOEL: Well, anyway, I made a deal with the warden captains in Montana that you take the next grizzly case to your state court, and then the next one, I'll take to federal court. Well, when they started seeing that I was getting \$10,000 to \$15,000 fines and revocation of all hunting and fishing privileges, they said, "Hey, we'll go with you, Joel." So, that kind of stopped that.

I had to develop really a first name basis with our federal judges and had breakfast quite often with Judge Battin. When Bob Freeman was the agent in charge, he had an airborne hunting case out of the Crow Res, and Judge Battin declared the whole Airborne Hunting Act was unconstitutional. So, I spent quite a bit of time talking to him. Finally, he says, "Alright, you bring me a good airborne hunting case, and I'll prosecute it, I'll hear it." And we did. We'll get into that in a few minutes – the Montana Freeman I got involved with.

About this time, '82 and '83, I was getting a lot of information from Yellowstone park rangers that there was commercial poaching going on, and [they said] "We don't know how to work it, and we don't know what's going on." And at that time, John Gavitt was working in Great Falls on Operation Trophy Kill. And Gavitt came down quite often and stayed with us. Patty cooked him dinner. I said, "John, I want you to go down with me, talk to the Chief Ranger, Bob Miles, and just outline our problem." So, he went down, and we visited with him, and we identified about 15 or 20 people that were routinely going into the park on horseback killing, elk, buffalo, bighorn sheep and transporting them out for sale. So, John got involved in that. When John got involved in it, he said, "Well, we got to create an interstate nexus of coming out of the park. So, he bought a commercial taxidermy studio in Fort Collins, Colorado. So, he had my players ship all their hides and heads down to Fort Collins. Eventually we weren't getting any new players so, the US attorney said, "Well, we better shut it down. About that time, for some reason, I got involved with cutting four National Geographic TV programs on bears. I get a call, and the guy says, "Hi, I'm Tom Brokaw, NBC." I said, "Yeah, hi."

LIBBY: Oh, yeah. “Oh, hi.” Really?

JOEL: He says, “Joel, I'd like to come out and meet with you and discuss the possibility of NBC doing something on your grizzly bears.” So, I said, “Sure. When are you going to be here?” So, he came out, we met and spent about three quarters of a day at Holiday Inn in Bozeman. His real motive was, he says, “You know, Meredith and I own some property south of Big Timber, but we want to go backpacking. Do you have any recommendations where to go and maps and stuff?” So, I got him all lined up. Well, at the end of the thing he says, “If you ever have anything big going on, let me know.” He gave me his business card and on the back was a phone number. So, I talked to Pete Dunbar when we were getting ready for the takedown and he says, “Well, give him a call.” I called and a lady answered the phone, “Hi, this is Meredith Brokaw.” Home phone! I said, “Tom asked me to call if we had something going on.” She said, “Well, he's out jogging right now, but as soon as he comes back, he'll give you a call.” Well, he called and sent a film crew up here, and Pete Dunbar came out. On the film, this was the “largest commercial operation in the history of the United States.” And of course, this really inflamed Terry Grosz and the people down in Denver.

LIBBY: So, in which way or how so?

JOEL: Jealousy.

LIBBY: That you had Tom Brokaw's phone number? That he had called you?

JOEL: I had rapport with our U.S. attorneys and could get anything in. And a lot of people don't understand that the case agent concept is that you sit up at the prosecutor's table with the AUSA, and you help pick the jury. You take notes for cross-examination. I mean, you're part of the prosecution team. A lot of agents that don't or aren't able to have cases that merit a grand jury and federal prosecution, don't understand the closeness that has to be developed.

LIBBY: Do you remember what year this was?

JOEL: 1984. And I've got a whole deal here on Trophy Kill. Gavitt was really the instigator of this. We had some bad people there that had been involved in the rodeo in '81 and Gardner gang rape, and a victim that would not come back to testify. They were involved in arson, assault and battery, all kinds of stuff. So, when we quit having them sending hides and horns and stuff to our Fort Collins operations, Gavitt says, “You guys, would you take anybody on an undercover hunt? And of course they say, “How much are we going to get?” He said, “Oh, we'll probably get \$3000 or \$4000. So, he says, “Oh yeah.” So, Gavitt lined up Dave Kirkland, Nando Mauldin, Rick Thornton, Andy Pierce and Pete Nylander that went in for ten-day hunts by themselves, two-day ride into the backcountry. And of course, they missed everything. Kirkland, who was one of my idols, he came out, I picked him up, and he says, “I've got to have time by myself.” So, I said, “What do you need?” He says, “Paper, a lot of paper.” He sat down and he wrote down dates, times, places, serial numbers. He'd look at a gun one time, memorize the model 72-70, serial numbers, everything. No notes or anything else. But anyway, these guys all came out, and they were in there with it.

