

HARD WAY BACK

*One man's true story of political corruption
in Alaska and New Zealand, how he was chased
around the globe by a U. S. Special Agent and
jailed in a foreign country.*

by Kent Kaiser

8

Contents



Author's Notes	5
Chapter 1 The Federal Raid	7
Chapter 2 An Unsavory Introduction	15
Chapter 3 The Day I Should Have Died	21
Chapter 4 The Interrogation	31
Chapter 5 The Last Frontier "Alaska"	37
Chapter 6 "New Zealand" Island of the Great White Cloud	49
Chapter 7 Mountains out of Molehills	79
Chapter 8 Fraud in Paradise	85
Chapter 9 Clearing the Air, Exposing the Rats	91
Chapter 10 In the Dungeon of a Kiwi Jail	107
Chapter 11 Two Goliaths for the Price of One	121
Chapter 12 My Unknown Resume "Solvay"	135
Chapter 13 The Trial, Part One: Perjury on Parade	147
Chapter 14 The Miracle "Alleged Perjury"	161
Chapter 15 Notching One Small Victory	173
Chapter 16 Under the Stars	193
Chapter 17 The Trial, Part Two: More Bizarre Twists	199
Chapter 18 The Blessing of the Amulet	211
Chapter 19 The Joy of Salvation	221
Appendix	233

8

Author's Notes



“This is a true story and all the characters are real; however, some names have been changed in the interest of privacy”.

“This story is based on my best understanding of the facts and told from my perspective. There are at least two sides to any story, but I believe this to be a fair and accurate representation of events. This includes any references to alleged perjury, and although I personally believe the U. S. Special Agent committed numerous offenses of perjury, the New Zealand legal system never pursued the perjury allegations. The Special Agent was never officially investigated or charged with perjury.”

“Despite the challenges I faced with the legal system in New Zealand, I have a profound affection for the Kiwi people themselves. Nothing in this book is intended to malign the people of New Zealand collectively.”

“I would like to thank Ray Balogh and Shayna Angell for their help in writing this book.”



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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'S. S.', written in a cursive style.

Chapter One

The Federal Raid



I WAS SNAPPED OUT OF MY DAYDREAM BY THE SOUND OF SCREECHING tires. I looked down through the window of my second-floor home office in southwest Michigan, and saw the four trucks -- two heavy-duty vehicles and two SUV's -- barreling up my U-shaped drive in typical federal motorcade formation.

Jumping from my chair, I scrutinized the vehicles as they parked in a row just a few feet from each other forming a blockade just outside my front door with "MICHIGAN DNR" (Department of Natural Resources) emblazoned on the side of one of the trucks. *You've got to be kidding me!*

A flurry of thoughts ricocheted through my brain, foremost of which was: *This is the kind of SWAT-type behavior they reserve for serial killers, murderers, and bank robbers. What will the neighbors think?* In my 44 years of life, I had compiled a "criminal record" of a couple of speeding tickets, nothing more.

I replayed the mental video of the past few weeks in Alaska, and I instantly knew why these federal agents were invading my space: They were coming to raid my house.

Three days earlier, I had returned home, as I did every September, after another successful season of adventure. Having been raised in Fairbanks, I enjoyed the outdoors and the vastness of Alaska's wilderness. Fishing, hunting, hiking, and photography were my lifelong passions -- passions I have turned into a guide/tourism business for the past 15 years.

This time, there had been an “incident” before I left Alaska. Several officials -- particularly one U.S. wildlife agent with a bad attitude and a harassment mentality -- had interrogated me about the kind of tag I had purchased for a deer I had hunted and killed. Had I purchased a \$50 resident tag or a \$150 non-resident tag? For some reason, they were inordinately interested, even though no one raised an issue when I bought the tag. I had contacted the Fish and Game authorities, and they acknowledged my co-residency and told me to get the \$50 tag.

After being questioned later about this, I had told those officials I had a Sitka blacktail deer mounted in my house in Michigan, and anytime they needed it they could pick it up -- as long as I was home. I instructed them not to bother my wife if I wasn't there. Their only comment at the time was a dismissive “small fines, small potatoes.”

I made my way downstairs before the doorbell rang. I was still dressed in shorts and a muscle shirt, having just returned from the gym after my daily 60-minute workout. I had worked out religiously for 25 years and maintained a powerful 6'1", 240-pound physique.

I opened the door and was greeted by four stern agents. Two of them, a black guy and a white guy, were federal agents. They each wore blue pants and sported windbreakers with “FEDERAL AGENT” across the back in big yellow letters. The other two were Michigan DNR officers. One was Asian, the other Caucasian.

