

## Roger Wheeler

Detective Mike Huff tells the riveting story of why the Boston Mafia murdered this Tulsa businessman.

### Chapter 1 – 1:20

#### Introduction

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**Announcer:** Businessman Roger Wheeler, the former Chairman of Telex Corporation and former owner of World Jai Alai, was murdered May 27, 1981, at Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa, Oklahoma, while sitting in his car. At age 55, he was leaving the golf course after his weekly game of golf and was murdered for uncovering an embezzlement scheme that was going on at his business, World Jai Alai. Linked to the murder were H. Paul Rico, John Callahan, Whitey Bulger, Steve Flemmi, and Johnny Martarano. The first Tulsa police detective to arrive at the scene of the crime was Homicide Detective Mike Huff. Immediate suspicions led to speculation that the murder was a mob hit, but when at Huff's request, the Tulsa FBI asked the Boston FBI office for help, they received a terse reply that Boston had ruled out a Boston mafia connection. Thus began years of a relentless pursuit by Mike Huff, with resources provided by the Tulsa Police Department and other organizations in Boston and federal agencies to identify those connected to the murder of Roger Wheeler. Listen to Mike Huff talk about the murder from the day it happened to the conviction of Whitey Bulger on the Oklahoma oral history website, [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).

### Chapter 2 – 8:50

#### Homicide

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**John Erling:** My name is John Erling and today's date is June 13, 2013. So, Mike, state your full name, your date of birth and your present age, please.

**Mike Huff:** Michael Kerry Huff, 6-15-1955, almost 58 years old. Live here in Tulsa.

**JE:** We're recording this interview in the recording facilities here at Voices of Oklahoma. Where were you born?

**MH:** Tulsa, Oklahoma, at Hillcrest Hospital. Born and bred here. Love the city.

**JE:** Your mother's name, maiden name, where she came from and where she was born.

**MH:** My mother is Madeleine May Murphy. She came from Enid along with my dad, William Alfred Huff. I'm a product of their nearly 50-year marriage. They're both deceased. My mother's family actually came from Ireland in the late 1800's, made their way through Boston, which I think is kind of ironic—it's kind of played into this case—and wound up near Oologah, Oklahoma, living down the road from the Dog Iron Ranch. Actually, my relatives worked as hands on the Dog Iron Ranch where Will Rogers grew up—the McSpadden family, I believe's, ranch. So, you know, I'm kind of engrained here in Oklahoma.

**JE:** Then your father—what did he do for a living?

**MH:** My dad, after he got out of World War II and had a couple of jobs, realized that Enid, Oklahoma, wasn't a real land of opportunity at that time. Wound up coming to Tulsa and was a US Postal worker for nearly 40 years, retired from there and lived three months after he retired, which kind of gave me a whole different perspective on that golden retirement years.

**JE:** So how old was he when he died?

**MH:** He was 62 when he died. You know, I'm nearing that age, so I just retired from one thing and just stepped right into another the next day. I don't need to sit around. Don't have any hobbies.

**JE:** And then your mother was the home keeper. Yes, my mother raised four kids. Three of us are still alive. She was a wonderful, wonderful lady. I was able to move her in with me her last few months of her life. It changed me and my two kids forever. She was a great lady. They both, then, were very supportive of you and your family and education and all that?

**MH:** They just had high school educations and my dad really wanted me to be a lawyer, and from about age three or four or five, from what I hear, I had always wanted to be a policeman. My dad didn't know where that was going to take me, didn't realize that that would take me to the happiness that that job did, but he was real proud of me. I had been nominated for Officer of the Year while he was still alive and then had won an Officer of the Year award when he was still alive, so I think he realized that it made me happy and I had a bit of success with it. He died before a lot of the successes I've had, but I'm sure he's aware of them.

**JE:** Where did you go to elementary school?

**MH:** Well, I went to elementary at Franklin Elementary at 11th and Yale, where I was captain of the Safety Patrol, by the way. Then we moved from there to over near TU—south of TU, and my junior high was Woodrow Wilson Junior High School. From there I went to Rogers High School, graduating in '73, then I started off at Tulsa Junior College and was looking forward to just this four-year college experience, and I think maybe I had just turned 19. I

heard of a program at the police department that was going to be brand new, a federally funded program for guys that were still in college to get their foot in the door at the police department. We call it the Cadet Program. So while I was going to TJC I applied for that. January of '75 I was hired. It was a full-time job. We had wonderful assignments. I didn't realize how much background it would give me to be a successful policeman, but in the records division you can find all that minutia of data to help you—mug and print where you learn how to deal with criminals while you're taking their fingerprints and pictures, as well as I was a hit-and-run investigator, so that really gave me the taste of investigation. All the while, I was finishing TJC and then bouncing around trying to get my additional college credits. I can say I dropped out of a couple other colleges after TJC because as soon as I turned 21, well, I fell into this like nobody's business. I was making arrests day and night. When you arrest somebody, if you work four to midnight or seven at night to three in the morning, you're back in court at 8:30 in the morning, no matter what you had planned, no matter what college classes that you needed to travel to Tahlequah to go to Northeastern. It didn't matter. So I was in court a good three or four days a week with the number of arrests I was making, so I was able to drop out of Northeastern and I was also able to drop out of University of Tulsa, too. I use that as an example with my kids. Get it together before you take off on this adventure. I had this wonderful conversation with my dad when I was a senior in high school. I mean I remember it like it was yesterday. We were watching TV on a Friday night, watching a John Wayne movie, *Hatari*. I was just so intrigued with that adventure. My dad, you know, he never really super opened up—you know, from that generation, and he talked about how after World War II he wanted to come back and live a life of adventure, but he started having kids and the responsibility that came with it kind of pushed that adventure to the side and made him go to the post office and make sure there was a paycheck coming in every couple of weeks, but his advice was, "If you can make a living in the life of adventure and help people, go for it." All the while, he was trying to push me towards wanting to go to law school, but I really took that to heart. I've since had that conversation a couple of times with my son, who always wants to go back to it. Here's a kid that was going into his senior year in high school in honors classes. He just passed his Eagle Scout test the night before last and here he wants to be a Tulsa policeman and maybe someday an FBI agent, but he's the kind of kid that could grow up and be a doctor with his science and math skills. But that life of adventure deal is a draw.

**JE:** Are you trying to push him away from police work?

**MH:** No. You know what? It was an honorable job. My dad didn't push me. He just guided me. My son, wherever he wants to go, wants to do, there's people lining up to help him because they see the kind of kid he is. He took on a huge Eagle Scout project preparing

gardens for all the fallen officers at the Police Memorial. It was the biggest project they ever had that they didn't have to pay for. He raised \$4,500 on his own. If I can just guide him, he's got the power and the drive to go on.

**JE:** So, as you get into your police work for the Tulsa Police Department, you eventually are a homicide detective.

**MH:** In 1980, I took a promotional test. At that time you had to be promoted to get into the Detective Division. I took that test and there were a couple of spots open when I was promoted and I could have either gone to the narcotics section or to the evening shift homicide section. I had a great mentor by the name of Chief Chuck Jordan, who was a sergeant at the time. Chuck said, "Oh, man, you'll be a great homicide detective." I didn't think it was enough excitement for me, but I kind of changed the way we did business there and it turned out to be plenty of excitement and I learned so much from Chuck Jordan. He is such a smart, streetwise guy and it finally meshed. I stayed there forever.

**JE:** How many years were you a homicide detective?

**MH:** From 1980 to 1989, I was just a homicide investigator on the night shift, and then from '89 to '91, I made sergeant and went back to patrol, but the administration saw the Wheeler case that I was so deeply involved in by that time, and they couldn't give that to somebody else, and another case—I had a young housewife that got murdered and sexually assaulted in east Tulsa by the name of Janora Stevens. I was just on the verge of solving that case, so they said, "Hey, go back to patrol, learn those supervision skills, take these two cases with you, you can work on them as much as you want off-duty and you'll be back shortly." So I returned to run the evening shift homicide squad in 1991, then on April Fool's Day in 1995, I was transferred to supervise the homicide cold case and the crime scene unit on day shift. I remained there until May 31, 2011. So I think that run of 31 years was probably one of the longest, absolutely not THE longest, but it's a long time to be in homicide and I was blessed with that.

### Chapter 3 – 7:33

May 27, 1981

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**John Erling:** Well, there are many cases we could talk about, but let's bring you to May 27, 1981. You would have been 25 years old?

**Mike Huff:** Absolutely. Twenty-five and a little bit frustrated that homicide wasn't as action-packed as I was wanting it to be and I remember I was on evening shift and myself and a couple other guys, R. T. Jones and Bob Shockey, who are both retired now, were sitting

with Sergeant Jordan and we were trying to figure out where we were going to eat dinner. It was the big decision of the night.

**JE:** What time was that?

**MH:** A little bit after 4:00 coming up on 5:00. So we got the call from the dispatcher that there had been a shooting at Southern Hills. It's just kind of like on TV. You grab your coat and your radio and you're heading out the door and everybody's got their two cents worth. So we were thinking maybe it was the kitchen help or maybe a lawn crew had a dispute or something like this. We weren't really getting any information on it because it was on a different frequency than we were assigned. We all drove out there just as fast as we could in 5:00 traffic and pulled in there and see a Cadillac with the driver slumped over with a bullet wound between the eyes and I'm thinking, "Wow, this is not the cleanup crew or not the lawn crew." That's where the twists and turns started that particular day.

**JE:** So, were you the first to look in the car?

**MH:** I was the first detective at the scene to look in the car. There was already a couple of patrolmen there. One of them, very ironically—and this is jumping ahead a tiny bit—was from Boston, Massachusetts, and it turns out that his Little League Baseball coach was an FBI agent by the name of Dennis Condon, who was actually the partner of H. Paul Rico, who was ultimately by me for his role in the Wheeler murder. That was one of those seven degrees of separation, but there was only like two degrees there.

**JE:** Tell us what you saw when you looked in that car.

**MH:** Well, Mr. Wheeler was seated in a late-model Cadillac. He was dressed in a suit. He had a leather workout bag with his golf club in it, and you knew that there was a successful Southern Hills Club member seated behind that wheel and shot between the eyes. Right outside the door were several live rounds of 38-caliber ammunition lying on the ground. A lot of speculation as to what that meant. In fact, years of speculation as to what that meant.

**JE:** But it was one bullet that fired into his body?

**MH:** Absolutely. There was just one bullet fired, which kind of makes you think that somebody knew what they were doing. So we just had the task of that whole methodical process that night.

**JE:** What was your immediate reaction in terms of who would do something like this?

**MH:** You know, I had just a couple of weeks before gotten involved in an investigation where a successful man, just a few blocks away from Southern Hills, got robbed and threatened with a gun about 58th and Harvard. That was my first thought. I'm thinking, you know, maybe they were trying to rob him because he had a very expensive gold watch on that was visible, and maybe something went bad. You know, if I look back when I was 25 years old, I was naïve. I was not worldly, if you would, and you look back to an era that if you

don't go to the library and pick up a book to read, that was the sole source of information or whatever you could get on the three channels of television. Now we're inundated with information. It's so easy to get. A cellphone is a computer. So that naivety—the thought of the mafia coming to Tulsa wasn't in my wheelhouse.

**JE:** I'd like to state here—we're talking about Roger Wheeler of Tulsa, is a businessman, Chairman of The Telex Corporation, he was owner of World Jai Alai and he was 55 years old. Let's back out and lay some ground work to that day. We go back to the Winter Hill Gang out of Boston. Just briefly tell us, who were they?

