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**Interview of Former Special Agent of the FBI
Paul J. Brana (1954 – 1978)
Interviewed by Brian R. Hollstein
On March 30, 2005**

Edited for spelling, repetitions, etc. by Sandra Robinette on October 28, 2005. Edited with Mr. Brana's corrections on December 19, 2005 by Sandra Robinette.

Brian R. Hollstein: My name is Brian R. Hollstein. I am interviewing Paul J. Brana. Today's date is the 30th of March, 2005. We're at the New York Athletic Club, New York City, and we'll get started with our interview.

We don't want to have the names of any informants mentioned out loud. We don't want any companies that might have been used as covers. This will be reviewed by the Bureau pre-publication people.

And we'll have it transcribed first. It will go to you; you'll get to look at it and see if you have any changes on it. You'll find right away all the Spanish names will be misspelled. And then we'll take it to the Bureau. They'll review it and make any changes that they see fit.

Then it goes off to the University of Virginia to the Miller Center about the Study of American Government and that's where our repository will be. And it will be available then to scholars and researchers who are interested in the FBI and mainly the people of the FBI. That's what I'm interested in developing information on. So that's the idea.

Paul J. Brana: Could I give you a little historical background on this building?

Hollstein: Yes, sure.

Brana: My first job out of high school, Power Memorial Academy, was at the New York Athletic Club.

Hollstein: Oh, certainly.

Brana: When I was 18 years of age, I started working in this building as a mail clerk for the New York Athletic Club.

Hollstein: What do you know? Things come around.

Let's see. Your year of birth?

Brana: January 20, 1928.

Hollstein: Place of birth?

Brana: Manhattan. New York City.

Hollstein: And we have your current address as correct in the directory?

Brana: Yes.

Hollstein: And you're retired, retired now?

Brana: Yup.

Hollstein: And your Bureau service?

Brana: November 22, 1954.

Hollstein: To?

Brana: June 30, 1978.

Hollstein: I think that does it. Any questions at all on the program?

Brana: No.

Hollstein: Copyright or anything like that?

Brana: No. No questions.

Hollstein: Okay. Good.

Just to get started. You went to school here in New York?
You grew up in New York?

Brana: I grew up in what they call “Hell’s Kitchen.” I sang with the choir called the Paulist Fathers where I went to school at St. Paul the Apostle which is right down the street from where we are right now.

Hollstein: Oh yeah. Yeah. I walked by it in fact today coming up.

Brana: Yeah. And I went to Power Memorial Academy which also happens to be the building that I was born in because that was New York Hospital for Women. I think it became Power Memorial Academy around 1938.

And I went to Power from ’42 to ’46.

Hollstein: My wife was born at New York Women’s’ Hospital.

Brana: Was she really?

Hollstein: But that must have been somewhere else though. She was born in 1944.

Brana: Yeah. Oh, no. That’s got to be a different one.

Hollstein: Yeah, yeah. Your college education was what?

Brana: Manhattan College. Graduated from there. But actually, I had joined a National Guard unit and we were called up on active duty on May 1, 1951. I was a senior at Manhattan College when I came back for my diploma, on May 28, 1951. So I was in the military.

Hollstein: How did you find the Bureau? Or how did the Bureau find you?

Brana: Well, that’s a long story. I applied ... I got out of the service, December 16, 1953. I had been an officer with the 11th Airborne Division. I was looking for employment. I picked up temporary employment in a training program with Grand Union Supermarkets. But I was looking because I was married and we had a child. We were expecting a child.

I applied for a position with the New York City Police Department. I took all the tests. This was like March, April. I took all the tests and I was being interviewed at the 20th Precinct at East, East ... on West 68th Street.

Brana: I'm upstairs with a plainclothes sergeant who is interviewing me. You know why I wanted join the police department, etc. And somebody in the building yells, "Does anybody in the building speak Spanish. We need a Spanish speaker." And I said to the sergeant, "I speak Spanish."

He said, "You do?" I said, "Yeah. I'm Spanish" He said, "You're Spanish?" I said, "Yes." "Would you mind doing an interview?" I said, "No."

So we go downstairs and I do an interview about a half an hour. We're going back upstairs and he says, "You're a detective. You're a detective." I said to him, "What's the matter with you?" He says, "For Christ sake, we don't have anybody that speaks Spanish. You could have a new job, and you're a detective automatically."

And we get upstairs, and we're continuing the interview and he says to me, "Your physical condition? There's nothing wrong with you?" I says, "I happen to get a disability from the government for a back injury that I suffered when I was in the paratroopers." "Oh, forget about it," he says. "You do? You get a disability?" I said, "Yeah. I've been getting a disability since the day I was discharged."

"We cannot take anybody with disability." And that was the end of my career with the New York Police Department.

So the next thing that I did. I immediately put in for the FBI around August. And I end up in new agent's class, November 22, 1954, in Washington, D.C.

In order to get down there, I had to go down to take the physical three separate times. The third time, the full colonel in charge of the facility at 90 Church Street, where all government aspiring applicants took their physical, the full colonel interviews me and he says, "Paul." He says, "I can't approve your physical."

I said, "Colonel, what are you talking about?"

He says, "Well you have a disability." I said, "Colonel, there's nothing wrong with me." I think I was getting 15 percent disability.

Hollstein: Oh boy.

Brana: Which is up to 60 percent now.

And he checks my reflexes on my knees and my ankles. And he has me do some bends. "Okay, Paul, if you say so." And he signed off.

That's how I got into the FBI. I was very fortunate.

Hollstein: You took your training at Quantico and...

Brana: Yes.

Hollstein: ... the Old Post Office in D.C.?

Brana: Yes.

Hollstein: And where was your first office?

Brana: Baltimore, Maryland.

Hollstein: You got lucky.

Brana: I was headed straight for New York.

Hollstein: You were in Baltimore for how long?

Brana: Approximately a year-and-a-half.

Hollstein: And what were you doing in there?

Brana: I was doing criminal work.

Hollstein: Yea. The basic stuff?

Brana: Right.

Hollstein: Deserters?

Brana: Deserters. Yeah.

Hollstein: All the rest of that stuff.

Brana: As a matter of fact, I teamed up with a guy by the name of Bob Rank. Bob Rank had fought in the heavyweight division of the Olympics and I remember that he and I were out doing deserters together one time.

And I spent 18 months in Baltimore. And after Baltimore came New York. Home sweet home.

Hollstein: You stayed in New York then the whole rest of your career?

Brana: No, I did not. I stayed in New York until October of 1959, when I transferred to Puerto Rico.

Hollstein: I didn't know you had spent time down there.

Brana: I had approximately five years in the Bureau and they sent me down to Puerto Rico. I guess they needed some Spanish speaker, somebody that could speak Spanish.

Brana: And so I had...

Hollstein: Were you in San Juan?

Brana: I did two years in San Juan. I had the road trip out from San Juan. I used to go out the northern road trip to Bayamon and back into San Juan. Of course, I did Mayaguez and Ponce. I did the whole bit.

I did the Virgin Islands, as a matter of fact. On a couple of occasions, the agent who had covered the Virgin Islands was on vacation so I had to go to the VI.

Hollstein: I was in Ponce for two years.

Brana: Oh, you were!

Hollstein: Yeah. Yeah.

Brana: I didn't know that.

Hollstein: I had three years in the Army in San Juan and then two years in...

Brana: They give you that?

Hollstein: Yeah.

Brana: Two years in the Army down there.

(A brief Spanish. Conversation follows.)

Hollstein: Okay. This little blast of Spanish is enough for the transcriber, I am sure.

Yeah. In fact, I was in Puerto Rico when you were in the DR, in the Dominican Republic.

Brana: Oh, oh, yeah, yeah.

Hollstein: I was well after you. It was 1962. I was there 1962 to 1965.

Brana: I got there in April of 1965. We were there... I was there in the Dominican Republic until October of 1965.

Hollstein: So after San Juan, you came back up to New York?

Brana: Back to New York.

Hollstein: What were you working in New York then?

Brana: For a very short period of time, I was on a security squad. Then when I came back for my permanent stay, I got into the organized crime squad.

Hollstein: So that was right in the beginning then of the Organized Crime work?

Brana: OC work started in? I think the statutes, the ITAR (Interstate Transport in Aid of Racketeering) statues passed in September 22, 1961. And, so in other words the FBI had no jurisdiction in organized crime until those statutes were passed.

Hollstein: Right, right. That came right after the Appalachian Meeting?

Brana: Right. Right.

Hollstein: Because when I arrived on the scene in 1972, they were pulling a lot of people in for Organized Crime work.

Brana: Right. Right. And I think that the first arrests that were made under the ITAR statutes were in November of 1961.

It was an organized crime gambling operation that was going from Brooklyn to New Jersey. And they were bringing the work in from New Jersey into Brooklyn.

And I think that I made the first arrest. The name of the individual escapes me because we took... It was a numbers operation and there were four individuals that we arrested on that particular November of 1961 operation in Brooklyn.

Hollstein: We got started on that but let's go back to the Dominican Republic and see if we can get that one nailed down before it's **unintel** to go in.

Brana: Sure.

Hollstein: Then we'll see where we head after that.

Brana: Right.

Hollstein: How did you happen to get involved in the Dominican Republic?

Brana: I guess primarily because of my Spanish background. Jack Danahy, one day he says to me, "Paul," he says, "Would you like to go down to the Dominican Republic for a couple of weeks?"

I said, "Sure. Why not."

He says, "Pack a light bag."

Brana: So I pack a light bag and I end up with a diplomatic passport and a flight down to the Dominican Republic.

Hollstein: Had things broken by that point? The revolution was ...

Brana: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. The Marines were already in and the 82nd Airborne had gotten in there.

Hollstein: Johnson had asked the FBI to...

Brana: He was very unhappy because of the fact that the knew nothing about this event which took place, I think, around the first of April. He knew nothing, in other words. And the had no information. Apparently the FBI in San Juan had some wiretaps. And they had some information. So he got a hold of Hoover. Johnson got a hold of Hoover. He said, "I want your people down there."

So as a result, ten agents were sent down there. There was a total of ten of us in the office that were working, conducting investigations to determine, you know... Their primary concern was that the communists should not get in and take over the government.

Hollstein: Do you remember the names of the other guys, offhand?

Brana: The main man was Henry VonEckhart. Arnold Orancia, John Wachter.