I got stuck organizing the takedown and, because of the number of people, I got ahold of Park Service, and they sent me up 50 officers. Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks sent their entire crew down with me because of death threats. I had some death threats - “Have you seen your boys lately? What are they doing?” I ended up getting the Marshals SOG team, special operations group, out. They came up with a

helicopter, and we took down 22 arrest warrants and two vehicle seizure warrants. I talked to Jack Shanstrom, the federal district judge at that time and he said, “Well, I’ll come over to Livingston and arraign them.” So, he came over and set bond on 22 people for Loren Ellison. He said, “This is a \$1 million cash bond.” And eventually, we convicted him. Twenty-two years in the penitentiary.

LIBBY: 22 years, wow!

JERRY: The longest sentence for wildlife, ever.

JOEL: The rest of them got three to five years.

JOEL: Anyway, all of this was really due to John Gavitt.

LIBBY: Where was John Gavitt stationed at that time?

JOEL: Fort Collins.

LIBBY: He was in Fort Collins. Okay.

JERRY: But he was in the undercover unit, and that was managed out of Washington. The overall project was funded and approved and managed out of the Washington office at that time. But they had a lot of freedom to go where the evidence went and led them. We had a big bunch of undercover cases in about 3 or 4 years. We had Operation Falcon; Kirkland was involved with a big fish case and things like that. It was probably one of the more successful 5- or 6-year periods in our existence as far as the number of people that we caught and the undercover cases, all the plants and reptiles. And it was because we finally had the money and the people to do that.

LIBBY: And the support from Washington.

JOEL: About that time, I got a call from Bob Petersen, the warden down in Ranchester, Wyoming. He says, “Would you meet with us over in Pocatello?” He says, “We got something we want to talk to you about.” So, I went over to Pocatello and Bob Petersen, Ron Carlson, the warden out of Big Timber, Don Wright, Idaho warden and J.C. Romines from Texas, we met at the Holiday Inn, and they said “We’d like to start an interagency game violators organization, the National – what did they call it? I got a couple of belt buckles for it. National Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association. So, we got that started in Pocatello, Idaho, and it went on to where they were selling belt buckles and became a pretty good organization.

I had a name of William Huer, H-U-E-R, of Pennsylvania [that] killed a big bull in Yellowstone, and I ended up getting involved in it. We had to wait until he checked it in to establish an interstate nexus up at Bozeman on Frontier Airlines. I got into a Frontier Airline uniform, and when he did that, I popped him. I had to haul him up to Helena before Judge Lovell for arraignment. We went to trial, and he was convicted. The judge says, “Part of your sentence,” I think he got like 18 months, wasn’t that big a deal, but he says, “I’m preventing you from hunting in the United States for a period of five years.” Well, this asshole comes out and he says, “Oh, I’ve always wanted to go to Canada hunting.” So, the judge says, “You will surrender your passport to the US Marshals before you leave.” (laughter) Judge Lovell was good. These three judges, when they’d argue motions, we’d go back into chambers, and they always insisted I come in. He says, “Joel, why can’t you do something like this? I mean, if a guy is convicted here

in Montana, why won't Wyoming or Idaho or Texas honor it? So, I got to talking to some other officers and they ended up going to their chiefs – Irv Kent was the chief at the time - and bringing this proposal up. Eventually, they entered an interagency compact, which was started. I think Judge Lovell had the credit.

LIBBY: Did it have an official name?

JOEL: No, it's just an interagency violators compact where they honor it. There are 37 states now that honor it.

LIBBY: Oh, okay. So, it's a thing.

JOEL: It's a thing. And Canada.

LIBBY: And Canada! All right. So, in the notes that you sent me, you said something about the Interagency Game Violators Compact. Is that the official name?