**MH:** The Winter Hill Gang was a group of Irish mobsters that co-existed with the traditional Italian mafia in Boston. The Winter Hill Gang, at that time, was a guy by the name of Howie Winter, who had no real play in the Winter Hill—that was just a section of a suburb of Boston. Howie Winter, a guy named Stevie “the Rifleman” Flemmi, was in the hierarchy, James “Whitey” Bulger was in the hierarchy. Their muscleman was a guy by the name of John Vincent Martorano. These guys were just Boston thugs, loansharking and gambling, maybe a little bit of enforcement for the Italian mob. These were the guys in that era of time that were just your thugs. They were a loose-knit organized crime family. That's where that was. I had never even heard of them, the fact that they could come to Tulsa, Oklahoma, just was not even a thought to me.

**JE:** Well, we'll get into some more details, but of those crews, they were skimming \$10,000 a week from the parking lot operation at World Jai Alai.

**MH:** Well, that has never been proven but has been alluded to and probably happened. They had some connections right into the parking operation. One of the most heralded FBI agents by the name of H. Paul Rico had retired from the FBI in Miami and had spent most of his career in Boston. He was from Boston. He had gone to work for World Jai Alai before Mr. Wheeler had purchased World Jai Alai in about 1978. Wheeler loved and trusted the FBI thanks to Efrem Zimbalist, Jr. in the TV show and felt very secure that he had FBI agents because there were a number of retired agents working at World Jai Alai and felt very secure with that. Rico had a storybook type career on its surface. When you talk about the witness protection program, he had developed the very first witness that they modeled that program after. They created it because of a mafia witness that Rico had developed. Rico was very close to J. Edgar Hoover. He had his own legendary-type career also, which was believed to be of value to Wheeler when he purchased World Jai Alai.

**JE:** I think we should just say what Jai Alai is.

**MH:** World Jai Alai is a game created in the border region between Spain and France, the Basque territory. It's a game where you have what's called a zesta, which is a basket that is actually lashed to your arm. You sling—literally the shape of the basket allows you to

slung a very hard ball called a pelota to a wall and it's kind of a handball game. It's real fast-moving and it became a pari-mutuel sport in the '20's when a family in Boston created World Jai Alai, which ultimately spread to Florida. Very attractive to organized crime. At that time, betting facilities weren't on every corner. There wasn't a casino everywhere. At that time, you had your horse tracks, your dog tracks and legal betting, and you had Jai Alai. Jai Alai was very unique. In a horse—you're betting one horse against the other. It's not a complete opportunity to control or fix a race, although it happens. Jai Alai is a situation where you're betting on one man against another man, which gives you the opportunity to corrupt it and throw heavily weighted games. So that became a very lucrative target, we believe, for organized crime. That was in the '70's and '80's.

## Chapter 4 – 10:00

### World Jai Alai

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**John Erling:** Roger Wheeler, of course, bought World Jai Alai and then he became suspicious that there was skimming going on, didn't he?

**Mike Huff:** Yes. Roger Wheeler was very successful, self-made businessman with Telex Corporation, Consolidated Appliances, Wheeler Oil & Gas, you name it. Franklin Supply was a pipeline supply company that had explosive growth during that time in the oil boom era. He found himself really flesh with money and wanted to make an investment. He was looking for something out of the ordinary which would provide him a little fun, if you will. Through the First Bank of Boston and a guy named Dave McCowan, he was directed towards World Jai Alai, and he purchased World Jai Alai for something like \$55 million dollars. But the interest rates in the late 70's were extremely high, like maybe 21 percent, so there was a heavy payment to make every month. After a couple of years, he's struggling and he's thinking, you know, this isn't adding up, something's wrong. He started becoming suspicious of the internal operations of Jai Alai.

**JE:** Well, let's bring in some names here like John Callahan. He was an accountant, I believe.

**MH:** John Callahan was a CPA from Boston. He was hired to do a search for a CEO in the mid-70's as the founding family of World Jai Alai was coming towards the end of their time. He actually said he did the search and he was the most obvious candidate, so he was hired as the CEO of World Jai Alai. John stayed there for a couple of years. It was obvious that John was a mob wannabe guy. The Connecticut State Police who oversaw the regulatory job of the World Jai Alai facility in Hartford, Connecticut, discovered that Callahan was associating with mobsters, which was absolutely prohibited. He was forced out of World

Jai Alai. He also had a firm, Callahan and Associates. His partner in that firm was a guy named Richard Donovan. So when he was forced out, he managed to get his partner, Dick Donovan, in place as the President of World Jai Alai and Donovan was President of World Jai Alai when Roger Wheeler purchased it.

**JE:** So, is Rico still in the World Jai Alai then?

**MH:** Rico was hired by Callahan to be the Vice President of Security and Rico brought in several other retired FBI guys to fill various jobs within there, so I think Mr. Wheeler felt good that he had that he'd have that continuity of what he believed an honest guy, Paul Rico, so Rico reported to Donovan. Back in the days of doing due diligence of a purchase—again, it's not the information era at that time. You cannot dig up information unless you spend tons of money trying to find this stuff out through private investigators. So, Rico was operating pretty anonymously.

**JE:** Isn't it true that Callahan and Rico had been skimming money from the company up to a million a year?

**MH:** It's believed that now.

**JE:** Okay.

**MH:** Wheeler had no idea, you know. Only when Callahan starts shopping around for somebody to kill Roger Wheeler that word comes out that "we're due to lose a million dollars a year if he finds us out." So, all that's discovered after the fact.

**JE:** But then there's a point where Callahan wanted to buy the company.

**MH:** Callahan tried to buy the company. That did not work. Rico and Donovan alluded that they were going to try to buy the company. They wanted to change some licensing with the State of Florida to benefit them. That didn't work. Mr. Wheeler's making several moves. One of them he fires several people—key people—none of them FBI agents, believing that that will help him. He starts the sale of the Hartford Fronton to a guy by the name of Stanley Berenson, thinking that he would shed that geographic connection to these Boston mobsters that he's kind of starting to hear about. That didn't help him. He tried to put Paul Rico on a polygraph because he questioned his integrity by now.

**JE:** "He" meaning...

**MH:** Wheeler.

**JE:** Yeah.

**MH:** That didn't happen, but it got all this out in the open. These actions got all this out in the open, so in early 1981, about January of 1981, the murder conspiracy was born and they offered the hit to another Boston-area mobster killer. He ultimately declined and that was Brian Halloran.

**JE:** Didn't Callahan at one point recruit Roger Wheeler, a legitimate businessman, to buy in to World Jai Alai?

**MH:** Well, he was part of that time along with The First Bank of Boston and they felt that this absentee owner in Oklahoma, and whatever feelings they had about what Oklahoma businessmen would be, they thought Wheeler would be perfect, but Wheeler was not an absentee guy.

**JE:** That's interesting because Wheeler was born in Boston, attended MIT, Notre Dame, Rice University, so he's actually from that area in the first place.

**MH:** Yes, his father was a printer at The Christian Science Monitor, I believe. Wheeler was really a self-made man.

**JE:** And I don't know whether he did it or not, but I read where Wheeler actually wanted more money to buy a home on Nantucket.

**MH:** He did have a home on Nantucket, a beautiful vacation home. Wheeler stimulated the economy. That's all we can say.

**JE:** But did he try to buy racetracks and slot machine businesses, Las Vegas casino?

**MH:** Dave McCowan, through The First Bank of Boston, which was ultimately fined heavily with their association with some illegal mafia activities years later—Dave McCowan really led him through the Landmark Casino, a racetrack, trying to explain to Wheeler that these are cash cows—it's lucrative. Wheeler was looking for something that wasn't in his backyard that was lucrative and was kind of fun, out of the ordinary. Wheeler was a patsy in this deal, but he was a smart patsy and he started trying to understand what was going on around him and that alerted these people that you give him enough time, he's going to figure this out and we're all going to jail.

**JE:** So, he would be called a patsy because he was very innocent and unaware of the kind of people he was dealing with.

**MH:** Absolutely. They were all in the background. They had John Callahan, who was a clean front man, if you will. I mean, he carried a CPA license, he was presentable, he had had a significant amount of business turnaround success, such as like the Hayward Wakefield Furniture Company, which was a big furniture company at that time. He turned them around. He turned several businesses around, so he had the skills and he was presentable to be out front, but he had this dark side where he liked to hang out with mob guys.

**JE:** Then Wheeler buys—and does he send his son to audit the company?

**MH:** He sent David Wheeler, who is a brilliant computer genius—this was still in the days of mainframe computers, and David was a consultant and had quite a bit of experience with the banking business and computer analysis of the banking business. So, he sent David down there. David and his wife went down there, had a place at Biscayne Bay. David immediately stepped into this cesspool of what he identified, you know—David was not in agreement that his father should have ever bought this business. David's very conservative, very smart. David immediately stepped in and was confronted with Paul

Rico. My description of Paul Rico is he was a mob boss. The first time I laid eyes on him I thought, “Holy cow, this isn’t what I expected as an FBI agent.”

**JE:** What did he look like?

**MH:** I liked to call him swarthy. He was just kind of a slimy guy.

**JE:** Smarmy is another word.

**MH:** Smarmy’s good.

**JE:** (Chuckles)

**MH:** He wasn’t your typical buttoned-down, winged-tip, professional-looking FBI agent.

He just talked like a mobster and he was bully-ish. He really enjoyed being bully-ish to a 25-year-old detective from Oklahoma who wasn’t in his league at that time. But I outlasted him. David ran across this and David was absolutely the most naïve guy that I have ever known, but if you talk to David you’ll realize that this guy might be crazy, but he’s smart crazy and he’s going to figure out if there’s a loose end, he will find his way to it, so I’m really surprised that David Wheeler wasn’t a target also, but I think David Wheeler’s arrival at World Jai Alai in the spring of 1981 really put this thing into fast forward.

**JE:** Well, that’s then when John Callahan became nervous, right?

**MH:** Callahan became nervous that we know of in January of 1981 and this conspiracy started a discussion. Ultimately, they decided to get Johnny Martorano in there. Johnny was on the run for a horserace fixing case, ironically—a national case. Johnny was very close to John Callahan, so it was an easy one to circle to identify. The first guy that they offered the hit to, Brian Halloran—his name will come up later—but Brian did not want to come to Oklahoma. He said, “You know, if something goes wrong and I’m from Boston, this is just going to be too messy.”

**JE:** Let me just stop you for a moment. Didn’t Callahan try to buy World Jai Alai from Wheeler and Wheeler refuses? There were offers of like \$60, \$80, \$100 million dollars.

**MH:** Right. And what was a legitimate offer that he could actually pull off financially, I think, eliminated many of those very lucrative things, so Wheeler just didn’t want to talk to him. You know, Wheeler wanted to turn this business around and make money and be in it for the long term. He wasn’t going to be scared off by these guys. I don’t think he had the knowledge to realize that he was truly in danger through this outfit, but obviously we know now he was.

**Chapter 5 – 4:32****Johnny Martorano**

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**John Erling:** Profile Johnny Martorano more for us.