Hollstein: Arnold Orancia?

Brana: Arnold Orancia.

Hollstein: Because I worked with a Ron Orancia who is the son of an agent.

Brana: That's him.

Hollstein: Who was down in Ponce.

Brana: That's probably him. Arnold was an older guy. He was older. I was the youngest guy down there. I was a young kid.

Hollstein: So VonEckhart, Orancia, yourself?

Brana: John Wachter. Those are the names that come to ... you know.

Hollstein: They were all New York guys?

Brana: No. Just Henry and myself were from New York.

Brana: There were two other guys, but they were body guards at the office. Their assignment was to spend the days, you know, taking care and make sure that nobody got in that shouldn't be there.

Fred Voltz was one of the two and Dick Kaiser. Both of them had been in Puerto Rico with me prior to that time, when I was there from 1959 to 1961.

Hollstein: Were they all out of the New York office then?

Brana: Oh, no, no, no. There were only two of us out of New York. VonEckhart and myself were the only two out of New York.

Hollstein: Unhuh.

Brana: The others were... Like the SAC had been, you know. They had done legat work. Camarota was another one, Armand Camarota. Most of the other guys had done legat work so, you know, they were familiar... they were all Spanish-speaking agents.

Hollstein: Yeah, yeah.

Wally Estill was the SAC over on San Juan at the time.

Brana: Yeah. I knew Wally.

Hollstein: We did an interview.

Brana: Right.

Hollstein: In fact he says, "Hello," by the way too.

Brana: Oh, yeah?

Hollstein: Yeah. Everybody says, "Hello." Everybody I talk to, "Say 'hello' to Paul Brana for me."

Brana: Oh, yeah.

Hollstein: You're a famous guy.

Brana: Infamous.

Hollstein: Well known.

Brana: I mean how many FBI agents with diplomatic passports have been challenged to jump... to make a parachute jump?

Hollstein: Not very many.

Brana: That made a parachute jump.

You know one of the stories that I love to tell. When we got into the Dominican Republic. They fly us down in this C-130. We had a C-130 that was converted into master bedrooms. The whole airplane was nothing but five separate master bedrooms. And I think there were four or five of us Bureau agents that were being flown down there.

Hollstein: Did they fly out of, out of...

Brana: Out of Washington. Oh, we had to go down to Washington and get passports. I didn't know that FBI agents got diplomatic passports.

Hollstein: That's unusual, yeah.

Brana: And they went to Legats?

Hollstein: Right. Yeah, usually. We had to get official passports.

Brana: Yeah.

Well, I had a passport from before when I had done the Sky Marshal job. They gave us official passports then. But on this one they gave us diplomatic passports.

We land the C-130 in the Dominican Republic, and they have helicopters to fly us over. I said, "How come they're flying us over in helicopters? You know. How come we don't drive over?" "Well, the enemy has the roads."

Brana: I said, "The enemy has the roads?" Nobody had told us, you know, that there was a combat operation going on.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Brana: So we're going up in this God damned helicopter and I see this machine gun fire. I say, "Christ, nobody told us we were coming into combat." We could actually see the machine guns, you know, fire. Which I recognized.

Hollstein: Yeah. So Jack didn't tell you any of this when he sent you down there?

Brana: No, Jack didn't.

So, you know, six-and-a-half-months down there.

Hollstein: So you landed. Where did you stay while you were there then?

Brana: We stayed at the Jaraqua Hotel, in Santo Domingo. Henry and I, he was probably, he was at least 20 years older than me. We stayed in one, you know, one of the local hotels.

Hollstein: And where was the office at?

Brana: It was in Santo Domingo.

Hollstein: That in the same hotel?

Brana: Oh, no, no, no. They had a building which was in Santo Domingo.

Brana: It was in a secure area.

Hollstein: Yeah. Unhuh. What were you doing while you were there?

Brana: Conducting investigations. You know, individuals that were being considered for government positions.

Hollstein: So you were preparing for the new government to...?

Brana: Right. Right. We were checking to make sure. Our primary assignment was to make sure that no individuals, because the communists were trying to take over the government of the Dominican Republic, and we were there to make sure that nobody, you know, with any historic communist affiliations was considered for ...

Hollstein: So how would you get these leads? How would you know where to go and to investigate?

Brana: That's a few years ago. That's a few years ago.

Hollstein: It wasn't easy though. This was a big deal.

Brana: Oh, no. Oh, yeah. It was a hell of an assignment. But, you know most of the guys... Like I had never worked, for the most part, security work. I always did... You know. Like in New York, I would work in organized crime for Christ's sake. I was doing undercover work and they bring me in do this because of my language ability, I guess. Because Jack Danahy knew me. And that's how I ended up down there.

Hollstein: You got crossed up with Jack Danahy?

Brana: I was the only criminal agent down there. All the other guys had done all of this work all their lives. Henry VonEckhart, his father, I think had been ambassador to Mexico for Germany or someplace. But I mean, you know, he was an expert in his field. So I was learning, primarily learning from these other guys in how to ... you know.

Hollstein: How to deal with all of this?

Brana: Right.

Hollstein: What type of weaponry did they give you for something like this?

Brana: I was carrying my snub-nosed 38.

Hollstein: Unhuh. Not the best thing when people are carrying around whatever they were carrying at the time.

Brana: Oh! Oh! To give you an example, the type of activity that we... I remember that on a number of occasions that we got word that there was shooting going on, I wanted to know where the hell... you know, where the enemy was and where our guys were.

I would grab a helicopter. And I remember that I had Henry VonEckhart sitting in the back of the helicopter with both doors open. And we're up there. And he's sitting...Of course, Henry was a little older.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Brana: But we would go up, you know, and see where the firefights were. As a matter of fact, I had a helicopter pilot who, at one point, was teaching me how to fly a God damned helicopter, for Christ's sake. And it's a good thing that he did, because then I subsequently jumped. That's another story.

Hollstein: Let's finish out some of these thoughts. You were in combat gear while you were down there?

Brana: Oh, no, no. Just a plain shirt and a ...

Hollstein: It was quiet enough... That you didn't have to...

Brana: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Hollstein: It wasn't like Iraq?

Brana: The enemy was not... Quote enemy unquote... was not ... We were in the government, in the city, you know, in Santo Domingo, you know, which was primarily held by the government people.

Hollstein: So that was reasonably quiet?

Brana: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

Hollstein: No flak jackets or ...

Brana: No, no.

Hollstein: Stuff like that? Okay. And the other fellas were also doing ... Were they doing any intelligence work at all or?

Brana: Yeah. The ten of us were doing intelligence work.

Hollstein: Unhuh. You had resources that you could talk to?

Brana: Oh, yeah. Because we had the embassy. And they had a lot of people. And we were coming up, you know, developing people.

Hollstein: Because you mentioned you were doing background investigations and what-have-you.

Brana: Right, right.

Hollstein: So you had sources already that were down there that would help?

Brana: There were no established sources, because, you know, at the time, there was no FBI office down there. There were no agents that had been assigned down there.

Hollstein: was still there though? was still there?

Brana: Not to my knowledge. I never got to know any of those people.

Hollstein: Not at all?

Brana: No.

Hollstein: So your main dealings with them were the diplomatic people?

Brana: Right.

Hollstein: And they had resources?

Brana: And people, you know, and people that we went out on ... Yeah, exactly. People that they set us up with.

Hollstein: And how long were you down there in the DR?

Brana: I was there until the middle of October 1965. I was there a little over six months.

Hollstein: A good long time, though.

Brana: Oh, yeah.

Hollstein: Considering ...

Brana: Yeah. Particularly, since I had four sons at home, small children. And when I wanted to come home to visit them on annual leave, the man that was in charge of the office said to me that I couldn't go home without Bureau approval. I said, "Well I've earned my annual leave." I had to pay my own way home.

Hollstein: Is that right?

Brana: I had to pay my own way home. Until I got back to New York, and I spoke to an SAC by the name of Joe Schmidt. And I told Joe what the story was. He couldn't believe it. But he arranged it so when I returned to the Dominican Republic, the man in charge of the office said to me, "Next time we'll pay your way."

And I said, "Next time will be one way." I says, "I'm not returning here." I didn't.

Hollstein: Let's hear about your jumping story now. I know I'm killing you not asking you the story.

Brana: Well, we were eating C-rations. Because there was no place to eat down there and we were being issued C-rations. So one of the guys who had been in the service. He was also an officer. A guy by the name of Miguel Martinez had been a Captain and I had been a Lieutenant. And the paratroopers were down there.

I had been with the 11th Airborne Division. So I said to him, "Let's go eat with the military. So we went over there, Christ, they issued us mess passes to eat with the officers. So we're over there and I worked out an arrangement where every week, they would fill up my car with, what they call, class-B rations. I would give them a case of whiskey, and they would fill up my car with class B rations which I would bring back to the office.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Brana: Orrantia would cook the meals for all the guys. I did this for about 16 weeks. And then, you know, things changed a little bit so we could then go out and eat.

What happened was, one of these officers, military guys, realized that I had been a paratrooper, they challenged me to jump. I said, "What? Are you guys crazy? I haven't jumped since 1952 – 1953."

Hollstein: Had the technology changed much?

Brana: No.

Hollstein: Did they have new equipment or anything like that?

Brana: Not to my knowledge.

Hollstein: Go ahead. Just keep talking.

Brana: They gave me a complete uniform. You know, jump boots. I still have the jump boots, steel helmet liner, complete fatigues. One morning, I'm in complete uniform. I get Fred Voltz to drive me out. Freddy is retired out in California now. But he drives me out, takes my pictures, which I understand the copies of my picture in uniform got up to the Bureau.

Hollstein: They must have loved that.

Brana: I get in a Jeep with a Captain and we go out to the airfield. I thought they were jumping the C-130s. It was C-119's, which is what I jumped.

Hollstein: Do you just go right straight out the back on those?

Brana: Oh, yeah. They're jumping helicopters. I had never jumped out of a helicopter. And what do I do?

Can you believe a civilian puts on a uniform, walks up to a helicopter, takes a manifest from a sergeant, scribbles an individual off the manifest? I manifest myself, Paul J. Brana, Lieutenant, 01936809, which was my service number. I thought you jumped out of the helicopter. You had to get down on the strut while you're in the air.

Hollstein: Unhuh. And then jump?