JOEL: Inter-Agency Law Enforcement Officers Association. That's a different deal.

JERRY: Yeah, that's an organization of law enforcement officers. I don't believe, I've never heard of them doing any group law enforcement, actual law enforcement. It was more of an association kind of thing where they had meetings and agents came from all over the United States, state officers and federal officers. I was a member of it. I'm sure you started it and was a part of it. It was a way that we could exchange information, get to know people. Knowledge is very important.

JOEL: To assist our grizzly bear problems, I started an interagency grizzly bear patrol in the backcountry. In looking at Dick Knight, who was head of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Committee, most of our bear deaths were from management control actions. Getting into a camp that had food stored. So, we teamed up in the backcountry with Park Service and U.S. Forest Service to put a stop to this. And what really changed a lot of the backcountry problems was a superintendent of Shoshone National Forest, Steve Mealey and Superintendent Jackson of Targhee says, "Well, we're going to put a Forest Service reg on exposed food storage in the backcountry, and our Forest Service officers will write tickets for it. You guys (have) cross credentials." And that put a stop to where a white tent meant a free meal to a bear.

LIBBY: That's fascinating. You were at the very forefront of that.

JOEL: Well, the other problem that we had was the bears get in trouble constantly. They kill a lot of domestic animals. I'm trying to think of his name, the head of the Defenders of Wildlife – [Hank] Fisher. He says, "Joel, what if we documented wildlife depredation by bears, and we, Defenders, will put up the money and reimburse the rancher for the price of his lambs or the price of his cow." And I said, "That would be a big asset." And about the same time, the Audubon in Billings came in and says, "How about we put up a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the conviction?" And I said, "Great." So, we had all those things coming together, which helped a lot. In the meantime, I was down on the Crow Res, and they were killing eagles like mad and sending them to Albuquerque for \$500 apiece. In fact, Nando Mauldin was working undercover down in Albuquerque at the time.

So, I popped Mr. William Huggs, took him to federal court trial, and he tried to bring out all this native rights garbage. Then, I had the chief medicine man from the Crow come in, and he says, "No, a double

train war bonnet is 112 feathers. And it used to be for counting coup for war. But now, if you're a straight-A student or you get a college degree, we'll award you a feather, but it's a part of our religion to have William Huggs down there, killing all these eagles and selling them." Huggs got three years out of it, but it did put a stop to a lot of the vandals' killing of eagles.

I've got two other things. A rancher comes into my office there in Billings. He says, "I got a damn airplane, and it's all taped out." They were taping them out - the numbers. He said, "It came in and took all my weaning calves and ran them through the fence. I got them scattered all over the breaks up there into Missouri." And so, I got a little more information out of it and figured out who it was. It was Leroy Sweitzer, who was head of the Montana Freemen, who eventually had an 83-day standoff up in Jordan. We spent two years running down that plane. Finally, I caught up with it in Oregon right out of Portland, went through GATO. All aviation transfers go through what's called GATO, General Aviation Transfer Office down in Oklahoma City. They put a stop on it, and we had the agent, Pete Nylander, go down and seize the plane. That plane ended up, after the trial, Bill Melleur was using it. It was a PA Piper 21 with a 150 Lycoming engine, all nav equipment. But anyway, we went to trial with Judge Battin, and Leroy walks in there. He's got the Constitution in one hand and the Bible in the other. And Judge Battin says, "Mr. Sweitzer, the issue before the court is not the Bible, nor is it the Constitution. It's the ownership of November...." whatever the plane number was. So, he shut up and sat down. But anyway, it was a jury trial, and they convicted him, forfeited the plane. I had an arrest warrant in REM, which you can get for a vehicle or an aircraft. It's a little different than an arrest warrant in person.

LIBBY: Arrest warrant in ...?

JOEL: In REM, R-E-M.

LIBBY: REM. Is that capital letters?

JOEL: Yes, ma'am.

LIBBY: Okay.