**Mike Huff:** Johnny Martorano is a hit man. He grew up in Catholic schools. One of his high school football mates was Ed Bradley of “60 Minutes.” Johnny had an offer to play football for the University of Tennessee. Johnny was dyslexic and he didn’t think he could make it. He didn’t think he could hide that but, also, Johnny had gotten into kind of a little bit of a mob lifestyle early on because his dad had a restaurant in Boston, I’m wanting to say in the combat zone area, and a lot of mobsters hung out there. I think maybe there was a second floor where they felt they could freely hang out there, and so Johnny became aware of that. Johnny’s brother, Jimmy Martorano, did step into the life of the mafia guy eventually. I think Jimmy was maybe going to be falsely accused of a murder by some other mob guys, so Johnny stepped in and killed a guy that he thought was going to kill his brother. And from that point on, Johnny just fell in with these guys and one murder led to another murder. And Johnny’s not like a hit man. He’s not a guy that’s saying, “Well, man, I’ll do that for \$50,000. As sick as it may sound, Johnny is an honorable guy. “You’re my friend, you’re in trouble, I’ll help you. Now, you might have to pay some pretty big fees for my expenses, but I’m not going to make any money off of this.” So, one thing led to another and before you know it, Johnny’s got 20 murders under his belt, and some of them—he mistakenly killed a guy thinking he was the guy he was supposed to kill.

**JE:** So Callahan comes along and says to Johnny that Wheeler must go.

**MH:** Well, there’s a group. It ultimately included Bulger. It also included Stevie Flemmi and Callahan, and then kind of an absentee conspirator, if you will, as far as Johnny goes, was Paul Rico. Paul Rico was the inside man. So, Johnny said, “Sure, I’ll do it.”

**JE:** But didn’t Whitey and Steve Flemmi have to approve this?

**MH:** Sure. Yeah, they were partners. While Johnny was on the run from 1978 or ’79, he was still considered a partner in the Winter Hill Gang. Howie Winter eventually went away to federal prison and Stevie and Whitey became the leaders and once you’re involved with Johnny, I think you’re pretty much involved with Johnny forever. He’s a guy that’s presence, even though he’s not there, is feared.

**JE:** Whitey wasn’t sure about this, was he?

**MH:** Well, you know, Whitey was reluctant, but this was a timeframe where he was experiencing explosive growth, too, and his push was carte blanche because he had John Connelly in his back pocket. John Connelly was another FBI agent that was after Paul Rico’s era. Connelly was from Boston. Connelly grew up in the same projects as Whitey

did. Whitey was a little bit older, but Whitey ruled the roost. There's this story of Whitey buying youngster John Connelly an ice cream cone and there was this forever bond. Whitey's younger brother, Billy Bulger, was a little bit older than John. Billy was a very studious guy and became very successful in politics, although now it's really questionable. He was kind of a dirty politician—a lot of allegations about that. So, through Billy Bulger, John Connelly got a lot of strength because Billy Bulger had a ton of clout. You'd look around on the Internet and you find Billy Bulger with Ted Kennedy, find him with John Kerry. He was in that circle. So, for an FBI agent to be able to pick up the phone and be one phone away from Ted Kennedy or whatever, that's anybody's boost, then. So, Whitey had this guy in his back pocket. He had his brother on...

**JE:** This guy meaning?

**MH:** John Connelly.

**JE:** Connelly, right.

**MH:** And on the other side, he's got the power of his brother, the politician. There's the story about a trooper was really after Whitey and after one legislative session, buried in these 5- or 600 hundred pages of the bill was one line that basically said, "and this trooper must retire." That kind of power. So, that's the explosive growth that Whitey had. He was an up and comer, so it was almost a challenge to Whitey. It was out of his wheelhouse a little bit, Oklahoma was, but somebody challenges you to go kill somebody and killing somebody is your business, it's like, "Okay, I can do that."

## Chapter 6 – 7:35

### Unsolved Mysteries

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**John Erling:** I don't think we've said it here. Whitey, then, was an informant to the FBI to John Connelly.

**Mike Huff:** Initially, Whitey was discovered by Paul Rico in the '60s. Paul Rico sent him away to prison for bank robbery, but he always tended to Whitey's family. So when Whitey got out, he became an informant for Paul Rico at that time, but in the 70's when John Connelly came back to Boston and there was this arranged meeting where the two met at this oceanfront site in South Boston and they shook hands on this agreement, "Whitey's going to help me take down the La Cosa Nostra and I'm going to protect my Irish" is what Connelly said. In fact, he said that to me, too. So, Whitey is giving self-serving information to Connelly so he can get more lucrative criminal deals and get the mafia out of the way. It was scratching both of their backs.

**JE:** So while Whitey is also committing crimes and perhaps killed people before this Roger Wheeler case, John Connelly, FBI agent, was covering up for him.

**MH:** Absolutely John Connelly became a criminal himself. Rico became a criminal back in his era when it got to his finish line without getting discovered. John Connelly had the same idea in mind, although John Connelly—his paychecks—they found multiple paychecks that he just threw in his desk drawer. He didn't need the money from the FBI. He was getting plenty of money through Whitey. In fact, Whitey even chastised him a couple of times for buying extravagant things. I even asked the strike force attorney in Boston. I had heard John Connelly bought a big house through a mobster. I really pressed that U. S. attorney about that and, "Oh, no, we can't prove anything." So they knew all along that there was this stuff going on. They just didn't want to scratch the surface of it. They knew it.

**JE:** Was it true, then, that Steve Flemmi calls Paul Rico and Rico wants this to happen?

**MH:** Yeah, Steve Flemmi was really close to Rico. He was an informant of his also in the '60's before there was this real Whitey-Flemmi connection. Whitey had gone away to prison. Stevie had gone on the run on a bombing of an attorney and Rico had helped him get back three years later. So, yeah, Rico said, "We really want to do this," so they put that in motion and, you know, I think Whitey's code name to Rico was "Jack from South Boston." I was ultimately able to get a bunch off Paul Rico's desk and saw some notes called "Jack from South Boston" and stuff. The minutia of evidential trivia that would go right past somebody else became part of building the probable cause. Probable cause is kind of like building a snowball. You get it packed tighter and tighter and tighter and hope you get it to the end before it all melts on you.

**JH:** How did you get items off Paul Rico's desk?

**MH:** Well, there were some private detectives that Telex had hired to go in there early, early—I mean within weeks after Wheeler's murder. They gathered up a lot of just stuff that they had no idea what they were getting, so I eventually was able to get access to that and then go back at Paul Rico and say, "What's this, what's this, what's that?" and then maintain that for years until it came full circle and became relevant.

**JH:** It's interesting to say here that Whitey Bulger had a comfort zone when he was getting rid of people and that he was used to dealing with gang members and offing them, but when it came to legitimate people like Roger Wheeler, then it caused him to pause a little bit.

**MH:** He did. In this latest book that Shelly Murphy and Kevin Cullen have written. I don't know where they got all of their information, but they refer to Whitey's characterization of the Wheeler murder as the holy trinity. The importance and the stature of that murder, if you will. You know, all of these other guys, God bless all these dead mobsters and everybody else. I mean, nobody deserves to be murdered, but that collection alone will eventually will go away in the overall hierarchy of cold cases. They don't rank as high, but Wheeler

never went away and I think if there's any benefit of a continuity of an investigation by a police department on something as important as this—again, Wheeler was not any more important than anybody else, but what happened with this murder, it took a part of this community away. I mean, first of all, the peaceful sanctity of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Southern Hills Country Club, one of the most prestigious in the country, Telex Corporation—they fed 4,000 or 5,000 people just in their company alone. They put groceries on the table, high-paying jobs for a lot of people. That went away. This was like a bomb in this city and people don't understand the fallout was continuing for years, literally. So, what I did and some of it is just definitely not worthy of any pat on the back, but I just nurtured this case and kept it alive for years, kept it in front of people. Go back to the early '80's. There were three channels on TV. Then one of the stations said let's do something unique. Let's do a reality show. Well, what's that? The very first show of any of these shows that have been born and morphed through the years, was a show called "Unsolved Mysteries." There was a pilot for "Unsolved Mysteries" and one day I'm at my desk and I get a phone call and, "Hey, this is John Cosgrove from 'Unsolved Mysteries.'" "What? I don't know what you're talking about." So he explained this concept to me and I said, "Man, that's interesting." I understand the power of TV. I can watch the same show that some guy in Los Angeles is watching while it's being watched in New York. That's pretty powerful. But I told him, "You know what? This police department is conservative, stuck in the mud. We won't do this, but because you've been nice to me, I'll run this up the flagpole." And that was quite a task. Bureaucracy on its best day can kill you. On its worst day you've become an enemy. You make enemies with people by asking them to think outside the box. So, it took me a couple of months of this Chinese water torture to get the department—and I kind of hand it to Chief Bob Dick. He had the guts to do this, because Pat Wheeler even tried to stop him. She wrote him a letter that was pretty accusatory, saying this is just not going to be helpful or whatever.

**JE:** That would be the widow of Roger Wheeler, Pat Wheeler.

**MH:** Yes. Yeah, that was Mrs. Wheeler. She was a widow. Wonderful lady. Wonderful philanthropist here in town, but very naïve about this. And, you know, it's got to hurt, just destroy your family. So, anyway, I kept after it and we did this "Unsolved Mysteries" show. It had one of the highest viewerships in television ratings of all time. We portrayed it and by 1985, we thought Johnny Martorano was in the mix somewhere. He looked exactly like the drawing made by the crime scene artist based on the witness interviews, and that artist is a wonderful internationally known artist, Harvey Pratt, from the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation. He has done so much good for law enforcement. Such a wonderful artist. So, it's funny. Years later, I'm actually spending some time, days, with Johnny Martorano in captivity. Johnny says, "Hey, I was on vacation in Hawaii," and he

says, “I remember it like it was yesterday. I was sitting on the edge of the bed watching TV while I was putting on my shoes and my woman was getting ready in the bathroom.” And he said, “I looked up and I saw you on television holding my picture on this ‘Unsolved Mysteries’ show.” This is 1985. He said, “I knew right then I was going to meet you someday and my life had changed.”

## Chapter 7 – 6:45

### The Murder

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**John Erling:** So, let’s bring back, then, where he got involved. Whitey Bulger was very smart, but when he said, “This Roger Wheeler case will never go away, never,” he was absolutely correct. They picked on the wrong person.

**Mike Huff:** He was correct, and they chose Tulsa because being in the Midwest, they didn’t think we were sophisticated enough to deal with a mob hit and they thought that it would go away in a matter of weeks or months.

**JE:** So, then, let’s talk about how Johnny Martorano comes to Tulsa and he has an accomplice.

**MH:** Johnny was told to pick Joe McDonald. They called him Joe Mac. Joe was a Top 10 fugitive at the time for a robbery of a post office for stamps. He had a really wild career as a Boston mobster and hit man, and he was beholden to Paul Rico because Paul Rico hid him out after he did a murder in Boston back in the ‘60’s. Actually, the way I understand, hid him out at his home in Belmont. So, Joe Mac says, “Yeah, I’ll go with you.” So they flew from South Florida to Oklahoma City in a time where you didn’t have to present identification. You had a plane ticket. You just walked up with the money and paid for it. They rented a car. They came to Tulsa, stayed at the old Trade Winds West hotel at 51st and Peoria, and then scouted for several days for all the right things. They had guns shipped to them by Stevie Flemmi via Greyhound Bus. They picked up guns, including a machine gun—they called it a grease gun—in case the police got in behind them and they had to shoot it out with the police. They were professionals. They were very prepared. This is not something like, “Let’s show up in Tulsa and look for a rock to bang this guy over the head.” They stole a car, they got it planted and hidden so they could use it and then they communicated back with Boston saying, “Hey, tell us more about Wheeler.” They scouted Telex. They found a camera. They didn’t feel comfortable that they would be in view when they did that. They had the word that he would be playing golf on that Wednesday afternoon. They found his car sitting on the backside of Southern Hills parking lot overlooking the lake out there. They sat on it for a couple of hours. They went and got the stolen car. They put on beards and wigs and

armed themselves. They had a description that came from Paul Rico describing Wheeler's general size and weight and the fact that he had a ruddy complexion. Martorano said, "Man, I knew with that complexion, that absolutely proved that it came from Paul Rico because," he goes, "All the years I've been around, I've never heard anybody describe "ruddy" other than cops describing somebody as "ruddy". You know, I kind of chuckled with that because that's true. So, Wheeler comes walking out after 4:00 walking out to his car. Johnny gets out of the passenger side once he sees Wheeler committing to that car and then as Wheeler gets seated, he opens the door, fires one shot. The gun falls apart. It's a faulty revolver. He had a little 38 revolver. The gun fell apart, which really upset him. The live rounds fell to the ground. He kind of trots back to the car, they went out, they dumped the stolen car, got back in their regular car, went back to the Trade Winds, sawed up the gun, dumped it somewhere in the river near 51st and Riverside.