Brana: And then jump. But I did it. And they awarded me the Expeditionary Medal for making an historic jump.

Hollstein: That's great. You're hooked up though when you're jumping?

Brana: Oh, yeah. The static line, in the C-119's, the static line was up above you. In the helicopter, the static line was across the floor from one side of the helicopter to the other and you strapped onto it.

Hollstein: Oh, yeah. How many people would jump in a group?

Brana: Five people.

Hollstein: That was all they could get?

Brana: Yeah. Oh, you jump one-at-a-time.

Hollstein: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Brana: Because you had to get down on the strut in order to jump out. You couldn't jump from inside the helicopter.

Hollstein: It wasn't efficient for dropping a lot of people.

Brana: It wasn't efficient because the helicopter tipped a little bit. You know, you're in the way of the chopper. But a blade is right above your parachute.

Hollstein: Not a good feeling, I'm sure.

Brana: But, you know, when you're challenged to do something...

Hollstein: It would be fun too, if an FBI guy backed down. You just couldn't do that. There's no way.

Brana: No, not very easily.

Hollstein: So, did any of the other people stay over after the Dominican Republic stuff was finished there? Any of the Bureau people?

Brana: No, none of us stayed. But I understand that they did assign permanent agents down there. I think there were two brothers that were assigned down there.

Hollstein: Could be. Yeah. I didn't get the names of anybody from around that time. Clark Anderson might have been...

Brana: No, no.

Hollstein: He was in the DR at one point, I guess.

Brana: Because I knew Clark from Puerto Rico.

Hollstein: Yeah. He was SAC when I was there.

Brana: I don't know anybody involved in that after I left.

Hollstein: So back to New York and home. Let's talk a little bit about the organized crime just for a bit. Get some sort of a feel.

Brana: Right.

Hollstein: So you were growing up with the organized crime program in New York. Right?

Brana: Right.

Hollstein: Was there an actual division at that time?

Brana: Oh, yeah. You know that's a good question.

I don't recall specifically... No, I don't think... There wasn't an organized crime division. There was a squad or two squads that were handling organized crime work. Initially, it was part of the criminal division.

Hollstein: Right, right. Was Duffin there at that time? And Mulroy.

Brana: Tom Duffin and Jimmy Mulroy – I knew both of them. I cannot say that they were supervisors at that time. They were not supervisors.

Hollstein: Who was your supervisor? It would make it much easier if you said who was your supervisor at that time?

Brana: You know, I don't even recall. I know the face, but, the name I can't recall. Maybe the reason for that is, the type of work that I got involved in, I was doing. Guy Berado and I started doing organized crime work in 1962. And we were the first two FBI agents that were undercover in the Mafia.

And we were targeted in New Jersey on a gambling operation that was run by a guy by the name of Tony Bananas. If you ask me what his Mafia name was, you know, you're talking about 40 years ago. I don't recall his name.

Hollstein: Nicknames were more fun anyway.

Brana: Yeah.

Brana: That operation was a lot of fun because they subsequently moved from New Jersey to New York. And they were operating out of the East Side, up in the 60's in New York City.

And Berado, my partner, and I both went in there undercover. And then they moved back to New Jersey. And I remember that we got into the game, went and hung out in the bar where they were steering from. And there was a Hispanic that was steering for the game who asked if... I remember one day he asked if... We were spending a lot of money, you know, trashing a lot of money. This guy comes over. "You guys looking for some action." We said, "Yeah."

So he took us to the game. We would go to the game from this particular bar. He would take us over there. He was subsequently killed after the FBI closed the entire operation. I think that they thought he was an informant of ours and that's why he was taking us to the game.

But I remember that we got quite a little bit of press on it. Because I recall that, while I was on the witness stand testifying, I think there were about 24, 25 individuals that were arrested for running this operation. All organized crime connected.

But while I was on the stand testifying, I was asked, "Well, weren't you afraid, you know, for the fact that you could have been arrested? Police could have come in?" I said, "No, because I had been advised that the police were on the take."

But, and, of course, this made the headlines in the newspapers with my name that I had testified that the operation was protected by the police.

But that was the first operation that Berado and I got involved in. And we got involved in a number of other ones. And then Guy became a supervisor and I continued to do organized crime undercover operations.

The last one that I did was probably, I did it from 1962 to 1974. The last one that I did was on the Carlo Gambino family, was running a gambling operation in Brooklyn.

Brana: I happened to be the supervisor of that squad. And I'll never forget this... Because the agent, Dick Nally... Jimmy Kalstrom was my number one man. Dick Nally, who was the case agent, comes to me one day and he says, "Hey Paul, we can't get anybody to go undercover in this operation."

I says, "What? Are you kidding me? There must be somebody that's willing." He says, "Nobody wants to go." And he says, "Why don't you go in? You used to do this."

So I end up. I'm the supervisor. I'm supervising the Gambino squad during the day. And at night, I'm going into a gambling operation collecting evidence.

Hollstein: That was a colorful crowd that was in that crew also there at the time. Is that the one where they had the installation that was found?

Brana: You're talking about the gambling operation. Oh, no it isn't. No. No. That was a different one.

No. As a matter of fact, this was 1974 that I was undercover in that operation. And in 1987, during the trial of John Gotti, I testified during the John Gotti trial because now he was being charged with RICO, and they were showing, you know, the continuing operation from 1974, you know, until 1985, you know, that it was still being run by Gotti.

But you know, you talk about a small world. Maurice Roussell and I get involved in the murder of Manny Gambino. And this was a straight out investigation.

And we had an individual who was suspect as the killer of Manny Gambino but we had no evidence. Because we couldn't... We had no evidence. We could not find the Gambino's automobile until about four or five months after. His automobile was found parked at Teterboro Airport in New Jersey.

No body. He's disappeared. Oh, and what had occurred was that there was an attempt to... There was an alleged kidnapping of Manny Gambino and they attempted to extort money from the Gambino family. We know that he's dead, you know, because he has disappeared.

Hollstein: Sure. Well, now, that was an interesting case too. Just going back a little bit. He was what? A cousin of Carlo Gambino? Or a...

Brana: He was a nephew of Carlo Gambino.

Hollstein: And his mother, or some women in the group actually called the FBI. That was the first time they had ever called the FBI.

Brana: Yeah. The FBI received a call, and I think that there was an FBI agent there during the alleged payoff. He was one of our...

Hollstein: The whole thing was managed as a kidnap investigation. That had never had been done before. ...organized crime...

Brana: It really wasn't run as a kidnapping operation by the FBI. There was only one agent. What was the Italian agent's name? Tony? We had an Italian agent who had informants. I think he might have been there at the time of the payoff.

Hollstein: I'm probably getting it mixed up with the Bronfmans.

Brana: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Hollstein: That's a whole different story.

Brana: Oh yes.

Hollstein: The Gambino's... I was out on that too. And we were around interviewing all kinds of OC figures.

Brana: Oh, really.

Hollstein: All over the place. All over Brooklyn. Yeah.

Brana: Yeah, yeah.

Hollstein: Yeah. It was an excuse to get in there and talk to these guys. They weren't happy about it.

Brana: We came up with this Robert Henry Sentner as an individual suspect. The way that we came up with him... On the night of the payoff, which was made at Fort Lee, New Jersey. I think there was, maybe, \$130,000 was paid off. A ransom was actually paid at Fort Lee, New Jersey.

Brana: The police at night would go around and check the license, would take the license numbers of all the vehicles that were parked in the area. And they come up with a license plate that's a rental license plate to a van rented to this Robert Henry Sentner.

And somehow or another, Sentner is known to Maurice Roussell. And Maurice Roussell and I contact Sentner. And we bring him into the City, and we start talking to him. And we would talk to him, sometimes... once a week we'd bring him in.

Sentner was a young guy. Georgetown University graduate. And we would interview him very, very frequently. We had a hotel. We would get a six-pack of beer and we would go up and kind of try to relax him.

The vehicle ... Gambino's vehicle had not been found. It was subsequently found at Teterboro Airport. All the glass is taken off the vehicle and sent to Washington for fingerprints. After about five months from the initial alleged kidnapping and payoff, the window on the driver's side is found to have Sentner's thumbprint inside the window quite a distance from the edge.

So I tell Sentner, "You were driving the vehicle because your thumbprint is in the vehicle." And I kept breaking his chops. He finally admits to killing the guy. We had no evidence whatsoever that there had been a killing.

Hollstein: The guy just disappeared, right?

Brana: Exactly. But he tells us that he was driving the vehicle and that Gambino had threatened him, because he owed Gambino like \$80,000 from gambling debts. And that Gambino said to him, "Hey, you don't come up with the money, your sister's baby is going to have problems." Or words to that effect.

At this time, Sentner takes out a 22 caliber gun, which he had in his pocket, sticks it behind Gambino's left ear and kills him. That's the story that he tells us.

Now of course we have no body. "Come on I'll take you to the body." He takes us down to Redbank, New Jersey. And, of course all the senior Resident Agents... Nobody wanted to get involved in digging up the body, so I had to call up New York and bring one of my agents over. Wayne Orrell, an Indian. And...

Hollstein: From Muskogee, Oklahoma.

Brana: And Sentner takes us over and he says, "This is where the body is." And I got Wayne, and he digs up the body. Which makes the first page of the *Daily News*, because I called up Norma Abrams, who was a reporter for the *Daily News*. And they sent a photographer out, took a picture of ...

Hollstein: I think Charlie Christopher was in on that one too, if I remember correctly. They both came back complaining about the job. I remember that.

Brana: Yeah, the name sounds familiar. We got a lot of good press on that one.

Hollstein: And quite a bit of intelligence too, because we were out. There were lots of interviews being done of Gambino people and I talked to some old woman with... Steve Edwards and I went out on that one. And we talked to some old woman. And she had the most enormous Doberman Pincer. All that dog wanted to do was eat us.

Brana: Is that right?

Hollstein: It was just killing him to have to sit there. And he was watching and watching. Any move we'd make, he was gonna nail us.

Brana: You want to hear a Gambino story?

In 1990, we have a Manhattan College reunion. And one of the guys, who had been in my class, who was now a supervisor with the Internal Revenue Service ... "Hey Paul, what do you think of Tommy Gambino?"

I said, "What are you talking about? He says, "You remember Tommy that was in our class." I says, "Yeah, he was a good friend of mine. What about him?" He says, "That's the Tommy Gambino that's son of Carlo Gambino." I said, "You're kidding me."