JOEL: To try to get the courts convinced that they deserved our attention in federal court, I don't know how I got it, but after the four Audubon features, *Outside Magazine* got ahold of me and did an eight- or nine-page article in *Outside* on commercial poaching in Yellowstone. And the whole only reason I participated in it is you got to sell the program to the potential jurors. You can't just walk in there and hear that little Johnny is poaching to feed his family. And of all the cases I've had, I've had one in which I knew the guy had to feed his family. I let him go. (unintelligible)

Yellowstone calls and said, "Joel, we got a film here from Utah Game and Fish. I want you to come look at it." I looked at it and said, "Yeah, it's in the park." And it showed a guy with an arrow killing elk. In nine years, he killed 36 bulls in Yellowstone Park. It took a lot of time working back and forth. They'd shoot low pictures of the bulls coming in and bugling. One of them had three arrows in it. [The pictures were taken] to where they didn't show the peaks. But Yellowstone, on all their trails, they have a two-inch triangle florescent orange trail marker. They showed up. So, we ended up with Don Lewis, who claimed he was the world's greatest archer. He was sponsored by Browning Arms and Lynch game calls. He and his partner were prosecuted down in Casper. I was very disappointed in the outcome. He got a year probation and a \$15,000 fine.

LIBBY: Well, a \$15,000 fine is pretty good.

JOEL: But for a serial killer? The saving thing for us is they have photo albums showing all the guts and blood, and he had over 150 animals that he'd killed in Alaska, British Columbia, Alberta and in the States, illegally.

LIBBY: Do you think it stopped him from doing that?

JOEL: I understand he went back to school and got a degree in civil engineering, and of course, he's no longer hunting.

LIBBY: Okay, so you saved animals too.

JOEL: I don't know.

LIBBY: Yes, you did.

JOEL: But anyway, it was good working with these people. You want me to go into the bad part?

LIBBY: Sure. Well, whatever you want to talk about.

JOEL: April of '93. I happened to be down in Denver delivering a bunch of ammunition. I figured out a way that the government, a refuge can trade a used lawn mower in on a new lawn mower. We could take in used brass that I got Malmstrom Air Force base and trade that in for new brass. So, I was supplying, for refuges in our region, all of the ammunition for their qualifications. So, I was down there delivering things, and I walk in, and Terry gives me a letter. I think I have it somewhere stored; 1 or 2 paragraphs, says "We're giving you ten days. You're to report to personnel right now to either resign or transfer as a Contaminants Specialist." I said, "What brought this about?" He said, "Oh, a whole lot of things." I said, "I know what brought it about. I wasn't going along with the bushwhacker with all of this performance evaluation stuff." And he said, "What's that about?" I said, "You know damn well that, Neill has been on me because I don't go along with performance standards and evaluations, particularly with Jim Klett." Here's a GS-12 agent who has a good caseload, rapport with the U.S. Attorneys, rapport with the park and things, and go in and say, "Now, Jimmy, you got to go touch base with the chief warden twice a year." You got to go do this and that. I said, "That's demeaning, and I'm not going to do it." Well, that was kind of cutting my throat. But anyway, so I went down to Personnel, and they said, "Within ten days, you either have to resign or initiate a move." I said, "Well, gee. Right now, the government's buying houses so, you're going to have to pay for my house in Billings, and it's going to cost." I said, "I'll come down there." I only had two years left. So, I returned to Billings. I went in and talked to Pete Dunbar, and he set things in motion. He got ahold of the Chief Ranger, Dan Sholly. Next thing, I get a call from Max Baucus' office, and he says, "Hey, your transfer has been put on hold for at least a year."

Next thing in that week, I had [previously] cross-deputized - as US Deputy Game Wardens - the Glacier and the Yellowstone and the Teton Park Rangers, so that they could assist me in interviews and enforcement outside. They all turned in their credentials. Grosz calls up the superintendent of Yellowstone and says, "Joel won't be teaching at the In-Service. I'll be up there." And he says, "No, Joel is going to teach as usual. You will not be allowed in the park on official business for anything."

LIBBY: Now, who said that?

JOEL: Bob Barbee, the superintendent of Yellowstone.

LIBBY: Said that to Terry Grosz?

JOEL: Yes. And with that, Terry says, “Well, I want to have a meeting with all the Montana Warden Captains.” They refused to have any kind of meeting.

LIBBY: Everybody had your back.

JOEL: Guys like J.C. Fredericks, from all over the country, were calling and saying, “What in the world is going on?” I said, “It's all the bushwhacker over this personnel stuff.” So, they don't give a damn that you have an average of four cases that went to trial in federal court, a year. You're keeping things running. You've got the bear problem kind of under control. You take on the Montana Freeman. They took a plane away. Actually, I took two planes, a PA 18 and then a Pawnee Agra Wagon.