**JE:** Arkansas River.

**MH:** The Arkansas River, yes, sir. And then drove downtown to the bus station. They had repackaged the machine gun and the other tools that got sent out here and sent them back to Boston under the name of Joe Russo, then they drove to Oklahoma City, returned their rental car.

**JE:** What kind of a car?

**MH:** I believe a Ford. Returned the rental car, bought a plane ticket to Fort Lauderdale and life returned to their normalcy.

**JE:** Are there witnesses at Southern Hills?

**MH:** There were eleven witnesses ranging from a lawn crew guy to kids at the swimming pool and other people. They all had an array of descriptions. Everybody saw something a little bit different—one thinking he might be Cuban, he might be black. He was well-tanned from South Florida. Consistently, the tag was a tag that we could never locate. Sam Tom 5107, it's an Oklahoma tag from Stephens County. We couldn't actually physically locate that car. The car had changed hands two or three times, not reregistered, maybe went through a wreck. Somehow they got that tag. Don't know how they got that tag. I never pinned it down.

**JE:** But it was a car they had stolen.

**MH:** Well, they had stolen the car and they replaced the tag on that car with another tag.

**JE:** You don't know how they came up with that tag?

**MH:** You know, that was one thing he couldn't recall exactly where they got that tag. Sometimes in a criminal act, it intersects with other criminal acts and it's like these guys were stealing something that has already been stolen, so it's hard to figure out how it happened.

**JE:** About the guardhouse at Southern Hills that apparently it wasn't tended to when Johnny Martorano and Joe McDonald came through the gate?

**MH:** The guardhouse, I believe, was slightly in existence, frequently unattended, so that day the guardhouse was not an issue. It was free access to the place. But going back to 1981, I don't recall a guardhouse, and so it was either unattended or just not nonexistent.

**JE:** When we talk about witnesses, this is when then you are very much involved, then, aren't you? You're talking to these witnesses.

**MH:** We're interviewing the witnesses. We're taking them downtown for interviews with the detectives that were down there and we're trying to sort the witnesses out, keep them separate. You know, all that police stuff. It worked out very well. Ironically, one of the 11-year old girls that was a really good witness—was at the swimming pool—she was the daughter of a successful businessman but was also an ex-FBI agent. It was a little ironic—little twists and turns that you really don't understand until 20 years later. This had a serious effect on a lot of people's lives, including a couple of those witnesses. This stayed with them for a while—and the fear of the power. The powers that can reach out to somebody. They reached out to Oklahoma and that was powerful right there. Invaded Southern Hills. That was really ballsy.

**JH:** Were you feeling then as you talked to the witnesses and so forth, these aren't local people doing this?

**MH:** Well, I didn't think it was local people, but I didn't have a clue. For a 25-year old guy that lived and drank police work 24 hours a day, and in between police work I was either in a gym or chasing a woman—Telex? What's that? World Jai Alai? I couldn't even spell it. So I knew it was way out of the ordinary and I knew I wanted to be involved.

**JE:** How much did Johnny Martorano get paid for killing Roger Wheeler?

**MH:** Well, that's funny. Johnny's a loan shark, so his math is different than conventional math. I think there were around \$50,000 worth of expenses before it was all over. He didn't save receipts though, so it was hard to come up with the expenses. He claims he didn't profit a penny. When you try to pin a loan shark down on some financial information, it gets like trying to squish a worm and it's pretty hard to do.

## Chapter 08 – 12:21

### The Investigation

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**John Erling:** Where, then, does your investigation go? You talk to the witnesses.

**Mike Huff:** Our investigation went towards an Oklahoma connection, and that Oklahoma connection was a guy by the name of Pat Early. He resembled the composite drawing that we had, kind of short in stature, stocky. He was a hit man. He was part of something back in

the '70s. There was the Dixie Mafia. The Dixie Mafia, in this area of the country, they were pretty powerful. Kirksey Nix, Jr.'s father was a federal judge, I believe. Tom Lester Pugh, Alvin McDonald, Pat Early. I think that crew had traveled out to Arizona and I'm wanting to say had done a residential robbery on maybe some of the LaFortunes that were vacationing in Arizona. They were everywhere. One of their most famous things is they traveled from Jones Riverside Airport by plane to McNairy County, Tennessee, and did a hit in McNairy County, Tennessee. Their target was just injured, his wife was murdered. It was in a drive by shooting of two mobile vehicles. Turns out that was the crux of the story of "Walking Tall," Sheriff Buford Pusser. Came right out of Tulsa that hit, so I was walking through these worlds of the biggest stories of what's happening now and I was oblivious to it. It didn't matter to me, so we spent a lot of time in Oklahoma City. We thought the driver of the vehicle was a notorious bondsman in Oklahoma City that was a suspect in several murders, a guy by the name of Dennis Bates Fletcher. He, to a tee, resembled the driver. Obviously, he wasn't the driver. But the FBI was happy for us to go in that direction. "Yeah, go there, tell us the big stuff that you know and we'll get back with you." I mean, really, seriously.

**JE:** The FBI in Oklahoma or...

**MH:** Well, the FBI in Oklahoma who is obviously reporting to FBI Headquarters. This was a big deal to the FBI. I can say Headquarters knew what was going on within days or weeks. They knew they had something going on there. They were at the only level the FBI indexing and their data—their national or international data and the mechanism that they had, the whole logistics—they're the only one that could put this together information-wise. They are wonderful with capturing and analyzing data. So, they knew what was going on. And here we were in Oklahoma with no access to data and we were just running down the best lead we had for literally a couple of years.

**JE:** When you say FBI Headquarters knew what was going on, they knew that this was underworld, is that what...

**MH:** I believe so. I don't say that they knew how evil it was at that time, but they knew this was underworld. We met with the FBI in Oklahoma City and, you know, we talked to all of the FBI organized crime jargon of La Cosa Nostra, LCN and all that kind of stuff. Chuck Jordan and I spent a lot of time, as well as another detective, a great guy who's retired now literally dying, Dick Bishop. He and I were partners on this for several years before he retired and went to the Sheriff's Office. So, we were chasing these ghosts who were very active criminals in Oklahoma City. We spent tons of time in Oklahoma City, although this happened in May. The first week of July, we got a tip to go to Boston and met with the commander of the State Police, Colonel Donovan, who very cryptically gave us a group of names. He said, "These might be involved in your case." Well, how? "Can't tell you." They knew what was going on. They knew what was happening.

**JE:** The FBI in Boston.

**MH:** No, the State Police. The Massachusetts State Police. They knew a small bit. They didn't know the whole story, and it turns out in hind sight 20/20 when you put it all together, how they knew was that Brian Halloran had been offered this hit in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and had declined it and he knew who was behind it. Brian Halloran's brother was a trooper with the Massachusetts State Police, who eventually got a very limited subset of the information from his brother up the chain of command to the colonel of the State Police. So, in that meeting, I believe there was a guy named Hammerschmidt, Richard Hammerschmidt, a lieutenant. From that, we walk away with this tiny bit of information. It's so cryptic. There's really no way to investigate it because there's no Internet, there's no nothing. The criminal records, you just can't follow up on information back then like was needed. Years later when all this started to unravel knowing that there was an FBI task force that we assisted very closely in looking at the corruption end of what happened up there, they were ultimately the ones that indicted John Connelly for his part. We came across, "Wow! Lieutenant Richard Hammerschmidt, retired from the Massachusetts State Police that met with the Tulsa Police, weeks after this murder, was a boyhood friend of Steve Flemmi and ultimately got charged leaking information on these cases back to Steve Flemmi about what was going on. That circle was just closing in so many directions and so many people wanted to know what we were doing and where we were going with our information. Once we got that Oklahoma City stuff out of the way, you're talking two or three years before we put that to bed. We nearly lived in Oklahoma City.

**JE:** That means the people involved in this, they felt, "They're targeting Oklahoma City. Surely they're not looking at us." For two or three years, they've felt...

**MH:** Absolutely. And then when they realized that we were kind of looking at them, they started dropping bogus reports in files as red herrings. I ultimately got to see all of those reports and I thought, "Oh, my God. I remember saying this to this agent and he has taken that and expounding on it and making it look like it's an official thing that's a promising lead, trying to steer away from what was going on. So, Wheeler gets killed on May 27, 1981. On May 12th of '82, Brian Halloran had already gone to the FBI. Brian Halloran is the guy that they initially offered the hit to that Flemmi and Bulger and Callahan had offered this hit to and he says...

**JE:** So he's been a hit man for a while, Brian Halloran.

**MH:** Oh, yeah. He had a pending murder indictment that he was out of jail on right then. His motivation was to help himself out with that pending murder indictment, so he goes to the FBI thinking, "Well, this might just involve a retired agent, so maybe they'll listen to me." So, in early '82, he goes to the FBI and says, "Hey, I got offered this hit on Wheeler out in Tulsa and I declined it and here's who's involved in it and H. Paul Rico is really the

inside man on this whole deal and they were skimming a million dollars,” blah, blah, blah, so it’s like, wow, this is good stuff, I would think, if the FBI had ever told us. They never told us. This was our local murder case, our investigation and they’re saying, “Mm hmm. We’re not going to tell Tulsa, Oklahoma, because they’ll get on it and this thing will blow, so they did everything they could—the guys that were initially handling Halloran, I think, were honest guys, but they were working and reporting to the organized crime section who didn’t want this thing solved because of the can of worms it would open up, and the U. S. Attorney’s Office, the strike force attorney in Boston, Jeremiah L. Sullivan, he was getting his rock star kind of cases through the Boston FBI. He knew that the informants were Bulger and Flemmi. Nobody wanted to go there. It would upset the apple cart.

**JE:** They felt Whitey and Flemmi were giving them good information about the mafia so they kept protecting them because they kept getting information.