Hollstein: You were connected and you didn't know it.

Brana: I never. Here, we get involved in the Manny Gambino case. I never knew that Tommy, who was a good friend of mine in college, who was a real nice guy. I never knew that he was *the* Tommy Gambino.

As a matter of fact, Tommy has, since that time, done all kinds of jail time. He runs the garment center as well as the trucking down there. Good Catholic kid.

Hollstein: Yeah. Well brought up, you know. So many of these stories when you watch “The Sopranos” on TV...or some of these Mafia folks like the Good Guys, Goodfellas” ...

Brana: “Goodfellas”

Hollstein: I was sitting at lunch, I said, “That’s exactly... Those are the people we dealt with.” They look like that; they talk like that.

Brana: Yeah, yeah.

Hollstein: That’s the way they are.

Okay, this is side 2 of our recording with Brian Hollstein and Paul Brana, March 30, 2005, at the New York AC. I’m sorry for the transcriber here but we’ll do the best we can. Hopefully this will clear up.

Paul, I didn’t read your book here. But, maybe, we could start in on that and get a feel for what we have. Roughly, when did the material that’s in this part of the book take place? What era?

Brana: The 1960’s.

Hollstein: 1960?

Brana: I believe it was like 1965. 1968, 1969.

Hollstein: Go ahead. This involved the Attorney General of the United States. And the name of the book is by *Wall Street Swindler: An Insider’s Story of Mob Operations in the Stock Market* by Michael Hellerman. And it’s Doubleday and Company. It’s getting back a ways now.

Brana: Yeah. Yeah.

Hollstein: So, tell me how did you happen to run across Hellerman and get involved in the book?

Brana: Hellerman had been indicted for the Wall Street boiler room operation. And somehow or another, Bob Morvillo, who was the prosecutor, who was Martha Stewart's attorney, recently. Paul Stapelton was the case agent. And somebody came up with the idea of running an undercover operation. And that's where they brought me in to do the undercover.

The undercover was to try and put the fix in on indictments that were expected to come down from the United States Department of Justice. The indictments involved, a guy by the name of Johnny Dio, Johnny Diaguardi. He was a connected mob guy in New York. He was a heavyweight hitter. He was an extortionist, and he had taken a payoff from Mike Hellerman. Hellerman is the guy that brings me into this because of the fact that Hellerman was cooperating with Morvillo in the case.

Hollstein: So Hellerman was the defendant?

Brana: Hellerman was the defendant. Right. And he decides to cooperate with the government. So the idea is to bring a wise guy in to go down to Washington to put the fix in on an indictment which is expected on Johnny Diaguardi. And then the guy picked out to go to Washington eventually to put the fix in on the indictment if at all possible.

So in New York, I meet with a group of people that include a guy by the name of Joe Bond and, of course, Mike Hellerman, and a guy who is a Washington influence peddler. Understand that this happened a few years ago so I don't remember all of the details.

But the general story was that I was willing to pay up to \$200,000. Hellerman and his associates, a guy by the name of Joe Ball, had an individual who was a Washington influence peddler. He was a heavyweight in Washington politics.

Brana: He would end up with \$100,000. And there was another \$100,000 which I was to pay. In other words, I was to pay \$200,000. \$100,000 to the Washington influence peddler and \$100,000 to whoever could put the fix in on the indictment. An indictment that was to come down on Johnny Diaguardi, Johnny Dio who was the mob guy.

To make a long story short, it ends up, I go down to Washington and I meet with a guy by the name of Carson. Carson is the Administrative Assistant to the United States Senator Hiram Fong. Fong was the man who was responsible for making all federal judges. So I meet with Carson and I tell him, you know, that I've got \$100,000 for his man, whoever he can get to put the fix in. And I have \$100,000 for the influence peddler that's taking me down to Washington. It's around Christmas time and I give him \$2,500. I say, "Here's \$2,500 for you. Get yourself something for Christmas." And the agreement is that I go down the next week and see what he's been able to do. There is a book that was written on part of this story which involves Mike Hellerman, called "The Wall Street Swindler."

I subsequently go back to Washington the second time and I meet with Hellerman and we... Not with Hellerman, rather with Carson, with Bob Carson. And he says to me, you know, that he had reached out to the number one man in the Justice Department. But it was too hot to handle, that the indictments had already come down. He said when it came down to sentencing they were involved in making judges, that they could reach out to him, you know, and see that the right thing was done.

I come back to New York and I tell Bob Morvillo ... I said, "This guy is full of shit. He didn't reach the number one man in the Justice Department. He couldn't have gotten up that high."

I subsequently find out that on Wednesday of that particular week, Richard Kleindienst, the Deputy Attorney General of the United States, is meeting with John Mitchell, the Attorney General of the United States, and one of the things that they were discussing at that meeting was the use of an undercover FBI agent in an operation.

Brana: That any time that an FBI agent went undercover, it had to be approved by the Attorney General of the United States. The particular matter that they were discussing was the matter which involved the use of Paul Brana, the undercover agent, to meet in the United States Capitol, Washington, D.C., with Bob Carson, who was the Administrative Assistant to the United States Senator Hiram Fong.

It is at this time that the Deputy Attorney General of the United States, Richard Kleindienst, tells John Mitchell, the Attorney General of the United States, that he was contacted and that he was offered \$100,000 if the fix could be put in this case involving John DiGuardi. If the fix could be put in in this case.

It is at this time that Kleindienst now tells the Attorney General that he was, in fact, contacted. He had never previously reported at the time that he was contacted, to the Attorney General, his boss.

Subsequently, the trial in the Southern District of New York, Brana testifies, Special Agent Brana, that he had gone down to Washington, D.C., that he had met with Carson, that he had made Carson the offer, and that Carson had told him to report. Carson never told the Attorney General of the United States that he had been offered, that he had personally been offered \$100,000.

Subsequently, Brana testifies to making the offer of \$100,000. Carson testifies that he was made an offer which he considered it a political contribution, not a bribe.

Hollstein: Oh boy.

Brana: *The New York Times* writes a scathing editorial. An editorial stating, quote... "And here's the Attorney General of the United States... Because Kleindienst was now... he had succeeded John Mitchell as the Attorney General of the United States." And here was Kleindienst, in the Southern District of New York, testifying "that he was offered a bribe of \$100,000... he considered it to be a political contribution and not a bribe."

Hollstein: Amazing.

Brana: Yeah. Amazing.

Brana: That's probably the most interesting case that I was involved in while doing undercover work.

Hollstein: We're back on again.

Paul, I wanted to ask you about kinds of training, how you were selected? What did the Bureau do for undercover people at that time?

Brana: The Bureau did nothing. It was Mr. Berado and myself. He was an Italian and we were working organized crime. You know, we knew what these guys were like. You know. We didn't need any training. We knew how to talk. I mean Berado was a Jersey guy. I'm a New York guy. I'm from the West Side, from Hell's Kitchen. I know how to talk to these people. We didn't need any training. Who in the Bureau was gonna train us?

Hollstein: That was what I was wondering about. And later on they did develop training for undercover.

Brana: When did they develop a program, training for undercover?

Hollstein: Ed O'Brien was down at the Bureau at the time. He was a supervisor there.

Brana: When did they do that?

Hollstein: Probably in the late 1970's.

Brana: Oh I doubt it very much. In the late 1970's? I never heard of it.

Hollstein: Well, he was telling me that they had started putting it together. I guess they had. You had broken the ice. You and then Dick, Buffalo Dick. What was his name? Genova? The guy that went up to Buffalo and was undercover with the LCN up there.

Brana: There were a couple of guys. Yeah. We had Joe Pistone.

Hollstein: Yeah. Pistone also. And that sort of got things started.

Brana: I did it. I know Genova. I never heard of Genova going undercover.

Hollstein: That's what I recall just from my own memory. I could be wrong on that. But the point was that they had had some people undercover later on, after you and Berado had been doing some.

Brana: Joe Pistone.

Hollstein: And then had some bad results too.

Brana: Oh, is that right?

Hollstein: Yeah, where, you know, the guys had run into problems.

Brana: Well, talking about that, that reminds me of the Star of India case.

Hollstein: Yeah. Let's go on with that.

Brana: And, of course, the Star of India case was a theft of this magnificent diamond out of the Metropolitan Museum. And how Berado and I get involved is. Well, we're playing the fact that the mob is being accused of having been involved in stealing the diamond. And there's a guy by the name of Murph the Surf. Murph is the guy that is supposed to have stolen it.

So we have it set up that Berado and I go down to Miami around Christmas time. And we're trying to meet with Murph the Surf. And for whatever reason, he's not available. So we end up with Allan Dale Kuhn.

And Kuhn is the guy that was involved with Murph the Surf and the theft of the diamond from the museum. We meet with him and he tells us, you know, that he has pledged the diamond. We're purporting to be New York wise guys and that there's bad publicity being brought on the mob, on the wise guys because of this particular theft, and that the mob is being accused of perpetrating it. And we want to buy the diamond back, you know, for the mob, you know, to get the heat off the mob.

Hollstein: Unhuh.

Brana: And Allan Dale Kuhn tells us that it has already been pledged to an Eastern Airlines pilot... that it has been pledged for \$100,000. And he doesn't have it. And they don't have it. That it's already pledged. And, of course, it subsequently turns out that an Eastern Airlines pilot...

Brana: Mike Robinoff, who was the case agent on the case in Miami, subsequently executed a search warrant on the Eastern Airlines pilot's house, but they missed the Star of India.

Hollstein: So he actually did have it?

Brana: Oh he did have it.

Hollstein: Yeah?

Brana: But it was concealed in the air conditioner in the window of his apartment. And they did not search the air conditioner, in the window of his apartment, where it was alleged to have been concealed at the time.

Hollstein: When was this? Just roughly?

Brana: Oh, Christ.

Hollstein: Mid 1970's?

Brana: No. It has got to be in the early 1960's ... in the mid 1960's.

Hollstein: Mid 1960's?

Brana: Or late 1960's.

Hollstein: Okay.

Brana: It got tremendous press in New York because this Murph the Surf was a bad killer. He had killed a number of young women, so he had a very, very bad reputation. He was alleged to have been killing them. And I think that eventually that's what he ended up going to jail for.

Hollstein: Yeah, yeah. He went down for the murder.