“We have a search warrant,” one of them told me and handed me the folded paperwork.

Calm and collected, I stepped aside to let them enter.

They explained they were there to search my house for animal mounts and hunting photographs. “You've got to be kidding me!” I exclaimed, running my fingers through my short brown hair. “I told the official in Alaska that I had a deer head and that I had no problem with you picking it up if needed. Why would you go through all of this just to come for that deer head?!” I shook my head in disbelief.

Ignoring my statement, one agent informed me that I could either stay or leave during the search of my property. Well, I wasn't about to leave. I watched every move they made as they snooped around. The dialogue in my head continued. *You must be crazy! I'm not going to leave and let you go through my house like you own it. I have cash and valuables all over the place.* I felt invaded and violated, like I had no rights.

Because I'm a professional hunter and lead adventure excursions, I have multiple guns throughout my house: .44 Magnums hanging on the wall, shotguns mounted here and there, and many other guns in my gun case. After noticing all of the guns, an agent inquired hesitantly, "Are the guns loaded?"

I gave him a cold stare. "Yes."

Suddenly, the Caucasian DNR officer appeared very concerned, no doubt paranoid about all my firearms. He requested to frisk me, even though my lack of clothes made it blatantly obvious I was not concealing a weapon. Nevertheless, I cooperated, reasoning, *I'm sure they're thinking that this wouldn't be the best position for them to be in should the situation escalate.*

"What time will your wife be home?" the same agent inquired.

"Around 5 p.m." I was hoping they would be done and gone by then to spare her the added stress.

I was ravenous after my strenuous workout and made my way to the kitchen to get something to eat. The federal agents were the only ones actually doing the looking, with the Michigan DNR present merely as backup, so I was a little more at ease. After all, I had nothing to hide. The agents continued their search. My only request was that they not break anything.

I made a sandwich and pondered the raid. Apparently the officers anticipated discovering a huge bonanza, as they had brought four large vehicles. I used to have black bear hides, moose, caribou, Stone sheep, bighorn sheep and Dall sheep heads, and other hunting trophies, but had sold most of them over the years, and I had made big money doing it. However, I hadn't shot all those animals; I had purchased them from a taxidermist who needed some quick cash.

I couldn't help thinking about that U. S. Fish and Wildlife agent in Alaska, the one that had apparently vowed to make my life a living purgatory. I was certain he was behind this escapade.

Eventually my wife, Victoria, came home. She had known that, in time, someone would stop by to pick up the deer head; however, she was surprised to find four agents and a thorough search underway at our home.

The minute Victoria arrived I felt my entire demeanor change. My protective instincts kicked in, and all the restraint I had shown up to then dissolved into a volcano of anger and disgust. Anyone who knows

me understands that I don't take any crap, and if I'm pushed, I push back -- much harder.

"I need to see all of your photo albums," the agent demanded next.

Most of the albums were easily accessible, but there was one remaining photo album tucked away in my gun case drawer, which I hoped would remain hidden. In addition to taking the deer head, the agents gleaned a few photos and several pieces of paperwork out of my desk. I chuckled to myself, *such a small amount of evidence after such high expectations*. Instead of gathering four truckloads of contraband, they only had enough to fill one manila mailing envelope.

Why only confiscate one deer head? There were at least 12 more mounted deer heads in the house, as well as wolf skins, mounted wolverines, mounted lynx, turkeys, and a ton of other wildlife. Then I realized they were only after items that pertained to Alaska.

The hidden photo album was eventually discovered, but I was adamant they weren't going to open it. Inside was a photo of my wife, when she was 23 years old, cooking pancakes in the nude. It had been a random, spur of the moment photo. We were getting ready to pick up my children, who had spent the night at their grandparents' house, and head out on our family vacation to Mt. Rushmore and Yellowstone National Park. I remember gathering stuff for the trip, walking through the kitchen with my camera, and for some reason I snapped the picture. Then we packed and left on our trip.

When the film was developed, I slipped the photo into the album, tucked it into the drawer, and didn't think much more about it. It was a classy picture of a beautiful young woman and I had figured that when she got to be 70 years old, she could look back at that photograph and smile.

"Let me remove one personal photo," I suggested. "Then you can look at the rest of the pictures."

One of the agents became belligerent. "No, we're going to have to look at all of them."

That was it. I had contained my anger long enough. My face flushed from the rage building inside of me, and I struggled to keep my composure. "Well, you're not looking at it. It's a private photo of my wife!"