**MH:** Yeah, absolutely. That’s a very simplistic explanation, but probably closest that you could ever get. I don’t think that some of them really knew the depth of where all of this was going—the dark, deep corrupt depth of it. So they cut Brian Halloran loose. They had him in a protected house out on Cape Cod. It just didn’t work out for Brian Halloran. Nobody on their side really wanted it to work out for Brian Halloran, but they finally said, “Hey, go on about your business.” So, that afternoon Brian Halloran shows up on the wharf in Boston at maybe the Rusty Scupper Bar. He’s trying to get ahold of these FBI agents, saying “Hey, they cut me loose. They threw me out of this house out on the Cape. I’m scared.” So that word got back to John Connelly that Brian Halloran had snitched off Whitey and that he is at the Rusty Scupper right now. Halloran’s not knowing what to do, so he gets a ride to go away from the Rusty Scupper and they knew that he was leaving. They already had a surveillance set up. The word had got to Whitey and Whitey and a couple other guys did a surveillance, they had on disguises and ski masks, they had their undercover cart and they were loaded for bear. Brian Halloran gets a ride away from the bar with just Mr. Normal, a guy named Michael Donahue. Michael Donahue’s dad was a sergeant for the Boston Police Department. He was a family man. He was like a pillar in the neighborhood. Everybody loved him. He worked. He just said, “Yeah, I’ll give you a ride.” They drove up on that car and opened fire with rifles and whatever and killed both Brian Halloran and Michael Donahue.

**JE:** So, that would be Whitey Bulger...

**MH:** Whitey Bulger.

**JE:** And...

**MH:** A driver, and a guy named Kevin Weeks, which by this time, was Whitey’s little right hand man, gofer. Whitey mainly is the only that had the rifle and killed these guys. That was May 12, 1982. We had no clue about Brian Halloran. The FBI never shared the story

that Brian Halloran told them. The FBI just kept this secret and would have always kept it secret except their little monsters got out of their cage and went and killed Brian Halloran. So, May 13, 1982, I'm at my annual range qualification day about 9:00 in the morning. I got a call at the range. Really, the call was for any detectives on a range day to report to the Detective Division immediately. I get down there and Major Glanz is there.

**JE:** Who is now Sheriff of Tulsa County.

**MH:** Who is Sheriff of Tulsa County and a great guy—a wonderful friend of mine. He had a very cryptic story. He goes, “You guys need to go out and hit all of the motels, look for these three or four names.” Martorano, McDonald, and he gave us three or four names. So everybody is splitting up the town. “I'll take West Tulsa, you take East,” you know, that kind of stuff. There were 20 guys going out to view these hotel records, which were all little 3 x 5 cards at that time, looking for that time of the year before. I stayed behind for a minute and, “What's going on?” He said, “I don't really know what's going on, but something happened yesterday in Boston and maybe somebody got killed and this is the information.” He told me some details, but I was more confused at the end of it, as he was. So we went out about our business and I got a hold of a FBI agent here locally, ultimately able to track him down in a day or so and I said, “What the hell's going on?” So he tells me a real sanitized version, probably the information he had received. He didn't sanitize it himself, but it made me feel like, wow, something big is going on. Something's afoot here. This was mid-May. We had to start from ground zero.

**JE:** How did Major Glanz at the time get these names? The FBI in Boston?

**MH:** It had to be the FBI in Tulsa called Major Glanz and didn't give him any information. Of course, he didn't have the depth of information that we had. He just knew, “Hey, this is what's going on.”

## Chapter 9 – 12:26

### Drop a Dime

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**John Erling:** But you actually went to John Connelly asking for help.

**Mike Huff:** That was a little bit later. Again, it's an information era that didn't exist. We had a phone. That was it. You had a phone, and if the wrong guy answers the phone on the other end, you know, it's a dead end. Four days and literally a couple of weeks I kind of picked my way around the Massachusetts State Police. “Well, what about this guy? What about that guy?” You know, if someone didn't want to help me, “Well, who could help me?” I eventually found a wonderful guy by the name of Rick Fralick. I said, “Fralick,

something's up." Fralick was a guy that a year or so previously—really, before the Wheeler murder—they knew about Whitey Bulger and Steve Flemmi. He actually participated in the surveillance where they actually rented an apartment across from one of their hangouts, a garage in North Boston. Fralick lived in the apartment. A lot of these pictures that you see, kind of a buff Whitey standing around a car, those are the pictures from my friend, Rick Fralick. Then their surveillance got burned and then they're thinking that there is something amiss. They're thinking that there's some corruption somewhere around them. They suspected the FBI, but it was in its infancy of discovery. Anyway, Fralick says, "I'll help you." It took us a couple of weeks to put a trip together to Boston and Connecticut to figure out how we're going to address this. We partnered up, we found "the" guys in Connecticut that had discovered John Callahan being associated with these Winter Hill mobsters, and now we've discovered "the" guy in Massachusetts that had intricate knowledge of the Winter Hill mobsters, so we all connected and we formed our own little task force. We traveled to Boston for about a week and part of our goal in that was to find John Callahan. We figured John Callahan was ripe to turn into an informant. I wasn't a seasoned homicide detective at that time, but I was around plenty of guys that were, and John Callahan had the most to lose. He had the most normal life, he was just a wannabe mobster. He's the kind of guy that will roll over and turn into a snitch or witness immediately. So we're all over Boston looking for him and we can't find him. The FBI knows we're there. We catch them following us around. We didn't know that these guys were all reporting back to John Connelly. So, we put some heat on John Callahan and, ultimately, the FBI has John Connelly do an alleged interview of John Callahan where he denies and refutes all involvement and that's the official line. "Nope, Brian Halloran's a liar. Our star agent, John Connelly hooked up with John Callahan. He says, no, so it's done. It's all over. You guys go back to Tulsa." In fact, I was absolutely told, "If you're in our city, you need to clear it with me, an FBI agent, as to who you're going to talk to." If hitting a federal agent wasn't a crime, you know, I mean I'm a young muscled-up guy that was a street cop that did a lot of fighting. There was a time where it was like, "I'm going to just have to kick somebody's ass or get my ass kicked trying." So we knew that there was something really fishy going on. We couldn't find Callahan, so I go home. I believe it was August 2nd or 3rd. We had just been home a week or so. I get a phone call. I'm walking in the door. My phone is ringing at my home. The guy says, "Hey, are you Mike Huff from Tulsa PD?" and I said, "Yeah." He goes, "I'm Detective John Parmenter from the Metro Dade PD. Were you looking for John Callahan?"

**JE:** Metro Dade PD in...

**MH:** Florida.

**JE:** Florida.

**MH:** Florida. Dade County, South Florida. Headquarters of World Jai Alai. And he said, “Were you looking for a John Callahan?” And I said, “Yeah, we just got back in town a few days ago. Have you got him down there with you?” He said, “Well, sort of. He’s in a trunk of a car. He’s all shot up. He’s at the Miami International Airport and he’s got a dime on his chest—drop a dime.” For us that are old enough to realize the pay phones that cost a dime in that connotation. I’m going to drop a dime on your ass means I’m going to snitch you off. So I said, “Wow! That’s interesting,” and I said, “We’ll be down there as soon as I can get there.” We went down there, the case got assigned to a wonderful bull-in-a-china closet detective named Shelton Merritt. His nickname was “Grits.” Second generation South Florida cop. Their entire homicide unit was brand new because they had cleaned house over the cocaine cowboys hits of South Florida drug wars which ended up involving homicide cops stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars out of these homicide scenes. So here I’ve got a brand new cop who is 6’5”, chiseled in stone, street cop turned homicide cop. He and I hit it off really good together. I said, “Man, I don’t know what’s going on, but something’s happening.” He goes, “Well, I’m heading to Boston tonight and I’m going to stay at an FBI agent’s house. They’re going to pick me up. I said, “Oh, my God! Put the brakes on that.” He says, “Oh, no,” you know. Blah, blah. And so sometime later that he had walked into the grips of hell with that and had to back away from being with the FBI, but the FBI had assisted him with a search warrant on an apartment. Callahan had a nice home in Winchester, Massachusetts, I believe, where he lived with his wife and kids, and then he had an apartment down on the wharf where he chased girls and whatever. They did a search warrant on that and recruited some evidence.

**JE:** You said Callahan was found in his car with a dime on his chest. Who killed Callahan?

**MH:** Well, later we found out that the killer of Roger Wheeler was Callahan’s best friend and also Callahan’s killer, and that was Johnny Martorano. In the time that we had gone to Boston looking for John Callahan, we were everybody in the underworld and we crossed paths with everybody in law enforcement, so it was no secret that we were down there. They had—and I say “they”—Flemmi and Bulger got a hold of Martorano and said, “Hey, we’ve got to have a meeting.” They flew into New York, went to the LaGuardia Marriot. They said, “Hey, Callahan’s gotta go. They’re trying to pick him up. He won’t stand up under the pressure.” Then they involved some very intricate knowledge that they could have only gotten from their corrupt FBI agent, John Connelly. Johnny really didn’t want to kill his best friend. He was staying in Callahan’s condominium in Plantation, Florida, under a false name, and Callahan was the money man and he would bring money to Johnny. They arranged for Callahan to bring money to Johnny.

**JE:** In Florida.

**MH:** In Florida, which was a routine deal, so Callahan, the end of August, headed to Florida, flew in—actually the Fort Lauderdale Airport—Johnny picked him up in a van that Johnny had. Joe McDonald was following Johnny. John Callahan should have known something was going on when he stepped into that van, which was covered with visqueen, the entire interior of the van. They pulled away from the airport and Johnny shot Callahan in the head. I think Joe McDonald maybe was driving Callahan's car which he kept parked at the Miami International Airport. He had a Cadillac down there. And so they transferred the body from Johnny's van to Callahan's own vehicle, reparked the car at Miami International Airport. The dime just fell out of somebody's pocket, and for years we speculated the meaning of that dime which fit so good into the plot of the story, and then reparked the car at the airport, and a few days later people smelled the smell coming from it. So by now we're seeing, okay, Wheeler's dead, Halloran's dead, Callahan's dead. They have that common theme of a story and the FBI is denying the connections like crazy. Just like the government does today with the stuff—you go, my God, look at the story and they say, no, no, that's not the story. You guys don't know what you're talking about and we can't educate you, so leave. At the focal point was Paul Rico. I'm making trips back and forth to Miami to talk to Paul Rico and it just turned into, like, a Columbo show. I'm getting older and a little bit wiser, a little bit less naïve. He's getting a little bit older and cranky. We just didn't like each other.

**JE:** You're kind of like Peter Falk, then, aren't you?

**MH:** Yeah, I guess.

**JE:** On Columbo.

**MH:** If that's good or bad.

**JE:** I thought that earlier because...

**MH:** It just wouldn't go away.

**JE:** You kept coming back—kept coming back.

**MH:** And really, literally, the entire time we're just keeping this case on life support. We're not making any progress, but the case is not dying. So, Dick Bishop and I are standing outside the Miami headquarters of World Jai Alai, and we had just had a chess game BS interview with Rico. Rico just loved it because he thought he was making me look stupid. If he had just shut the door, it would have been better for him. But we're standing out there waiting for a cab. This guy, a former FBI agent, who was now and had been in the hierarchy of World Jai Alai, came up to me—and he knew me because I had been in and out of there so many times—he said, "I'm glad to see you here." And I said, "Really?" He said, "Yeah, I can't talk to you here though." And we're thinking we're going to get like a Deep Throat kind of thing. He said, "I am management supervision of night shift games tonight." They're running games at night, Jai Alai season. I said, "Well, we're just staying over by the

airport,” which wasn’t too far from World Jai Alai. I knew enough about this guy that he liked to drink. I said, “Let me call you and see how your night’s going and maybe I can buy you a drink after you get off.” He said, “Sure.” So we tried to prepare ourselves and get ourselves psyched up and loose enough to have a really productive conversation with this guy. He shows up about 10:30 or 11:00 and we’re at the bar. We’d had a couple of drinks. We were a little bit loose and so we had to get some drinks down him quick, and so we did and he started loosening up, talking all around the edges. He goes, “Yeah, there’s some stuff going on I’d like to talk to somebody about. We got him to the point where he broke down and was crying and saying, “I never thought I would be around anything like this, but I can’t tell you.” And he had some personal reasons why he could not tell us that would really put him and his family in obvious harm’s way, you know. There’s already three people dead that we knew about. Well, actually four people with Mike Donahue.