Brana: Right. But an Eastern Airlines pilot was found to have possession... subsequently ended up with the Star of India which was a big caper in New York. He got twenty years.

Hollstein: Oh yeah. Did you have any money to back this up?

Brana: Not at the time, but, you know, any time we needed money.

Hollstein: Was it difficult getting money?

Brana: No. As a matter of fact on one operation that I had with this guy, Joe Zitto, who was a made guy out of the Rochester area... and then the Bureau gave me \$15,000 to bankroll a crap game up there.

Hollstein: So they were willing to spend?

Brana: Oh the Bureau was willing to do whatever had to be done. I had no problem in my own mind that the Bureau would come up with whatever money was needed to do a job. Because, you know, we went into gambling operations and we always had money to do the jobs with.

Hollstein: That's interesting because, you know, the Bureau has ...

Brana: As a matter of fact ... excuse me for interrupting. But I gotta tell you. How did I find out that my father had passed away?

I'm undercover up in Buffalo doing a securities buy. I'm in a hotel room with a wise guy. And I don't recall now what it was that, specifically what it was that he was selling. But the phone rings and I answer the phone and it's the case agent, who is now in San Francisco. And I wish I could remember his name.

"Paul, I've been told by the SAC. I gotta tell you. Your father has passed away and I've been told that I had to tell you at this particular time."

That's how I found out that my father...

Hollstein: Oh my.

Brana: This guy was a great agent. He was out of Buffalo. He had me with this Joe Zitto in Rochester. He had me doing undercover. As a matter of fact, he had me out in San Francisco one time doing undercover. And this was mostly in the 1960's. His name will come to me. Graham Deshernine.

Hollstein: That's a hell of a way to tell you about something like that.

Brana: Yeah. That's how I found out that my father died. In 1971, that was. September 7th, I think, was the day in 1971.

Hollstein: Any other undercover ones you recall you want to tell me about?

Brana: That's probably the major ones.

Hollstein: Did these go on for any length of time? The undercover jobs.

Brana: What about the *Olympic*? The one on the boat? The *USS Olympic*, where we went on for the weekend. I gave you the newspaper clipping.

Hollstein: Yeah, yeah. I saw that. Yeah.

Brana: On that one, we got on the boat. This was run by the mob. They had sent guys in from Las Vegas. They had rented the *USS Homeric*... was the name of my recollection. And apparently it was the *USS Olympic*. I don't know where the hell they got that name from.

We were on it Friday, Saturday and Sunday. And it docks on Monday morning. We were, of course, participating in all the games on the boat. And by this time, the Coast Guard has taken us off. They come out on a Sunday night about 2:00 in the morning and they take us out. So that when the ship docks, we can be on the dock and point out all the people that have been... to be arrested.

Of course, the ship docks. And Berado and I are on the deck and we're pointing out the various operators of the game who were involved in operating the game. And some young looking, good looking female comes down off the boat, "Oh, look at those two guys. Aren't they big shots?"

And I said, "Lock her ass up."

Fortunately they found narcotics on her. So she got arrested for narcotics. But the only reason I had her arrested was because of her smart-ass attitude.

Yeah. That was a weekend on the high seas.

Hollstein: Most of these though were sort of buy-and-bust or short term undercover operations, right?

Brana: Yeah. There was nothing like Joe Pistone. Which in my personal opinion, and that's just my personal opinion. You don't have to put up. And I know there's one just exploded where they had an FBI agent undercover for two-and-a-half years.

I don't know whether or not it's necessary to put FBI agents undercover for extended periods of time. I think that it's just... Put them undercover in any type of under operation. As long as you're able to get the right type guy that fits into the picture.

Hollstein: Yeah. Yeah.

Brana: But you don't have to put them in like they did with Joe Pistone, you know, and interrupt his life for seven years. You know, when Joe had finished his operation, they sent him down to Mississippi someplace and he's working for an SAC down there that's apparently breaking his balls. So Joe resigns from the Bureau. And he calls me up one day.

I'm with *The New York Times*, because I had hired four or five retired FBI agents. He says to me, "Paul, I'm looking for a job." I says, "Joe, what do you mean, you're looking for a job? What happened with the Bureau?"

He says, "I resigned." I said, "Why?" And he says, "Hey, you know, they were just giving me a bad time."

I said, "How in Christ can they give you a bad time? You have two more years to retire. Go back into the Bureau and get your retirement." So that's what Joe did.

Hollstein: Good, good.

Brana: And, subsequently, when he retired, he was out running classes for the FBI. Which I mean, certainly, when a man with his experience was invaluable to the FBI.

But I don't believe, in my own personal opinion, that you need guys, you know, to upset their lives and put them undercover for like... Joe was out there for seven years.

Brana: All you gotta do is get a couple of good cases on a couple of the big made guys and you get them to turn on the big guys. That's how we got most of the big guys in. That's just my personal opinion.

Hollstein: Yeah. I guess there has been some bad returns on these things too. You know, where the agent ran into mental problems and all kinds of stuff.

Brana: Oh yeah. I can well imagine.

Hollstein: Being under like that, every moment you gotta be on the alert and concerned about what you're saying and doing. And after a while, you lose contact. Seven years is a long, long time in a guy's career.

I've got a note here that says, "A. G. Kennedy." What happened there?

Brana: Oh! One day Jack Danahy grabs me. He says, "Paul, I want you with Guy Berado and go into the back office." "Okay, Jack." You know Jack was a very popular ...

Hollstein: Oh yeah.

Brana: And Guy and I go back in the office and who does he bring into the office, but Bobby Kennedy, the Attorney of the United States. So Jack Danahy says, "Okay, now tell Mr. Kennedy about what you've been doing in organized crime, you know, your undercover work."

So we proceeded. And this is the first time that I had ever met an Attorney General who was interested in the type of work that we were doing. And I'll tell you. Bobby Kennedy was a hell of a fine Attorney General. And, of course, we spent time with him. You know, telling him about all of the different types of cases that we had been involved in. I thought it was very interesting that here's an Attorney General who is willing to talk to the people that are out doing the work. I thought that was very nice of him.

Hollstein: Oh yeah, yeah. It inspires you then too.

Brana: It does. It definitely does.

Hollstein: You want to keep going and do more stuff.

Brana: Yeah. I was involved in the, as I mentioned before, in the Gambino operation when I was a supervisor. And I subsequently end up testifying in the John Gotti case which ends up from the 1974 case involving the Gambinos.

Did I mention the... I mentioned the Gambinos.

Hollstein: Manny's kidnap and murder, yeah.

Brana: Yeah.

Hollstein: We didn't talk much about the Gambinos in general. You had mentioned his son, who you went to school with, yeah.

Brana: I had mentioned the fact that we were in the same class, yeah, Manny Gambino.

Hollstein: Well, no. It was Tommy.

Brana: Yeah.

Hollstein: Tommy Gambino.

Brana: Manny and Tommy were cousins.

The other big case that I had was the HOMEX case, homosexual extortion case. We had a former FBI agent.

Hollstein: Oh, boy.

Brana: I had two Generals that I busted out of the Army. I had an Admiral. Senator Church, I believe, I don't think he was a Congressman; I think he was a Senator, had a nephew in the Navy. He was an Admiral. And we were competing with Frank Hogan's office, the District Attorney's office. We were competing. They had gotten into this case before we got into it, but they did not have the ability to contact throughout the United States.

Hollstein: Right.

Brana: We had a case in New Jersey where an individual comes into the FBI office and says that he wants his \$11,000 bail that he had given to FBI agents. They didn't know what the hell he was talking about.

We had another one in New York. Oh, we had a case where Eastern Airlines gives the Miami office copies of the list warrants for individuals in North Carolina, which was sent to New York because the flight had originated in New York. And I end up identifying two guys: one of them by the name of Elwood Lee Hammock and the other one Sherman Chadwick Kaminsky. And these were the chief two extortionists for this United States operation which was being run by a Chicago Detective Sergeant by the name of Johnny Pyne.

I ended up getting Johnny Pyne two five-year sentences in Chicago, concurrent. He was extorting homosexuals throughout the United States. He did not get much publicity throughout the United States because these people were not prominent individuals. We even had a former FBI agent that was the subject of an extortion. And how do I know that he was a former FBI agent?

Edward Lee Hammock and Sherman Chadwick Kaminsky. Once that Kaminsky was arrested by me the second time, he became extensively cooperative. He was telling me about all of the extortions that he had committed in the United States.

We had an individual in the early 1960's who had paid over \$150,000 in extortions. What would happen. Once you were extorted, they would come back. What they were saying was, "Hey look, we're law enforcement. And you seem like a nice guy. Give us some money. We'll put up the bail; we'll get somebody else to go in and stand for you in bail so you don't have to go in."

And these individuals were purporting to be law enforcement, and they had all kinds of law enforcement badges. And they would allege that they were gonna represent this individual so, therefore, you didn't have to show up. They would keep coming back saying, "Your court appearance date is coming up again so you have ..."

Brana: So they would keep getting more money, more money. As I say. One individual out of Kansas City had paid up to approximately \$150,000.

But we got a guy in New Jersey who comes in. He wants his \$11,000 bail. When the guys in New Jersey, they don't know what the hell they're talking about. They end up sending it into New York, and I put it together with some other cases that I had. And that's where we come up with this HOMEX – homosexual extortions.

Hollstein: It's kind of interesting. You connected the dots, like they say.

Brana: Yeah. That's true.

And Sherman Chadwick Kaminsky... It ends up, we even solved a murder. Kominsky gives me five sapphires for a ring that he had bought from a guy in Atlantic City which had been for a ring. From one of the young kids that was being used as a homosexual, that was entrapping these homosexual individuals, had sold the stars to Kaminsky, who turns them over to me. And we solve a murder in Atlantic City of the Fudge King who had been killed by this kid and stolen his ring. And he sells the ring to Kaminsky, who in turn ends up giving it to me.

Kaminsky, as I say. Johnny Pyne got ten years. And then we had all kinds of individual, other extortionists that were participating, who were identified by Kaminsky and by Elwood Lee Hammock throughout the United States. And we had all kinds of extortion. As I say...

Hollstein: You mentioned you had some Admirals?

Brana: We had Senator Church's nephew, who was subpoenaed to New York by Frank Hogan's office. Who committed suicide on his way to New York.