"You're not allowing us to view it?" the agent retorted. "Who do you think you are?"

"No!" I glared at him for so long he finally looked away.

He threatened to call someone up in Alaska and stepped outside with his cell phone. I knew whom he was calling: the agent who was behind this raid and was running this whole pathetic show, the special agent from the U. S. Department of Fish and Wildlife.

After the agent placed the call, he returned to the house and declared that he was going to have to look at that picture. I took a deep breath and unloaded on them. "I told you, you're not looking at that picture!" I went down the line, staring each one of them in the eye.

"How lucky do you feel today?" I added. I could feel the veins bulging in my neck and my blood pressure quickly rising.

There was sheer panic in the Asian DNR officer's eyes. He knew they had made me angry, and he sensed -- rightly -- that I wouldn't back down. Also, I was bigger than any one of them, with ripped muscles, and there were loaded guns hanging all over the house.

I repeated the question, louder this time. "How lucky do you feel today? I told you, you're not looking at that picture!"

They were all riveted stock-still in silence, utterly stunned by my reaction. Slowly, I backed up toward where my .44 Magnum was hanging on the wall. I had enough and was willing to take this business as far as it needed to go. No matter what, they were not going to look at that picture. I would protect my wife's honor, as well as my own. How could I look at myself in the mirror, being some kind of coward who would let another man view a nude picture of his wife?

With tension rising by the second, everyone in that room knew it just wasn't going to happen.

Suddenly, the Asian DNR officer, who had been sitting on the couch, leapt to his feet. "There's no need for us to see that picture." He had, I believe, picked up on my honesty, and he echoed my assertion, "It's private of his wife." He had been the only agent that seemed to question what was really going on here. Obviously, he was dragged into helping the other agents.

The agent in command conceded. "Okay, I think we have everything we need."

"Yes, you do." I was really ticked off, and when I get that way, I will not back down. I started squeezing my hands, and they probably saw that I had one heck of a look in my eyes. I said, "You're done here!" I then referred to them collectively by a rather unsavory term.

One agent looked me in the eye, attempted to stand a little taller, and said, “Well, you can’t talk like that. Don’t swear like that.”

I replied, “I’ll say anything I want in my house, and you’re not going to tell me otherwise. This is just how I get. I can’t help it.” They had pushed all the wrong buttons and I responded accordingly.

They finally saw the wisdom in concluding their mission, quickly gathered their things, and I hastily signed a final paper.

I noticed that they were hustling out without the blacktail deer head they came for. “Uh, there’s the blacktail deer head you guys came to get,” I said. *You dummies!* I even had to point out which one it was out of the dozen deer heads I had in the house. They quickly scooped it up and headed for the door.

But before they could leave, I spied a black footprint on my immaculate white carpet. Our house was always spotless and I was not happy about this lingering reminder of the raid.

As three agents dashed out the door, I exploded at the last federal agent, Derek White, the black guy who was in charge. I shut the door on him, pointed to the black spot, and demanded, “Look at this! Who’s going to clean this up?”

He properly assessed my anger and quickly responded, “I’ll clean it.”

“Yes, you will.” I brought him a rag and some Windex and he got down and cleaned the footprint off the carpet.

I nodded that he was free to go, and slammed the door behind him with enough force to knock some nearby items off the wall, including a mounted fish my son had caught when he was five years old. I was relieved to find that it was unharmed.

Sitting on the couch, I was suddenly very curious about why the other three agents never tried to come back in to check on the fourth agent. *That was pretty cowardly of them.* That day I didn’t make any friends with the federal government, and I’m sure they told their superiors, fueling the animosity they already had for me. I’m sure that right then someone resolved that in the end, “We’re going to show this guy!”

I had asked Victoria to walk the dog when she came home, mainly to get her away from the situation. She returned after the agents left and asked what had happened. She was genuinely concerned. I gave her a detailed account of the day’s events, as everything was still so vivid in my mind. She was as baffled as I was as to why they chose to raid our house, rather

THE FEDERAL RAID

than merely pick up the deer head as they had previously agreed upon.

When I described the part about the photo album and the nude picture, and explained how I had stood up for her honor, she became embarrassed and upset.

I saw myself as a good prince, committed to protecting my lady's honor. However, that wasn't how she saw it. Victoria has always been a very classy girl, the pure and respectable type, and that picture stood against everything she was. For anyone to even know of that photo's existence was extremely embarrassing to her. And if her friends or family ever knew about it . . . To this day, she still gets angry about it.