**JE:** You said personal reasons.

**MH:** Yeah, he had some personal reasons. “If I say this, it will identify the guy, really. It might as well be his name.” But he had a son who that was in law enforcement that was not mixed up with this but was at ground zero to it all, and so he was privy to some things on one end and here his father, a retired FBI agent, was privy to things on the other end and he knew what was going on. He just could not—he couldn’t do it. You know, you couldn’t recreate that moment. I tried to recreate it three or four times over the years with him and it didn’t go anywhere. We were that close.

**JE:** He’s crying. He said, “I wish I wouldn’t...”

**MH:** He is broken down and crying.

**JE:** So where does it go from there?

**MH:** After a few minutes, he regains his composure and gets up and walks off. It’s like, oh, my gosh! We felt like we were used car salesmen at the end of the month and we just missed our quota. We let this buyer go. So we knew we were on the right track. I mean, that really solidified it right there and so we started this cooperation between the State Police in Massachusetts, the Connecticut State Police and us. We just tried to form this unofficial task force. We couldn’t go to Massachusetts every week or two. We just had to trust people to help us. Of course, there wasn’t even a conference call mechanism at that time. We just had to work hard to maintain that, and some of us are still friends.

**Chapter 10 — 9:52****The Set Up**

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**John Erling:** So, there's the FBI agent, Jerry Montenari. He wants to talk to Whitey and Flemmi, and this is pushed by the Oklahoma City FBI and you?

**Mike Huff:** Yes. Jerry is your very, very typical government FBI agent. He follows the rules, he's not corrupt, but he probably won't scream too loud when they keep telling him to not do that. Jerry tried to arrange an interview with these guys. Of course, the hallmark of criminal investigation interviews is it's not a group participation thing. They made these two guys show up at the FBI office in Boston together. They let them dictate that they would only talk with each other in the room so they knew exactly what's being said. You know, you're trying to find that one little thing. Well, that's a little discrepancy here. Let me go run it at this guy, see what he says, you know. That wasn't the thing that was done and so, of course, these guys just deny that they were involved in the Wheeler thing and, again, the FBI said, "Look, they denied it. We gave you what you wanted. Go on. Forget about it."

**JE:** These guys, meaning Whitey Bulger and Steve Flemmi.

**MH:** Right.

**JE:** And you were in on that interview.

**MH:** I was not in on it. I was not allowed in on the interview.

**JE:** Oh, you weren't?

**MH:** No. That was just it. The FBI would not expose their prize possessions to me or the Tulsa Police Department.

**JE:** It was only the FBI agent, Jerry. They'd let him do the interviewing.

**MH:** Jerry. Yes.

**JE:** And so why do you think they did not want you in there?

**MH:** Well, obviously they wouldn't want me in there because I would ask hard questions that they wouldn't be able to answer without lying and make it a blatant lie. I wouldn't allow the two guys at the same time interview. I would just be a fly in their ointment, so their resolution to all that was, "Hey, we've got Jerry Montenari. We'll send him in there to interview them and then you guys from Tulsa forget about it."

**JE:** And then Jerry didn't have as much information as you had?

**MH:** Jerry wasn't a homicide investigator. He didn't have that information. He was an honest guy. They did put an honest guy in there, but he wasn't the right guy.

**JE:** They knew that.

**MH:** Yeah. They created that whole situation and once again, just like they had done after John Callahan was interviewed by Connelly, they said, "Hey, look. There's nothing here."

Halloran was a liar. Connelly said it was no big deal. Now we've had an interview of Whitey and Flemmi, so just go back to Tulsa. We don't want to hear from you again.

**JE:** And then Whitey would not take a polygraph.

**MH:** Whitey wouldn't take a polygraph. And it really became a clamor at that time, because now we not only had Tulsa Police, Massachusetts State Police, Connecticut State Police. We have now added this big hulk of a guy from the Metro Dade Police, Shelton Merritt. We were just making contacts right and left saying, "This smells. This is corruption. This is bad." And we're going at the guy that's common to all these cases, Paul Rico. Totally unknown to us, Paul Rico was still really valuable to the federal government. They were investigating a possibly corrupt federal judge by the name of Alcee Hastings in South Miami, Florida. Hastings was supposedly selling cases for money. Selling decisions for money. And so they used Paul Rico. One thing that we agreed on, Paul Rico could pass as a mobster, so they put him undercover as a mobster, sent him in to Alcee Hastings to buy a case. So, here we are, everybody is screaming that Paul Rico is corrupt. It's now starting to become public. They've got a problem. They have to disclose any potential bad information on any government witness against Alcee Hastings, and here we are a pot of witches brew with bad stuff on Rico. They call us and they say, "Hey, we're going to help you guys out. We've told you that none of this matters, but we're going to get together and we're going to clear the air. It's going to be wonderful. The federal government is going to pay for a little confab down there in Tulsa and we're going to help you out on all your cases." So, they did. They brought in guys from Boston PD, they brought in guys from the State Police in Massachusetts, Florida FBI agents, Florida State Police, Connecticut State. I mean we had 20-some guys there. Of course, we had Tulsa FBI. And then we had Washington headquarters. And they put everybody up at, I think at the time it was the Westin Hotel downtown. It was pricey. Booze flowed. I mean, nobody could pay for anything. We had happy hours, we had catered dinners, we met in the federal courthouse in a courtroom that wasn't being used. And it was all in the spirit of sharing information. It was all kumbaya and holding hands and feeling good. And so the last morning, everybody was starting to filter out after noon and we had one last meeting in the morning. The guys from the Washington headquarters were running this meeting and we're all there. And they said, "Hey, look, here's the deal. Anybody have any bad information on Paul Rico, you need to get it out here right now. You need to tell us." And we said, "My, God, that's all we've been talking about. Have you not been listening?" They said, "No, we want to know your sources. We want to know everything about it, because he's going to be a witness against this Judge Alcee Hastings." I mean, it infuriated everybody. The entire group from Connecticut State Police walked out, obscenities flowing. Everybody knew that we had just been set up and that the corruption continued. They thought they could cover us up with a few drinks. That really drew the line in the sand.

**JE:** Yeah. Did you ever get to sit down face to face with some of these major players, like Whitey Bulger. Did you see him face to face?

**MH:** I've never seen him face to face. He hates me immensely. I've got some stories. Information has squeaked out on him, but I never saw him.

**JE:** How did he know, then, that you were so much on to him? Why did he hate you so much?

**MH:** Well, you know, we'll see an occasional story here in Tulsa in the news. This was a daily dose of stories in the City of Boston because it was just so engrained. Billy Bulger, the president of the State Senate who opposed busing of blacks into South Boston. This was their entire culture. This struck at everything. This struck at corrupt politics, it touched major national politicians. Here's Whitey Bulger's mystique aura, you know. There had already been things like "The Departed" where Jack Nicholson plays this fictional character of Whitey Bulger. I mean, they couldn't turn on the TV without seeing this. At that time and still actually today, I was pretty straightforward with the news media people from there. "This is all I'm trying to do. I'm not trying to get involved in your mess, but you certainly have a big one and it's impacting me." I was not scared of giving a quote. In fact, it actually really played to our hand very well. Any publicity is good publicity. The one thing that I was tasked to do was to keep this case alive. I testified before Congress in 2000. I said Billy Bulger belongs in prison in McAlester. Those kind of things just like, "Oh, my gosh, this is a Mike Huff headline day." One of the greatest ones that really cut to the core of Whitey Bulger—the FBI's wanted poster of him was, you know, Whitey might be walking his dog or going to a military museum or having this grand lifestyle as a retired person and it was so respectful. My wanted poster, in contrast, was Whitey's a degenerate, he's got terrible bad breath, you might find him around a nudist colony and it really broke the dyke on degenerate stuff coming out on Whitey Bulger. For so long, everybody had painted Whitey Bulger as Robin Hood. Hey, he's the guy that carries old lady's groceries up to their apartment. So after my wanted poster broke, these columnists—Howie Carr—he's written books, and a couple other of these columnists, you know, I was like McCloud, and they just took that to its furthest limit in their columns. So after I kind of outed Whitey and all this gay stuff coming out, I didn't care. I never said he was gay, but the front page headline and a half page picture was of Whitey Bulger and he had this hat and a dark trench coat and just looked weird and the headline of it was "Gay Blade." And the whole story was, "This is what the FBI's telling you, but this cop from Tulsa, Oklahoma, who we all love, is telling us the real story. Whitey's a degenerate. Let's go after him." That kind of stuff just struck to the core of Whitey.

**JE:** We don't know that he was gay.

**MH:** Oh, I never said he was gay. But we do know that he visited Provence Town and different gay hangouts and then later on, it was like, "Well, old Joe Blow that we all know in Boston,

yeah, he's an outwardly gay guy. He used to meet Whitey in this bar and, oh, by the way, Paul Rico's gay, too. He had a love affair with J. Edgar Hoover and Clyde Tolson." That's in congressional testimony and, actually, that story in and of itself that he was gay caused Paul Rico to ask Flemmi and another guy named Salemme, Frank "Cadillac" Salemme, to actually go murder a guy for him that was spreading the rumor that Paul was gay. I never had anything to do with calling anybody gay.

**JE:** Then he did have a longtime girlfriend which led to his arrest, as a matter of fact.

## Chapter 11 – 6:45

### Nothing Personal

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**John Erling:** But were you always looking over your shoulder like there was a target on you?

**Mike Huff:** You know, no. It wasn't a game to me, but I felt removed from it. People were following me whenever I'd go to South Florida or Boston. I did have kind of a very—I got offered a job through a very questionable ex-FBI agent who was trying to get me a job in the pari-mutuel industry. I'm a lifelong policeman. Why would you even call me and ask me if I would want to consider a job? I tracked that down. I mean, the only thing I know how to do is investigate. If you give me something, before long I'll get to the bottom of it and that job offer, I tracked it back to Paul Rico. These guys, man, they were devious and life was a chess game. You know, I grew up playing checkers, so I had to revert to chess. But, no, I never...

**JE:** Well, they probably didn't want to mess with you. That was leading back to—they always dealt with gangland people and if they start murdering the police officers and that kind of thing....

**MH:** You know, how they go about it was, they'll try to just ruin your reputation or whatever.

**JE:** We can kind of capsule. The plan to take over World Jai Alai led to deaths of four people, Roger Wheeler, Brian Halloran, Michael Donohue and John Callahan, is that true?

**MH:** Yes, sir.

**JE:** And Whitey was right. Killing Roger Wheeler was a mistake. So, then, we have on March 14, 2001, the three members, Whitey Bulger, Steve Flemmi and Johnny Martorano indicted for Roger Wheeler's murder with two other alleged conspirators already dead, and then in a plea bargain, Martorano confessed to some 20 murders by the gang, including Wheeler's, and he was given a 15-year sentence, but he was released in 2007 after serving only six years.

**MH:** He had actually served longer than that. He had been in custody in the State of Massachusetts awaiting that final outcome of that, so he got credit just as anybody would. Credit for time served. Probably did somewhere in the neighborhood of 11-12 years.