And, just to back up a minute, in 1984, long-haired coyotes were bringing \$175 to \$200. The next year, the European fur market said, “We don't want long hair.” They went back to martens, and so it didn't even pay to skin them out. But he had made over \$214,000 in one year. He'd go up in the breaks on CMR, run the line shooting antelope and deer, just leaving them for bait stations. And then the next morning he'd come back, and he's got a Browning automatic out there, and he's flying at 50 feet with his Piper Cub, shooting them, and then he'd go pick them up.

LIBBY: Wow.

JOEL: Anyway, it went on for a whole year.

LIBBY: Well, then what happened? I mean, he gave you a year. Then what happened?

JOEL: Well, then came March. In March, the Denver Post sent a photographer team up here. They took a picture of me out in the sagebrush and on the front page of the Sunday Denver Post, a color photograph, “*Why is this Popular Agent being Reassigned?*” (laughter) So, then Max calls me and says, “Joel, we've gone through this. Tom Striegler and others have advised for you to file a complaint with OIG,” which I did, for misuse of property, theft, all kinds of stuff. That was whitewashed according to the OIG agent. Nothing happened to it, so I just said, “To hell with it. I've got a good life, a boy that's playing football. We'd like to see a few of his games.” So, each district in Montana and Wyoming had a little retirement ceremony [for me.] They gave me that bronze, Wyoming Game Warden's Association.

I want to get Patty in here for just a minute. But the best thing that happened was right after this, [after I] resigned, Dan Sholly calls and says, “How would you like to come back and work in the back country?” I said, “Well, what do you mean?” He says, “You got to bring your wife because she's nice to people.” (laughter) So, we spent 11 summers in the backcountry in Yellowstone, living in patrol cabins, doing enforcement, a lot of medicals. Everything from ruptured appendicitis, kidney stones, broken collarbones, broken legs, to just trail maintenance. No personnel problems and no paperwork.

LIBBY: You were paid for this?

JOEL: No, I was a volunteer.

JERRY: That's after he retired.

LIBBY: After he retired from the Fish and Wildlife Service, but now, this is the Park Service.

JOEL: At 57, you can't.

LIBBY: Oh, even the Park Service, you couldn't either.

JOEL: No, federal firefighters or law enforcement.

LIBBY: So, you told me at the beginning of this interview that Terry Grosz was a good friend.

JOEL: He was. I don't blame...I still don't understand why Terry did this. I started to talk and found out it took six months of going through stuff to get this to the Regional Directors. I had big problems with his Administrative Assistant, Tammy, whatever her name was. She was supposed to order equipment for me. I needed a three-quarter ton pickup to pull an eight-horse trailer. She had a little CJ-5 Jeep delivered. And it just went on and on. I said, "You know, when an agent wants the equipment, we're telling you what we need. It's not up to you to decide we don't need it, or we need something else." So, I wasn't getting along with her.

LIBBY: I'm not really clear on this. So, did you feel that Terry didn't want to tell you what he did, and he didn't want to reassign you.

JOEL: He never did.

LIBBY: And he never did it.

JOEL: He said, "You're going to come down here, we'll put an office over there in the Golden [Colorado] office, and you can become a contaminant specialist working on gold mines." I said, "No thanks."

LIBBY: Wow.

JOEL: I said, "I got a good thing going with the courts and people up there." Anyway, let me get Patty in here. She'll tell you a little bit about working in the back country.

LIBBY: Okay. So, tell me more about the backcountry work that you did.

JOEL: We had about 20 backcountry patrol cabins, going back to when the Army administered Yellowstone Park before there was a Park Service. You're in the backcountry maintaining the trails. Trees fall down and crossings washout, but also taking care of people, making sure they comply with Park Service regulations and taking care of medical problems. Because Yellowstone has about 3 million people a year, but only 100,000 of them get a half mile off a paved road. We have bear problems back there. We had the availability to get out. The Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center had a helicopter that came in, if the weather was okay. Otherwise, you're up all night with somebody with kidney stones or a broken leg or a dislocated shoulder. But we had radio contact with the hospital at Yellowstone Lake. Patty got up every morning. She had to go and be certified to work on the lake with a kayak. And she went around to all the backcountry sites, checking on their health and well-being.