Brana: I had two Generals that I busted out of the Army. I had a kid... a Colonel, a full Colonel in the Air Force who I had interviewed by an agent by the name of Jack Pfaff in North Carolina. And he gives Pfaff a line of bullshit.

Brana: So I call him up on the telephone and I tell him, "Look, I want your ass up here in New York. Either you come up here voluntarily or I'll have you subpoenaed." He comes up to New York and I say to him, "Look, I've read the story that you told Jack Pfaff about... I don't want to hear that bullshit. I want you to tell me the story right from the beginning."

And he tells me the story about how he's extorted. He was one of these homosexual victims that was extorted.

Hollstein: Yeah, yeah.

Brana: Of course, it's 40 years ago.

Hollstein: Speaking of vulnerable. They were very vulnerable then.

Brana: Well, what they were doing. They had these young kids, 18, 19 and 20. They were working places like the Hotel Astor. And they'd send them into the Astor. And the kids would hang around, they would play the part like they were a little mushy, a little available. And some guy would pick them up. And the guy would go to commit an act on them, and they would turn on him. And then they would turn them over. You know, they would rob them.

What the kids would do is they would rob the individual of his property, turn it over to the extortionist, who would then come in and bang the shit out of him for all kinds of money.

Hollstein: Sure.

Brana: They had warrants. They had legitimate warrants. They had legitimate badges. They the badge of a New York City Police Officer which we recovered. So it was a major case. We didn't get much press.

Oh, Jesus! We had the president of the transportation company that transports all the vehicles that are sold around the United States. Have you seen these big green vehicles, transports?

Hollstein: Oh yeah.

Brana: We had the president of that company in New York. And he was a little reluctant to testify. I'll never forget it because Andy Maloney, who was the Chief Prosecutor in these cases, had him in his office. And I was there and I had to go out to coach a baseball game with my kids that night. And I said to him, "Look, I'm gonna leave. When I come back here tomorrow morning, I want to know that you have told Mr. Maloney," and there was another ADA with him, "all the facts."

Brana: I come back the next morning and he had spilled his guts as to how he was extorted.

Hollstein: Great. Fascinating set of things you bump into like that. You developed that whole thing then?

Brana: Yeah. We were the office of origin, and we contacted every office in the United States, because these extortions were going on all over the United States.

Hollstein: Yeah. Sure.

Brana: Yes. As a matter fact, on a second case, that I got John Pyne the second five years, we had a doctor, a doctor that was extorted. And he gives a description of the extortioner. And I'm looking at the description of the extortioner, and I says, "This is Johnny Pyne's ... This is his description."

So I sent the photograph of John Pyne, with other photographs to that particular office, and the doctor identifies him as being the extortioner. So Johnny Pyne went to trial, and got another five years on top of that.

Hollstein: That was a good racket while it lasted, I guess.

Brana: Oh yeah. They were making big ... Because they were impersonating police officers.

Hollstein: And they're not draining the guy too badly.

Brana: No.

Hollstein: \$30,000...

Brana: They would come back. They would come back all the time for additional money.

Hollstein: But if you got a lot of them ...

Brana: And, if it hadn't been for that guy in New Jersey that comes in looking for his bail money. He was looking for bail money. He wanted his \$11,000 bail.

So New Jersey didn't know what to do with it, so they sent it into New York. And, by that time, I had the same men with Kaminsky and Hammock flying down to Florida and leaving their bag on the airplane with the New York City Police Department badge with these warrants. So the Miami office sends it up to New York.

So here's Brana, he's got this out of New York; he's got the one out of Jersey. And I had another one out of Chicago. And I don't recall the details right now. But I put this thing together called HOMEX, and we circulated it to every office in the United States. And we came up with a lot of extortions.

Hollstein: That's good. Good work.

Brana: As a matter of fact, it must have been approximately 11 years later, Kaminsky takes off. He calls me up one day. And he has been very cooperative. He calls me up one day and says, "Mr. Brana, I'm taking off." I said, "Chad, thanks for all of your help. We really appreciate it."

So he becomes a Bureau fugitive. So I remember that years later, I'm running a drug enforcement operation. They were running it in three states in the United States – Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York. And I end up being the supervisor of the New York DEA/FBI operation.

And one day I get a call from a woman. She says to me, "Are you still looking for Chad Kaminsky?" And I said, "Yes, yes." She said, "You're gonna get a call telling you where he is." And within an hour later Pinky, his girlfriend, calls up and Pinky was calling me from the state of Washington. She said, "Paul, I'm a little unhappy with Sherman. He hasn't been doing the right thing. He's in Canada. He's coming back."

Brana: So I called up Bob Tolann, who was the case agent, and I told Bob, you know, here is where he is. He's up in Canada. He's coming back south. So they grab him. He had been a fugitive for ten/eleven years.

Hollstein: Bob Tolann was... He's the brother of Tommy?

Brana: He's Tommy's brother. They had a bar on 54th Street.

Hollstein: Is that still there?

Brana: I don't know. I don't know.

Hollstein: That was down where we used to get the cars out of the garage.

Brana: Oh, yeah. How could I forget it.

Hollstein: How about Bronfman? Let's go on to the Bronfman kidnap unless you got more?

Brana: Yeah. There was nothing major on Bronfman. The only thing about that was that I ended up with my picture on the front page of *The New York Times*. I did something that I shouldn't have done. Maybe I shouldn't repeat it, but I will.

When the two kidnappers were arrested on Sunday morning, one of them was a fireman and the other one owned a business. And Jimmy Kalstrom and I had about 15 cars out cause we knew where the kidnap victim was, but the God damned United States Attorney wanted a search warrant before we could hit the apartment.

Hollstein: I was part of that group, yeah.

Brana: You were? You were on the street?

Hollstein: On the street, yeah.

Brana: So we had been out all week doing surveillances. And we hadn't been God damned sleeping. And we had been out Friday night; the payoff was supposed to take place. And this is Saturday afternoon so I call in the office. I say, "Hey, you gotta replace us. You know, we just can't stay awake any longer."

Brana: Because I found out that they wanted to get search warrants. So I tell the office... I said, "Send 15 cars out. Replace the units that we have out here. We can't stay awake any longer. We've been working this all week. The payoff was supposed to be taking place."

So they execute the search warrant that night. And I'm back in the office and I got the two kidnapers. And I got them in separate offices. And I knew that there was a third party in the kidnapers' car.

I knew that there was a third party. I knew it was a woman because the kidnap victim, young Bronfman, had stated that there was a woman in the car because he was, of course, blindfolded so he couldn't see. But he could smell perfume. And he said that, at some point, they let somebody out of the car and that that person was a woman because he could hear the clicking of her shoes.

So I got the two kidnapers on Sunday morning. I got them. They're in separate rooms and I go in and talk to one of them. And I go in and talk to the guy who I knew was married because I knew the fireman wasn't married. I said, "Look, I'm not going to bring your wife into this is ..."

And we didn't know where the money was. That was the whole thing. We got the two kidnapers, but we needed the money. So I said to the guy who was married, I said, "I'm not gonna bring your wife into this as long as you tell me where the money is."

He says, "Let me talk to my partner."

So I give them a couple of minutes – the two of them together, split them. They tell me where the money is. So I go out and I recover the money on Sunday morning. And I get the gun.

Hollstein: Big picture of you with it.

Brana: And that's how my picture ends up. That's 1975, August of 1975.

And who would believe that three years later, I end up as Director of Security for *The New York Times*. That's why I always say I got my job through *The New York Times*.

Hollstein: I think that's the same time when there was that funny story about the husband and wife with agents?

Brana: Monserate.

Hollstein: Were surveiling the drop.

Brana: A clerk working for me upstairs.

Hollstein: That's right.

Brana: Sure, because they were both going to the place down at ... They were in Miami.

Hollstein: Oh, no, no. I'm thinking about the surveillance of the drop. They were in a cab.

Brana: Oh, oh, oh.

Hollstein: They were in one of our cabs.

Brana: Oh, I didn't know that.

Hollstein: And Frank says ...

Brana: How the hell did she get in the cab?

Hollstein: She was in there with them.

Brana: She was an agent?

Hollstein: She was an agent, yeah. Monserate.

Brana: At that time?

Hollstein: Monserate was married to ... I forget her name now. But anyway, the cab has a radio in it, of course.

Brana: Yeah.

Hollstein: And they got into a big argument about which way the car went that picked up from the drop. And he's saying, "No, he turned right." And I said, "No, he turned left." And they're arguing away. And nobody could talk because the radio was stuck on, I guess.

Brana: Yeah.

Hollstein: And then there was a big blow-out between the two of them.

Brana: The payoff takes place in front of two FBI agents sitting in a Volkswagen.

Hollstein: Right. That's right. Yeah, they ...

Brana: Up on Queens Boulevard. In that area.

Hollstein: Right. They had ... Were gonna position themselves...

Brana: Because we had the Coast Guard... We had a heat package in the money.

Hollstein: Right.

Brana: And we got a Coast Guard airplane that is supposed to be telling us which way that they're taking off. And Jimmy Kalstrom was driving me. And they're going up, you know, going north. And he goes ... smashes ... through the Triboro Bridge without paying the toll.

Finally, they tell us, "We've lost the package."

Hollstein: Right.

Brana: "We've lost the package." That's why we all ended back up in the office, 'cause we didn't know where the hell they were.

Hollstein: We were right behind you.

Brana: What happened was we had all kind of vehicles all over Brooklyn.

Hollstein: Oh yeah.

Brana: And you could believe it? We got the license plate. The license plate... We're in the office. It's like 3:00 in the morning and I get word that they've got the license plate in Brooklyn. I says it's gotta be a stolen plate. I said, "No idiot would go out and do a kidnapping, you know with a payoff, and use his own vehicle."

Brana: And this guy had used his own vehicle and that's why we scrambled out of the office on a Friday night, Saturday morning like four, five o'clock and we took positions back in Brooklyn. And, of course, we were all exhausted after that. That's right, yeah.

Hollstein: We ended up over in Ampere Avenue. Over in the Bronx there. We went over the bridge right after you guys. And we were over in that... What's the name of the park there on the Bronx side, out on the water, at the end of the El there? No matter anyway. But we were driving around back in there following this car. And of course, it turned out it was the wrong one.

Brana: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Hollstein: These are interesting though just in terms of how stuff goes. It never seems to go the same way as it does in the movies.