**JE:** Well, how did Johnny only get 12 years?

**MH:** Well, Johnny held a deck of cards which had all aces. Johnny could get to testifying against two former FBI agents on their roles in murders as well as testifying against Whitey Bulger in many, many murders and organized crime activity, so he was the first one to the prosecution that had some real value for multiple prosecutions, and out of those 20 murders, there was no way to make an arrest on those without him admitting to them. Those cases would have remained open forever and he would have remained a free man forever on those murder charges, because nobody had the evidence. He gave the evidence against himself as well as against the FBI. Now, unfortunately, what people don't understand is that you have to have a witness to prove a crime. As David Moss, our district attorney, used to talk about, crimes aren't cast with the people from the church choir. They're cast with criminals. Johnny is a guy that was loyal to his clan, his criminal group, until a point in time where he realized, "Hey, these guys were my demise. They were lying to me, they were snitching behind my back." He says, "I will never be a snitch. I'm a big enough man that I will be a witness and I will stand tall and tell this horrendous story. I can't speak for emotions, but I know Johnny Martorano pretty well, and he's not necessarily proud of what he did, but he says, "I can't change what I did."

**JE:** So you did have face-to-face conversations with Johnny.

**MH:** Yeah, I had face to face for days with Johnny Martorano over the years. Even met with him since he's gotten out of prison. We still maintain a little bit of a relationship.

**JE:** How is it to talk to a man, you look into his eyes, you know he's killed 20 people—how does that make you feel in ways you look at him?

**MH:** Well, you know, if you're sitting in a bar, you're wanting to watch your back because somebody might see him and you might catch a stray bullet. It's not unique. I have for 30-some years sat with killers in rooms a quarter of the size of where we are now. I certainly don't understand them. I'm not that smart. But I can communicate with them. Johnny's a guy that told me more truth than many of the law enforcement I came along. Is it hard, disgusting, tragic truth? Yeah, but he didn't lie to me, and he has a terrific memory that we were able to use for corroboration on so many different levels in this case. I mean, first of all, you have to be able to recognize what the minutia is so you can say, "Ooh! I've seen that before." You know, match it up. If you just take this as "Well, I read it, I kind of know the story," you've got to know every word. You've got to know where every piece of evidence is so when somebody says something, you say, "Oh! I can match that up." I certainly can't say Johnny's a good guy, but Johnny's a guy. He's a very interesting guy.

**JE:** Did he ever feel guilty?

**MH:** Over the years—again, I go back to the Boston newspaper and all these guys live and die by the Boston newspaper and this paper was played out in Boston a thousand times more than it did in Tulsa, and people in Boston know me. I mean, I go in a restaurant and people would say, “Are you that guy from Tulsa? Let me buy you dinner. You did a good thing.” And so Johnny knew me that way and he said, “Hey, you’re pretty good friends with that son of Roger Wheeler, aren’t you?” And I said, “Oh, yeah, we’re great friends.” He said, “Man, this is a little weird, but could you deliver a message?” “Sure.” And he said, “Man, could you just tell him it was only business to me? It was nothing personal.” I said, “Wow. I’ll tell him, but that’s a pretty big thing.”

**JE:** And did you deliver that message?

**MH:** Yeah, I delivered that message.

**JE:** How did David...

**MH:** It was hard. It was really hard. It’s hard to this minute for David. This changed his life in so many ways. His father—his death just destroyed that family. But Martorano, I think that he and I will be seeing each other in the future on something unrelated to this relevant to this international association and cold case investigators and involving their projects.

**JE:** So there is a bond between the two of you?

**MH:** Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

**JE:** But it’s bad guy, good guy.

**MH:** Yeah, not friends, but he knows I’m on a mission and he knows that I know more than anybody ever would want to know about him.

**JE:** And he likes being helpful to you right now. Do you think it’s kind of clearing his conscience to be helpful?

**MH:** I wouldn’t go that far.

## Chapter 12 – 10:40

### Trial Begins

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**John Erling:** Steve Flemmi, we’ve talked about, pled guilty to the murder of Roger Wheeler and is serving a life sentence.

**Mike Huff:** In upstate New York, he pled guilty on the condition that he would never have to see the inside of the walls at McAlester. I guess McAlester has quite a national reputation for being a place to not want to be. Flemmi and I—again—Flemmi sends me Christmas cards every year. Flemmi likes me. These guys knew I was not part of their corrupt world.

I was focused on a mission that they saw me remain focused for nearly three decades. When they saw me in court, “Hey, there’s Huff.” They would point me out. I could see it. You know, they’d give me a wave and a nod.

**JE:** And, of course, Whitey goes on the lam for 16 years and then he was finally arrested June 22nd of 2011. He is in trial as we speak today. The first day of trial was yesterday. The Tulsa Police Department gave you all the resources and they let you go. Somebody in the department had to say, “Huff, go after this.”

**MH:** I tell you what. They certainly did. This spanned many chiefs. Chief Harry Steege was involved in it. He tells a great story about when I was in South Florida trying to interview one of the most well-known mobsters ever, Meyer Lansky. He had gotten a call from the Miami Beach police chief, complaining about me. He likes to tell that story. But through Chief Dick, Diamond very reluctantly...

**JE:** Drew Diamond?

**MH:** Yes, Drew Diamond’s span as being chief was kind of volatile, but it was also in a timeframe that there wasn’t a whole lot that was going on with the Wheeler case. After that, Chief Palmer—wonderfully supportive guy—and really understood, and maybe it’s because he came from Kansas City where there is a bit of organized crime. He understood the commitment that we needed to make, and he made it wholeheartedly. The same thing with Chief Bean. Chief Bean grew up watching this thing. I mean, he was there from start to finish. He knew what was going on. Then Chief Palmer came back, still was supportive right to the end with Chief Chuck Jordan. I mean, he knew every step of the way of this case. You know what? The police department, with all the troubles that they may have and all the way politics get involved, the chiefs of police really—as far as homicide investigation—it was “Katy, bar the door. You do what you need to do,” and they trusted me. As a result of that, I had to find people that I could trust on these other cases and we built a nationally recognized homicide squad, not just on this case, but we solve over 80 percent of the homicides and the national average is 58% percent. If it’s 58 percent, somebody’s solving about 25 percent of their murders.

**JE:** Mm hm. About Johnny Martorano. I noticed where Whitey Bulger’s attorney, J. W. Carney accused prosecutors of engaging in a cover up of an allegation that John Martorano, who had killed 20 people, had committed crimes since his 2007 release from federal prison and has been shielded from investigation.

**MH:** Well, I tell you what. On the way over here, I was thinking I’m aware of this allegation. I certainly can’t vouch. I have no details that Martorano has or hasn’t done, but there accusing a state police lieutenant by the name of Stevie Johnson as covering up. Well, I’ve known Stevie Johnson for 20-some years. He’s not my friend. We’re not buddies, but he is honest to the core. He would not cover up anything. He has lived and died with

this case on a greater level than I have because it encompasses all of those racketeers and crimes, but I mean he's at ground zero in Boston. I could go stir up stuff in Boston and come home and nobody would ever know about it. He had to live there, so that J. W. Carney allegation is a defense attorney ploy. I'm going to write a letter to the Boston Globe or Boston Herald and say, "I've known this man for 20-some years and to besmirch his reputation like that in a defense attorney ploy is terrible."

**JE:** It's a Whitey ploy, isn't it?

**MH:** Whitey is not going to pick a defense attorney that won't go with his game plan. Whitey's got the game plan. It's the best defense is going offense. That's Whitey's deal.

**JE:** While we've been talking about all this and talking about the fact that Whitey Bulger was an informant, the opening day of testimony yesterday was Bulger saying he was not an informant for the FBI.

**MH:** Yeah, that he was just using them to get information.

**JE:** Right.

**MH:** Once he corrupted them, that was his goal was to use them to get information, but his meal ticket was providing information on the La Costa Nostra. Didn't provide one bit of information on his world of criminal activity and his associates' world, so Whitey Bulger is two things. He is a self-serving egomaniac, liar, narcissistic, so that's a little bit more in tune, but that's the Whitey Bulger reputation that I know is factual, so he's going to try to turn this around. It reminds me so much of a political debate. Somebody confronts the next person with well-documented facts and they turn it around and call you a liar. It's like, where did that come from? This is vintage Whitey.

**JE:** You are on the defense list to be a witness and what's the manipulation going on here?

**MH:** That's a strange situation there. The government probably—I can just open up too many cans of worms. You know, I don't want to get in the way of this justice that's being meted out. I think that the federal judge has really got her hands full and I haven't heard anything bad about her, but Whitey knows that I have been a thorn in his side. This is going to be his opportunity to stick a knife in my back and twist it. This will be an opportunity for him to, I guess, try to embarrass me. I don't know what I can be embarrassed about. I'm retired. I don't have any big skeletons in my closet, so I look forward to it. There was a column in the paper about, "What in the world will Whitey ask Mike Huff? Will Whitey want to know where Mike Huff got the information that he had bad breath and he hung out at nudist colonies?" This is all just entertainment for Whitey. Whitey knows he's going to die there. This is his last hurrah and I'll be a little bit a part of it, but that's it.

**JE:** This changed your life. That day you looked into Roger Wheeler's car, from that very moment to where you're sitting here today.

**MH:** It did change my life. For the good, for the bad. I guess the thing that it did, it let me have the feeling of not giving up. I felt guilty through my life of things that I've given up on, you know, I've always wanted to go back to college. I wanted this, I wanted that. But you know what? I didn't give up on this deal. That night that it happened when I sat down with Sergeant Roy Hunt, who was an icon of homicide investigators at the police department. I said, "Sergeant, I've got to be involved in this deal. I know I'm the youngest guy, but please let me be involved. This is a game I don't want to watch from the sideline. He gave me this lecture about how this is going to change my life and how I really needed to think about it, and if I showed up at 11:00 the next morning, I could become a part of the game, but if I didn't show up at 11:00, he understood. But I didn't understand that conversation at all until years later when I was watching a movie. It was the "Untouchables" and Kevin Cosner was playing Elliot Ness. Sean Connery was playing an Irish cop, which I've got a little bit of that in me. They're getting ready to bust through a door on a search warrant. Turns out the door that they're busting through is a door into the post office where they were storing illegal whiskey or whatever. Sean Connery says to Kevin Cosner, "Man, you've got to think about this. This is going to change your life." It was almost verbatim the same thing that Sergeant Roy Hunt had said to me and Kevin Cosner had the same bewildered look when he was listening to this that I had, so I thought, "Oh, my God!" and then you go through the rest of that movie and it's like, "Oh, it changed his life." Threats and this and that and whatever. So, yeah, it changed my life. It's left me with a lot of good memories. I was in the midst of one of the biggest things in this era and I think I won.

**JE:** Even without this story you have many other stories that we could certainly talk about. You've been injured chasing the bad guys and they've broken into your home and all that kind of thing, so we could do another story just on Mike Huff without this story at all. I would imagine the Wheeler must be indebted to you?

**MH:** That thing is so raw still. I don't believe that anybody's indebted to me. I don't think they feel that. I mean, information comes and it cuts both ways sometimes and it's hard. I think the Wheeler family has done their best to try to repair, resolve all that stuff, but I don't think it will ever come to an end. There are some cases where at the end of that murder investigation when that guy goes away or goes to death row or whatever. It's real clear cut—who was the good guy and who was the bad guy—and the family, absolutely they love me and they'll love me forever. This isn't one of those cases. This was a train wreck.