LIBBY: For the record, I'd like to say that Patty has joined us. So, if she says something, we're talking to Patty.

PATTY SCRAFFORD: Well, Joel retiring at age 54 was a blessing in disguise, for me anyway. Because we have had a wonderful retirement, and that ten years in the backcountry was just frosting on the cake for sure.

JOEL: And we worked six seasons at the Big Sky Ski Area as mountain hosts.

LIBBY: Mountain host. Yeah. Nice.

PATTY: Or ambassadors.

LIBBY: Yes, ambassadors. You get to ski around all day for free.

PATTY: And it's free.

LIBBY: And talk to people. (laughter) Pretty good gig.

PATTY: Yes, it was. We were young enough to really still enjoy life. Well, we're old now, but we're still enjoying life.

LIBBY: That's great. And now you're back in Texas, where you started.

JOEL: Yes.

LIBBY: And where are you from, originally?

PATTY: I'm originally from Portland, Oregon, which used to be a wonderful city.

LIBBY: Right. So, you're in Texas.

PATTY: I met Joel at the University of Colorado.

LIBBY: He told us that. So, that's great. So, you're settling here. Is this anywhere near your grandfather's ranch? I don't know Texas.

JOEL: Boerne is 26 miles from here.

PATTY: You go on highway 10 towards San Antonio.

JOEL: We were into a drought in the late '40s, early '50s and had to bring in water for cooking and bathing. You know, 100-year-old live oak trees were dying. We're in a similar drought right in this area.

LIBBY: Yes, I know it's bad. So, could I just ask you a couple questions? And you're more than welcome to stay. Maybe you didn't tell Patty any of this, if it ever happened to you, but did you ever have any times

when you were working that you were in a really tough situation? You were afraid that things might go bad?

JOEL: No. I think if you do enough planning and anticipation, you can prevent violent confrontations. And that's why we brought that SOG team up here. There had been death threats from Loren Ellison and Kenny Fike, some of these other outlaws, and they knew how to handle it. We had about 130 officers divided up, ten-man or eight-man teams, and chained them up and brought them into Livingston City Court. And Judge Shanstrom arraigned them right there. He had to bring his dad in and introduce him to John Gavitt and me, but he set a \$1 million cash bond on Loren. That kind of sobered up a lot of the wannabe poachers. They were getting over \$1 million worth of illegal elk out of Yellowstone a year. They were getting \$130 to \$150 for blood antlers, and they're roughly 30 pounds on a big bull. They were getting \$8 to \$10 a pound for hard brown, first year sheds. These Koreans were coming in from Seoul and buying this stuff for aphrodisiacs. They ended up killing a bunch of eagles, Ellison did, up by White Sulphur Springs.

LIBBY: Can we talk about your mentors? And if you feel like you were a mentor to anybody, but who were your mentors in the Service?

JOEL: Oh, Jim Klett.

PATTY: Coop.

JOEL: Oh, John Cooper. John Cooper, you know, he's the big one. Dave Kraft.

LIBBY: Oh, Dave Kraft. I interviewed him last year.

JOEL: Did you?

LIBBY: Yeah.

JOEL: Well, there were a lot of them. Dave Purinton, K.C. Fredricks. You know, you could go just right down the line.

PATTY: Jim Lyles?

JOEL: He was a student in the Park Service. The park rangers were Joe Fowler, Randy King, and Bob Minan. They helped a lot. They were the only ones that knew what was going on those two years that Gavitt was working undercover.

PATTY: Jerry Mernin.

JOEL: Yeah, Jerry Mernin. [Also, Jack Foster and Will Steffon, park ranger Andy Mitchell, and Judges Battin, Shanstrom and Lovell.]

LIBBY: Okay. Well, that's great. You had a great career.

JOEL: I did. I enjoyed every day.

LIBBY: Well, unless there's anything you want to add, I think we'll just leave it right there.

JOEL: Thank you.

LIBBY: Okay. You're welcome. Thank you.

*End of Interview*

Key words: biologists (USFWS), bird banding, endangered and/or threatened species, fishing, game management, hunting, law enforcement, mammals, poaching, training, trapping, tribal lands, waterfowl, wildlife refuges