Brana: Yeah. Because the payoff was supposed to have come down on Monday. Then on Tuesday, you know. We were all geared up and it dragged out. That the payoff was supposed to take place, you know. And Friday night, it does take place. And then, of course we lose them. And of course, we pick them up in Brooklyn. I couldn't believe that we were as fortunate as we were.

Hollstein: You know one of the things I've discovered in life is getting out there and shaking the place up. Getting moving, you know, seems to make these leads come off. You know. Things happen.

Brana: You know and that FALN. Have we discussed no payoff?

Hollstein: We haven't started in on that.

Brana: I had 100 FBI agents and 100 detectives out on the FALN.

Hollstein: That's FALN in Spanish. Puerto Rican bombers.

Brana: Si, si. Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional. And that was the result, I guess that I ended up with that squad as a result of the bombing at La Guardia Airport where 11 people were killed.

Hollstein: I think so. Okay. We were just getting started talking about the FALN. They had been in operation for a while though from the Fraunces Tavern bombing...

Brana: Yeah. Yeah.

Hollstein: And then they continued on.

Brana: Have you spoken to Andy Maloney?

Hollstein: No, not yet. I'll have to look him up.

Brana: Yeah.

Hollstein: And chat with him a little bit.

Brana: If you can't come up with him, I have his phone number at home.

Hollstein: Okay. They had done Fraunces Tavern bombing. They were Puerto Rican?

Brana: There was a relative of Andy Maloney's who was in Fraunces Tavern who got killed.

Hollstein: Oh really?

Brana: A relative. Yeah. That's why he's a person of interest at Fraunces Tavern.

Hollstein: And then they were going after, what, Chase Manhattan Bank? Right?

Brana: I don't know if they were going after any banks.

Hollstein: No, they were bombing here in New York in the banks.

Brana: Were they bombing the banks?

Hollstein: The prior of why I went on your squad. We would be out at night surveiling all the banks.

Brana: Oh, is that right?

Hollstein: ... in the City.

Brana: Yeah, I remember one down on 15th Street around Sixth Avenue. There was a telephone company headquarters.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Brana: What these bastards used to do is they used to put out small bombs and just test them.

Hollstein: Yeah. Just to make noise and cause trouble.

Brana: We identified where the dynamite was being stolen from. I don't know if you're aware of that.

Hollstein: No.

Brana: It was being stolen out of Colorado. We had traced the dynamite. As a matter of fact, I even had the God damned place where they were buying the attaché pieces. Remember?

Hollstein: Yeah.

Brana: Do you remember the leather goods pieces that they were putting the bombs in? I even identified the God damned place on Fordham Road because I had agents up there. And we marked all of the leather goods that had little metal pieces.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Brana: I had the metal pieces marked to identify them.

Hollstein: Did you ever have Zobo watches? They were Russian made watches that they used for the timers.

Brana: Not to my knowledge.

Hollstein: I remember up in the Bronx one went off. It blew up. And then the owner of the business came out and saw the stuff there.

Brana: Yeah.

Hollstein: Swept it all up, and threw it in the trash can. And then the New York City Sanitation truck came and got it.

Brana: Yeah.

Hollstein: And we found out which truck had picked up there and went up and weeded through all of it. Unbelievable crap that goes into a New York City Sanitation truck.

Brana: Yeah. We knew where they were buying. We knew where they were buying because we had concealed cameras taking pictures of all the people that were coming in. Because I figured eventually, we gotta identify the bombers.

Hollstein: Sure, sure.

Brana: Because, believe it or not, they were captured in Chicago. That was the end of the FALN.

Hollstein: Yeah. They flew in and, I remember it was the Episcopal Church. Some Episcopal Church group was taking care of the sub special organization, you know, that was looking for souls or something with the Episcopal Church and was supporting them.

Yeah, that was a good case. There was a lot of interesting stuff going on.

Brana: Jimmy Ingram was the SAC of the particular division that had the FALN. And I remember it. We prepared. And, as I said, Jimmy Kalstrom was my number one man, and he laid out the entire city as where all of these locations... There were close to 100 locations where we were gonna watch. On Park Avenue, Madison Avenue, 57th Street, Sixth Avenue, and Canal Street which is where the bombs had gone down in the past.

Hollstein: Right.

Brana: And we wanted to get the bombs as they were being placed. So I went down and I met with the Chief of Detectives in New York City, Jimmy Cottel. We're talking about 1976, July 4, 1976, 200 years of Independence. .

And I said to him, you know, I'm gonna put out 100 Agents. We've covered the City; we've got all these locations. I would like your people to be involved with us.

Brana: He said, "How many men do you want?" I said, "Well we're gonna do it for ten days and I've got 100 locations." And he gave me 100 detectives.

Hollstein: Yeah. I remember driving around dropping them off.

Brana: Do you remember, we had a big meeting down at police headquarters where we had the 100 FBI agents and 100 detectives. And we gave them a speech, you know. Am I correct?

Hollstein: Yeah.

Brana: I gave a speech about what we were gonna do, what we were gonna be looking for. But I made one mistake. One mistake, I guess, in a certain way stopped the bombings in New York.

I sent one of my good agents, Tommy Caton, down to *The New York Post*. I don't know if you remember Tommy.

Hollstein: No, I don't remember him.

Brana: Tommy went to Jersey, subsequently.

But whenever the bombers would put any devices down, they would make a call to the media, and tell the media that they had left a communiqué. And the communiqué claimed, you know, who was making the... who was doing the bombing, and the reason for the bombings, etc.

Of course, you gotta remember we had 11 people killed.

Hollstein: Sure.

Brana: The bombing at La Guardia. But nobody ever claimed credit for that bombing. And, probably that was an FALN bombing, but they didn't want to claim credit because of the number of people that were killed.

Hollstein: Yeah. Yeah, that was certainly was a problem for them. They were the same crowd that blew up some National Guard aircraft down in Puerto Rico too. No, no. I'm sorry. Wrong one. That was Macheteros - it was an offshoot of the FALN.

Hollstein: We were talking about the FALN and breaking that case. And you had a bunch of guys... You sent a fellow over to *The New York Post*.

Brana: Tommy Caton to *The New York Post*. and the reason for that was that we had a police officer who had been called, who had been required to respond to a building where a call had been made to the police for assistance. And the door to the building had been wired up so that when he went to the door, a bomb went off.

His name was Pogee. That was my recollection of his name.

So one of the reasons why I sent Caton down to *The New York Post* was because we had a recording of the woman that made the call. So that was a piece of evidence. So I wanted to make sure that if *The New York Post* or anybody else got any calls telling them where the communiqués were... because whenever the FALN would do any bombing... And here we have the 200th anniversary of our independence.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Brana: So sure as the devil, if they're gonna do any bombing, they're gonna do it now.

Hollstein: Right.

Brana: So I sent Caton down to *The New York Post* and those sons-of-bitches print the story in the newspaper. In a way, I guess it was good. Because it probably alerted the FALN to the fact that... There was a newspaper article the next day after Caton goes down there is the headline... And I have the newspaper article somewhere. I don't know if I gave it to you. "FBI/NYPD gears up for FALN."

Hollstein: Yeah, yeah. I think I have that one. Yeah.

Brana: Yeah.

Hollstein: It's being copied now.

Brana: As a result, there were no bombings in New York on the Fourth of July.

Hollstein: Unhuh.

Brana: And there were no communiqués left.

Brana: And shortly thereafter, Jim Ingram, who was the SAC of the division that was handling this bombing matter, is transferred to Chicago. And, subsequently, thereafter they grab a van with about six or seven individuals and they determine that they're the FALN.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Brana: And that was the end of the bombings.

Hollstein: That ended the whole thing.

That's all you need to do is send Jim out there.

Brana: Yeah.

Hollstein: He squared it all away.

Brana: Yeah, yeah. He took care of it.

Hollstein: A lot of work had been done in New York

Brana: Oh, yeah.

Hollstein: In terms of research. And all of the informants were talked to. And there was none...

Brana: We were out on all of the bombings. These bastards were putting down bombs just to test the bombs as far as I'm concerned. There was no reason for them to put these God damned devices down.

Hollstein: But nobody knew anything. You know, there was not even a rumor around in the community here from informers.

Brana: Because they weren't New York people.

Hollstein: And we went down, Sean and I went down to San Juan, talked to their people down there. Nothing. I mean just absolutely zero.

Brana: Yeah?

Hollstein: Really, really cold. We went through all the files and what-have-you.

Brana: When did you go down? After the fourth of July of 1976?

Hollstein: Must have been around that time, yeah.

Brana: Yeah, because it's, it's after that that the ...

Hollstein: You know, it was interesting, I'll tell you. Thinking back on it, you know. They fly in from somewhere else, do the job and then disappear. Nobody would know them in New York. They wouldn't be part of the community.

Brana: Yeah.

Hollstein: And nobody knew them from San Juan. But Chicago was a good bet. And that's where it worked. That was good times. Good work.

You left the Bureau in?

Brana: July. Late June, July of 1978.

Hollstein: 1978. So this was towards the tail end of your career then?

Brana: No. Because then I went over and took over the DEA/FBI operation in narcotics for a year.

Hollstein: You were a Bureau employee at that point, then?

Brana: Sure.

Hollstein: Oh, yeah. Okay.

Brana: Yeah, after the FALN thing, I went over to 57th Street. And I had a squad over there which was composed of half FBI guys and half DEA guys working narcotics.

Hollstein: That has pretty much gone dead, I guess, since then. Right?

Brana: Yeah. Yeah. Because now the Bureau, pretty much, I think, works narcotics on its own under the old ITAR narcotics ...

Hollstein: Yeah. Yeah. As opposed to the way DEA would ...

Brana: There was no reason to ...

Hollstein: What was that like, working with DEA people?

Brana: It was good; it was good. I was a supervisor and I had a DEA supervisor under me. A guy by the name of Frank White, who was a good guy. And it was interesting but, you know, I hadn't had no experience in narcotics.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Brana: And who did they target us on? They target us on the number one narcotics mafia guy in New York City, who ends up getting killed over in Brooklyn a short time thereafter.

Hollstein: Un huh. It was a very different culture though, wasn't it, with the DEA guys?

Brana: Yeah. Yeah.

Hollstein: How was that? Trying to manage that?

Brana: Oh, we had no problem. I had no problem with that.