**JE:** Will David Wheeler go to the trial?

**MH:** He said he won't. They are still a lot of unanswered questions there. We're not ever going to be to the end of this story. Resolution is not really ever going to come to this thing because there are so many things. The secrets are still buried. I think David very

simplistically thinks that all secrets should come out, but it's a narrow slice. The Wheeler case is a narrow slice of Whitey's racketeering charges. That's it.

## Chapter 13 – 17:35

### The Verdict

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**John Erling:** So comes the trial of Whitey Bulger. Monday, August 12, 2013, Whitey Bulger was found guilty of racketeering charges, guilty in 31 of 32 counts. A federal jury linked him to 11 murders. He'd been accused of involvement in 19 murders with those killings taking place from 1973 to 1985. The jury found that the government failed to prove Bulger was involved in seven of the murders and jurors had no finding in one murder. We should point out that in the 11 murders that were linked to him, Roger Wheeler was one of them. Mike, how did you feel about this verdict?

**Mike Huff:** You know, I was not surprised by the verdict at all. You know, even to the point of some of those not guilty on the murders just because of the weakness of the cases that the prosecution had. Very hard to prosecute a decades-old murder without forensic evidence or some real key other than bad guy testimony. In the Wheeler murder, it was a good day for me. I felt good about that. Then immediately thereafter I have questions on whether or not Tulsa, Oklahoma, will see Whitey Bulger. As of a couple of years ago when he got caught, the District Attorney was very adamant that we would see him here and he would be prosecuted in Tulsa for the murder he committed on Mr. Wheeler in our community. So, you know, immediately thereafter there was a question brought up to me that we may not prosecute him here.

**JE:** And that's because of funds, isn't it? Would it take a quarter of a million dollars or so?

**MH:** Well, I would think it would probably be two or three hundred thousand dollars. Luckily, those kind of decisions were so far above my pay grade, it was never an issue for me. Dollars and cents were something that I never factored into my work product, because you take that to a lower level and say we'll never prosecute this here because of a murder, so therefore I'm not really going to bust my butt here. It's a tough message to put out there, although I totally understand somebody has to consider that, but it's not me, don't want it to be me, and everybody knows where I stand on that.

**JE:** But we should note that Pam Wheeler, the daughter of Roger Wheeler, has said we shouldn't spend another dime on this thug.

**MH:** Well, I totally appreciate her opinion on that. Everybody has one. And the Wheeler family's opinion is mixed at best, but this crime was perpetrated on the City of Tulsa also.

Telex went away, thousands of people lost very high-paying jobs, this community suffered a loss. It's more than just the family that needs resolution and some closure.

**JE:** And then there was a point where you thought perhaps you were going to be called as a witness and that didn't happen.

**MH:** I knew I would not be called as a prosecution witness because that can of worms that I hold is too big to open up. It would have turned into a sideshow. I made it very clear to the defense attorneys of Whitey Bulger that under no uncertain circumstances would I have any information that would help him out. They also know that that cut both ways. I can say something relative to the FBI corruption which may help him, but I can also say that I was intimately involved in this investigation and have facts on him that go as deep as digging to China. They didn't want to get me out there to be able to expose some of those facts, because I just think I'm a livewire in this thing and people know to stand back from a livewire and they made a good decision.

**JE:** So, as you were able to follow the trial and you didn't go there, do you have more facts and information than the trial dealt with?

**MH:** Oh, absolutely. That was a sliver of information that got presented in that trial. And a sliver of information on each charge was presented in that trial, but the Wheeler case, again, has been referred to by Whitey as the holy trinity. It was the gem, if you will, of all these murders. I mean, so many tragic murders, but Wheeler drove this train. That information that I have had, whatever it is, whatever question you ask about Wheeler, I can end up talking about it for days on those facts. And I'm the only one that has that depth of knowledge and that experience and that longevity in that case. They just didn't want to take that chance.

**JE:** He referred to it as the holy trinity. This is because Wheeler was clean. He wasn't a mobster. He wasn't of the mob. He was clean and that's why this was so...

**MH:** Right. They knew this would come back. All these other mobsters that they killed and got away with those murders for years—one of the reasons why Brian Halloran didn't accept the hit on this murder was that he recognized it was a holy trinity very early on and he said, "There's no way we can reach this far out across the country and kill a guy this clean and not get a lot of heat for it," so... he made a good decision.

**JE:** Why do they use that term "holy trinity?"

**MH:** I don't know. I feel very confident in where that information came from. I know from my sources that the Wheeler case—Whitey knew it was his undoing. Whitey kept up with it. Whitey hated me. I can talk for days on all those kind of things, but he knew it was the thorn in his side and obviously it was.

**JE:** Inside the courtroom, Johnny Martorano, the hit man, the man who pulled the trigger to murder Roger Wheeler. And because of Whitey's betrayal, Martorano cooperated with

the FBI and as we've stated earlier in our interview, he served 12 years of 14. You haven't talked to him since the trial, have you?

**MH:** Not since the trial. I'm sure I'll speak with him here in another month or so when I go to Boston for the sentencing.

**JE:** That's November 13th. Whitey's due back in court and faces 30 years to life. But it's interesting when Johnny Martorano was asked about certain murders, he's just say, "I shot him," or "we broadsided him." When innocent people—a young woman and a teenage boy—were killed, then he said, "I wanted to shoot myself." He didn't seem to show a whole lot of remorse, but he did show emotion when he talked about learning that Whitey was an informant for the FBI. That's when he said, "It broke my heart." Steve Flemmi had also become an informant and Martorano said, "I was beside myself with it." He said, "These are my partners in crime, my best friends, my children's godfather." He even named his youngest son James Steven in honor of both of them. That's where the emotion came out.

**MH:** In spending a lot of time with Martorano, he is all about loyalty. He is all about that friendship and the responsibility that went with it and in his world friendship, a part of it was never rat on me and I'll never rat on you, and then when that happened, his world really fell apart. I mean, that kind of likens you to a hit man that needs counseling because it shook him to the core and he made a huge decision in being a government witness, which totally went against his upbringing, his screwed up values, that kind of stuff.

**JE:** Afterward, the jury spoke. It's interesting to notice the emotion that they went through. Some were shaking, they said, as they stood in the jury box and heard the verdict read. That's how emotionally—and I suppose you do in many murder or other cases as well, but particularly this one. Jurors lost weight, developed headaches and had nightmares as a result of this.

**MH:** This was a 50-yard line seat to probably one of the most evil criminal empires of our generations. Probably spans two or three generations. These people saw some of the most graphic photographs, they heard some of the most bone-chilling graphic testimony. I think they became a part of it. I'm certain that some of those folks probably need some counseling over the things—what they were exhibiting was post-traumatic stress syndrome. One murder's bad enough, but you compound that by 19 and then all the other threats of violence and the fact that this guy could reach out across the country and have people killed. They would strangle people just because, yank their teeth out. These people were the devil and they witnessed that. Hats off to them for doing the right thing. It was tough, but it gives you some confidence in our jury system.

**JE:** Right. And then probably what also would throw you is to see the cold heartedness of Martorano and maybe Flemmi, too. That was it. I shot him. To see that happening as a juror. You're not around these people. I mean, just that moment.

- MH:** Absolutely, and then also the terrible taste in your mouth that some of these people are walking free today that were involved in these murders. These hard, hard decisions that are made by prosecutors are very difficult because like our old District Attorney, David Moss, used to say, these plays aren't cast with the church choir, they're cast in hell. You've got to have an inside man most of the time.
- JE:** One juror said the graphic testimony about Bulger and his friends prompted jurors who owned guns to take precautions at home. They said that actually they loaded their guns at night because they were afraid of personal injury.
- MH:** I can imagine that, and then halfway through the trial the potential witness, Steven Rakes, who got his liquor store extorted by Whitey and Kevin Weeks, winds up dead. The resolution of that really didn't come out until maybe even to the deliberation time to where he was actually murdered by another person that wanted to use the timing of this in the Bulger trial to kind of throw a red herring out there. These people were just like human test rats with all this drama and evil thrown their way. The jury was exposed to that information. All of the country was exposed to that information. You couldn't log onto the Internet without seeing story after story for a few days. So, the resolution of that investigation didn't come until very late in the trial or maybe even into the deliberation stage that it was somebody else that murdered him, because everybody thought, "Oh, surely Whitey murdered this guy or had this guy murdered." Didn't turn out that way, but it did throw a curve ball to everybody.
- JE:** Yeah. Interesting. Whitey wrote a letter from prison and it was posted on radaronline.com. He admits he has a lot of time on his hands spending 24 hours a day in solitary confinement. He drops hints we haven't seen the last of his legal battles. I don't know what that's all about. How any attorney—I suppose, where he'd get the money to fund an attorney for an appeal is beyond me.
- MH:** Well, I think the taxpayers will pay for that appeal. Whitey's going to run out of time. He's going to die an old man in jail. That's just the way it is. What some people are suspecting is that maybe Whitey may take the stand in his sentencing phase where there's going to be some testimony. You know, the testimony would be for maybe a lighter sentence, but he's in a fantasy that the fight's still going. He hasn't realized that it's over for him.
- JE:** And then he writes he misses the peaceful years he spent in hiding in Santa Monica. Apparently, his girlfriend he likes. Said, "My 16 years on the run were the happiest years of my life and her," referring to his girlfriend, Catherine Greig. If I had met Catherine at a younger age, I would have had a better life." I wonder if she would have turned him from crime. And then when he talks about the sentencing, he says, "I expect the worse is yet to come. I'll deal with it and welcome the peace."
- MH:** Maybe there's a little bit of recollection, retrospection, all that stuff there, but the facts are in. He's an evil son of a bitch and he's going to get the maximum penalty here. I could

only wish that just for the sake of having the final say that he would wind up with the death penalty in the State of Oklahoma. Whether or not whether he'd live long enough for it to be carried out really wouldn't matter to me. It's like driving a stake in the heart of somebody evil and I think that we should have that opportunity to do it.

**JE:** Because Massachusetts doesn't have the death penalty.

**MH:** Massachusetts doesn't, the federal government under these statutes don't have it. Now, Florida has it, but I think they're going to back away from prosecuting him down there.

**JE:** So that would be the only reason, then, for Oklahoma to bring him back is that we could have the death penalty.

**MH:** Absolutely. The guy deserves it. Look at what he's done. Look at these aggravating circumstances. He killed potential witnesses against him. It fits every factor that the state law has set forth to qualify him for the death penalty. Just because he's old doesn't exempt him.

**JE:** Well, the Wheeler family, I think, and Tulsa is fortunate to have had you on the force, that you had that tenacity, you had that Columbo feeling back and forth to continue it on, because I'm quite certain maybe much of the investigation in the Wheeler case might have gone away had it not been for your persistence.

**MH:** Well, thank you for saying that. I certainly was pleased to have such a wonderful job for so many years and I just made it to the finish line. I'm maybe the last man standing on this deal. I'm the most tenured guy that's involved in this deal. These guys in Massachusetts may have been in junior high school when I started on this thing. They've done a wonderful job, but I was there from soup to nuts.

## Chapter 14 – 0:29

### Conclusion

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**Announcer:** This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous foundation funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will allow us to record future stories. Students, teachers and librarians are using this website for research, and the general public is listening every day to these great Oklahomans share their life experience. Thank you for your support as we preserve Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time on [VoicesOfOklahoma.com](http://VoicesOfOklahoma.com).