

LAW ENFORCEMENT SESSION

THE ROLE OF UNDERCOVER AGENT FOR THE OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

By BILLIE BALLEW

Assistant Chief in Charge of Special Investigation

Three years ago, in June 1968, our Chief of Law Enforcement and I went to the State of Pennsylvania, to see what we could learn about their Special Investigation work.

We visited with the Pennsylvania Wildlife heads for three days and were sold on the type of work or ways of apprehending large scale, illegal, killing and selling of game.

They pointed out to us the most important points to consider; administration of program by experienced personnel, the selection of competent personnel for undercover agents, never use one of your agents for any type of personnel investigation. Your agents are solely to collect evidence and information of game law crimes (in most cases, impossible through routine law enforcement).

We realized that we were faced with an ever increasing law enforcement problem involving large scale, illegal killing and selling of game. We further realized our routine law enforcement practice, was not accomplishing any appreciable results, in apprehending these highly skilled, wildlife criminals.

In the modern world of today, our ever increasing population, the increasing demand for outdoor recreation, the depletion of our recreational acres, the time is here . . . the time is now . . . when we must do everything within our power to implement whatever methods are necessary to insure rightful protection for all of our wildlife resources.

Never before in the history, has our wildlife resources meant so much to so many, economically and spiritually. We had better prepare accordingly to insure that future.

The use of undercover agents in conservation law enforcement is perhaps relatively new to most of our State Conservation Departments, but law enforcement in general, has utilized undercover investigations as an ethical and accepted tool, across the nation, for many, many years.

The security of our free world has, at one time or another, rested, at least to some degree, on information obtained by undercover operations.

The request for undercover investigations originates in the field. They, in turn, submit a report to our executive office, listing available information. Then, it is reviewed and approved for special investigation. All information is kept under lock and key. Only the Chief of Law Enforcement and our special force have access to this information.

We were fortunate to have worked with Jerry Kirkpatrick, Chief of Special Investigation for the State of Pennsylvania, instruct and get our agents started. In August 1968, we organized our Special Investigation Forces, closely copied the State of Pennsylvania.

I was appointed, Assistant Chief in charge of Special Investigations. Three men were appointed to work with me and a fourth was later added. These men, are leading Rangers in their Districts, when not on special assignment.

We started work on illegal deer killing and selling in Eastern Oklahoma. Two of the men were assigned to this in late 1969. We knew we were trying to catch highly skilled, wildlife criminals that had been operating for a long time. After fourteen months of work, we were successful in buying thirty deer.

On February 6, 1970, we arrested eleven men, after filing fifty-four separate charges of selling and possession of deer. All were released after making bond.

After waiting sixteen months, we finally went to court. The arrests had been made in bordering counties, Cherokee and Delaware. Cherokee, three men and Delaware, nine men were charged.

The three men in Cherokee County entered pleas of guilty on June 10, 1971. Two were fined \$1,000 each and court cost, for possession of illegal deer. The same two were fined \$100 and court cost for selling game animals. One has sixteen cases pending and was released on \$1,250 bond. Second has five cases pending and was released. Third has three cases dismissed, sixteen cases pending and released on \$1,250 bond, to be tried next term of court.

June 18, 1971, went to court in Delaware County. Seven men entered pleas of guilty. Eleven cases on possession, fined \$110 and cost. Four cases fined \$10.00 and cost for selling deer. One man jumped bond and a warrant was issued. One man, case dismissed.

In Cherokee County, violators received the maximum. In Delaware County violators received the minimum.

We feel this has done a lot of good. The public has started to give more reports since these criminals have been exposed.

We believe this to be a fine program, with a great future. I have not gone into detail about the many phases of the program. However, if any of you are interested I would be glad to discuss the details with any of you during the conference.

Each undercover agent works under an assumed name, for protection. He is issued a drivers license, hunting license, fishing license, Social Security number and car license plates under this assumed name.

THE INVASION OF THE MINI-MONSTERS

A Look at Some Problems of Off-road Vehicles and Their Relations to the Environment

By GRADY W. PHELPS
Florida Game and Fresh water Fish Commission

My fourteen year old son approached me recently and said: "Pop, I want a motor bike."

The very thought sent a chill down my spine and invoked visions of trace chains, black leather jackets with eagles on the back and long-haired hippie-type individuals traveling in roving bands. . . . I remembered Marlon Brando astride a Triumph in "The Wild Ones" and had apocalyptic images of aggression and revolt. I could see a Greasey Rider on an iron horse with 74 cubic inch lungs and apehanger bars booming down the freeway to rape John Doe's daughter behind the nearest viaduct, happy with his swastikas, burnt rubber, crab lice and filthy denim.

When I was fourteen, I dreamed of having my own horse and riding off into the west like all my cowboy heroes did every Saturday evening at the movies. But if Trigger had been laden with the pseudo-erotic symbolisms that cling to any Harley Chopper, the poor nag could not have been hobbled! The motorcycle is an object that provokes both desire and outrage—depending on which side of *thirty* you are!

But, not wanting to widen the generation gap and having just finished a hunting season loaded with problems dealing with motorcycles, I dutifully decided to find out more about these monsters! I took my son to see "Easy Rider"—and saw Captain Marvel and his fringed partner shot-gunned off their raked chopper on a southern back road. We saw Joe Namath's head bloodied with a chain in "C C and Co."