Hollstein: No?

Brana: No.

Hollstein: The Bureau guys also managed to ...

Brana: Yeah. I split them up. You know. One-on-one, a DEA and an FBI guy.

Hollstein: Un huh.

Brana: Yeah. As a matter of fact, I know, one time we're out making a collar and, of course, I'm out there. And all these guys are out there with their guns pointed. I'm the lead guy so I gotta take the guy in the car. And so, all the guns are pointing at me. And I'm moving over to get... And the son-of-a-bitch had a 38 under his leg, sitting in the car, the driver.

Hollstein: Unhuh.

Brana: The narcotics man, has his 38 right under his right leg.

Hollstein: Yeah.

Brana: Now I could understand why they had their guns on him. The FBI guys didn't respond in that way with guns.

Hollstein: Yeah. Well, you know, it was a different story...

Brana: Yeah. Yeah.

Hollstein: Because they were dealing with guys who were really ...

Brana: They were dealing with really hot guys. Yeah.

Hollstein: Street types and all. Yeah. Other stuff we should be talking about?

Brana: There's an example of a case where I got arrested.

Hollstein: Oh! You're Paul Gonzales?

Brana: That's an actual arrest where they arrest a doctor with us. And Burrado and I go up. We go before a judge. You know to play the whole thing along.

Hollstein: Sure.

Brana: Because they wanted, I guess they were trying to play the doctor, who was the guy that was selling us this load of drugs, to see if he would be willing to cooperate. So we went through the whole procedure before a judge, a federal judge.

Hollstein: That must have felt funny.

Brana: Eh. Not at all.

Hollstein: Did the Bureau agents that supposedly arrested you, did they know you were an agent?

Brana: No. One of them did know that Berado was, because he had his badge in his pocket. And this guy says, "I think this guy's got an FBI badge."

Hollstein: That can happen; that can happen. Even the best-hatched undercover jobs, huh.

Brana: Here's a story in the newspaper dated... "Nationwide Ring Preying on Prominent Deviants." March 3, 1966.

Hollstein: So that's your HOMEX case, huh?

Brana: Yeah. But see, this announces a police crackdown on extortion scheme.

"According to authorities, the blackmailers have been operating for nearly ten years shaking down more than 1,000 men, and many, more than one million dollars.

Announcing the indictments, the Manhattan District Attorney, declined to identify those who had been blackmailed out of concern that they would be professionally and personally destroyed."

And that was one of the things with this HOMEX case. People were not identified. People were not, you know, identified as being the victims or as making payoffs.

But this story appearing in *The Wall Street Journal* of Friday, June 16, 2000, pertains to the Astor Hotel. There one of the victims...
"Blackmail paid by congressman. Victim among thousands of homosexuals preyed upon by ring of extortionists."

Hollstein: So it's thousands?

Brana: Yeah.

Hollstein: That's a lot of folks.

Brana: Ohhhhh.

Hollstein: It sounds like ...

Brana: "Member of Congress..." Because I got a call from this guy... We had just had lunch and there was a guy in there by the name of McGowan, right?

Hollstein: Yeah.

Brana: That story is written by his son.

Hollstein: Oh, what do you know?

Brana: And his son had called me up to discuss this case with him... with me.

Hollstein: Unhuh.

Brana: What the hell is his son doing now? His son has got a tremendous job. He's the... I think he's the number two man at *The Wall Street Journal*.

Hollstein: Oh, really.

Brana: "Ring leader, John Pyne, from Chicago, got two five-year sentences. His New York associate, Sherman Chadwick Kaminsky, became a fugitive and was caught 11 years later. Mother Murphy served part of a five-year prison term."

Now, the NYPD got involved in this initially because they subpoenaed the Admiral, who was related to Senator Church.

Hollstein: This is the one that committed suicide.

Brana: Right.

"That night Church drove to a motel in Bethesda, Maryland and shot himself in the head."

Hollstein: So all of this was in the paper. This has all been published about the Admiral?

Brana: Yeah. Yeah.

And here we have the Congressman Felinhizer. I didn't know that his name had been public. *"The Congressman Felinhizer had also been extorted."* I didn't know that his name was public.

Hollstein: You're reading from the... Let's get that down. You're reading from *The Wall Street Journal*.

Brana: This is from *The Wall Street Journal*, page W 13, June 16, 2000. *"Although prosecutors often possessed enough evidence to bring convictions at trial, we got most of the public traitors to plead because we really did not want to put the victims on the stand."*

Andy Maloney says, "His boss, Robert Morgenthau, then a United States Attorney and now the Manhattan District Attorney, recalls, we made every effort to protect them. News organizations were equally discreet. Ringleader, John Pyne from Chicago, got two five-year sentences."

Hollstein: Okay, then. That will help with the editing then too.

Brana: Yeah. Yeah.

Hollstein: Folks at the prepublication side of things.

Brana: I didn't know that the Congressman's name, Felinhizer, had been extorted.

Hollstein: That was probably the biggest thing ever done on that particular type of case. We're talking about hundreds ... hundreds of victims, that is.

Brana: *"Felinhizer was not forced to resign from Congress, or from his committee assignments. Military officers who admitted to being targets, however, had to retire."*

And I had two generals who were forced out and a colonel
– Air Force.

Oh, and here's the other thing that I was telling you about.
"A GOP Congressman, Representative Peter Felinhizer, was hit for \$50,000 and marched right out of his Capitol Hill office so he could fly back to New Jersey to get money from his bank."

"One Kansas City businessman, who actually handed over nearly \$150,000 until he pleaded with the criminals to kill him because he had no more money to give."

Brana: Now this is really not correct. *“The case was broken by detectives working from the Manhattan District Attorney’s office and by federal authorities.”* Detectives did not break this ring up. The FBI did.

And, of course this is the truth, how the case began. He has an impersonation case. Jimmy McDonald, who was a very good friend of mine. We went to the beach with them. July of 1965, he arrested a man impersonating a detective in Grand Central Station. He says the guy had put in for a money order. The money order was being delivered. He didn’t know if this guy was really a detective. He walks up when the guy. He tells me that he puts his gun in the back of the guy who is impersonating a detective. Said he wasn’t a detective.

Hollstein: Do you have any more papers over there that remind you of any of the ...

Brana: Here’s the Princeton professor. *“The Feds got involved when a Princeton professor, who had fallen for the bail money scam, went into an FBI field office looking to get his \$11,000 bond back.”*

Hollstein: And that’s what broke your thing. Yeah. Yeah. The material you gave me in that binder there, we’re having copied now down at Quantico. Do you want a disc of the material we copied?

Brana: No. You know, if they have any questions, all they have to do is give me a call.

Hollstein: No, no. It would go in electronically, into the archives that way.

Brana: Oh, I see.

Hollstein: And if you want it, you can use it for whatever purposes you care to.

Brana: I’ve never even read this. Here’s Johnny Dio.

This is all about President Nixon. Somehow or another, this is Carson, Robert Carson ...

Hollstein: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Brana: I don’t know. Did I give you these?

Hollstein: I don't think so. I've got some of that same guy. I've got some clippings that you gave me.

Brana: You get a copy of this. This is all I have.

Hollstein: Oh, thanks.

Brana: But these other two, I only have this one copy. So, you know, if you want to Xerox these and then send them back to me.

Hollstein: Okay. Why don't I do that?

Brana: You know, I understand that now you can click in on *The New York Times* and get stories.

Hollstein: Oh yeah.

Brana: Well, it's something new.

Hollstein: Oh. Something new. Well, there's Google, you know for searches.

Brana: Not Google. I mean *The New York Times*.

Hollstein: This is an article from where? From *The Daily News*, huh?

Brana: I don't know how it comes out of the Leisure Section.

Hollstein: What's the date on it there? 1974.

Brana: 1974. That's thirty years ago.

Hollstein: This was a Rochester case?

Brana: Yeah.

Hollstein: Did you and Guy go up there?

Brana: No. Just me. Guy became a supervisor so then I was doing it by myself.

Hollstein: Okay. Well, tell me about it. How did you happen to get to go up to Rochester, of all places?

Brana: The case agent, who had been a New York agent, who had used me undercover in New York, gets me to... Well it was the same guy in 1971, and I was doing a case for him up in New York, you know, when my father was dead.

Hollstein: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Brana: So this is the same guy.

Hollstein: You guys go back a ways.

Brana: Oh yeah. Yeah

Hollstein: How did you get invited up to Rochester though to play?

Brana: Joe Zitto.

Hollstein: Okay, Joe Zitto...

Brana: Joe Zitto takes me to Rochester.

Hollstein: And, how did you know him? Is this from undercover work here?

Brana: No, no. I meet him through the case agent.

Hollstein: Oh, okay. So you were a New York guy at this point.

Brana: Yeah. Oh, yeah. I'm a New York wise guy.

Hollstein: And so the guy that brought you up, got into trouble?

Brana: Yeah. Joe Zitto got in trouble. Because he didn't have permission from the boss in Rochester to bring up... He's not supposed to bring up a New York guy to his territory without he had permission from the Board.

Hollstein: Right.

Brana: And that's when the Bureau gave me \$15,000 to bankroll a crap game.

Hollstein: Did you take over the game there?

Brana: Yeah, he was running the game. And, you know, I was there. And we had another guy that he had introduced me to who was an associate of his and the three of us were kind of running the game. You know, I'm not running the game. I'm here.

Hollstein: Yeah. Sure

Brana: But Joe is running it.

Hollstein: Well, now. They were Buffalo people then. Out of Rochester?

Brana: You know, I don't know where the hell Joe was out of. You know Rochester is a big money town for the mafia because Kodak was up there. Right.

Hollstein: Yeah. Kodak. Xerox. Bausch & Lomb. Yeah.

Brana: Yeah. You couldn't shoot straight.

Hollstein: Yeah. Russell Buffalino. Yeah.

Brana: Yeah. If you want to make copies of those things...

Hollstein: Let me take this along, too. It can't hurt.

Brana: Oh, here's the photographs that they would send out. They would give those to the cops and say, "Hey, you know. We're looking for these guys."

Brana: I didn't bring Berado's pictures with me. I have a couple of other ones.

Hollstein: A couple of other ones. Yeah, they're being copied now.

Brana: Right. Right.

Hollstein: Of the height marker there. That's great.

Hollstein: Okay. Let's wrap this one up.

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