



# *“Commemorating a 40 Year Career”*



# 1974



# *“An Interview with Michael Minieri”*

CPP, CSC, CET, CST, CCO, CPOI, CSM, RAM



*Consulting in Nigeria*

# 2014



**"FROM GUARD-TO-GLOBAL IN 40 YEARS: An Exclusive Interview with Michael Minieri"**

By  
Michael D. Colyott



Today



As a guard 1974 (age 18)



Consulting in Nigeria – July 2013

*He has gone from Security Guard in 1974 to one of this industry's most qualified and well known professional security consultants. A major professional magazine called him "...one of the most prominent people in the industry..." in a cover story and exclusive interview. Today, he is the founder and Principal Security Consultant for Minieri Associates and has worked in nearly 30 countries. Michael Minieri talks about his career path and lifelong passion for protecting lives and property.*

**- Tell us how you got started in the security industry.**

**MINIERI** – *In 1974 I was 18 years old and first starting college with an eye toward architecture. I needed a job that would work around my school hours and – ideally – would let me do some homework also. A friend suggested I become a security guard and it sounded like a good fit. I applied, got some offers and took one with a contract company.*

**- How did you go from pursuing architecture to a 40 year career in security?**

**MINIERI** – *There was just something about the security field that fascinated me, mostly because I saw so many things that I thought could be done better...typical know-it-all teenager thinking I guess. I applied for some higher positions in other companies and got lucky enough to be given some opportunities at a very young age so I advanced rapidly. In those early days, there was no formal education in the security field to speak of. Training was poor, and most guards only used security as a temporary stepping stone to their real career objective. Proven performance and lots of experience was comparatively rare so after 10 years, I was considered qualified for some pretty good jobs of the day.*

**- Your qualifications, credentials and experience today go beyond guard operations. How did that come about?**

**MINIERI** – *My first exposure to security technology was going to work for a combination guard and alarm company with a central monitoring station. I was something of a "techno-twit" even very young so all the gadgets got my attention. The first alarm system I ever saw still had a dry-cell battery at the end of the circuit and had huge relays in the control panel. CCTV cameras and monitors still had tubes. A few people took me under their wing to teach me about electronics and security systems, and I eventually crossed-over doing sales, installations and eventually did most every job there was on that side.*

**- You also serve as an expert witness in fire cases, in addition to security. What started that?**

**MINIERI** – *Shortly after I formed my first company to do consulting, there was a major historical fire at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas. There was a huge wave of regulatory changes across the U.S. requiring fire protection to be retrofitted in existing buildings. I needed more business so I researched and explored the fire and building codes, and the technology. I struggled for a long time with the complexity of the codes, but eventually I had something of an epiphany and they seemed to suddenly make sense. Again I was in the right place at the right time and got some opportunities with the Florida State Fire Marshal's Office, the NBFAA, and served on an NFPA Committee along with some other great exposure.*

**- What lead you into the independent consulting practice?**

**MINIERI** – *By the 90's I had accumulated this very broad "generalist" background and I really wanted to use all of it. Always doing just one specialty for years and years seemed a bit boring to me. I had established a lot of professional contacts over the years and one of them offered me a position as a security consultant. That fit me like a luxury brand driving glove! Lots of interesting challenges, tons of variety, multiple projects underway simultaneously, extensive travel and very few aspects that I considered undesirable. After 9/11, there was tons of work as numerous sector-specific security standards came into play. The quality of my work carried me the rest of the way and it still does to this day.*

**- You have lived in 4 countries and visited nearly 30. Do you focus on International work now?**

**MINIERI** – *I wouldn't describe it as a "focus", I still do projects in the United States. I think it is more like an evolution. Having so much international experience seems to be a much sought after qualification to many overseas clients. American experts are still considered among the best in most industries and professions, including security. Considering what I have observed that passes for "security" in most countries, I would say they are probably correct. I do love the international work because I personally enjoy experiencing other cultures and the people...very rewarding and satisfying....I really consider myself extremely fortunate to have these experiences in my lifetime. Governments don't always get along, but when you get one-on-one with people of any nation, you come to believe that there would be little or no conflict if there were more interaction at the common citizen level.*

**- Many of the countries you have visited are considered "dangerous", particularly to foreigners and for American's more than most. Do you ever have concerns for your own safety?**

**MINIERI** – *I have said many times that the places with the most danger are the places where I am probably most needed. I don't work in areas with open military conflict, even if they don't call it a "war". Para-Military operations are not among my core competencies. I do my threat and risk homework before accepting a project or traveling to new places....that's frequently a task I perform in the course of many projects anyway. I follow the same safety and security recommendations that I give to clients under similar circumstances and my vigilance and situational awareness is heightened just due to my work and experiences.*

**- What was the most dangerous experience you have had so far?**

**MINIERI** – *It was probably a project for a major multi-national oil company in Colombia at a time when the drug cartels and the para-militaries were at their peak of activity. I had to visit several facilities in the mountains in areas not fully under government control so I was flown by helicopter – never by road – and a full platoon of soldiers escorted me at all times that I was outside of a secure compound. The escort provides some sense of security of course, but in the back of your head, you know that the first bullet from the bush will probably be aimed at the guy in the middle that is not carrying a gun. This year, I worked in Nigeria – again on oil projects – and was always escorted by a Nigerian Federal Police close protection team. It just goes with my chosen profession.*

**- It's a long journey from security guard to where you are today. Any regrets along the way?**

**MINIERI** – *I gave up trying to guess "what might have been" had I chosen any of the other forks-in-the-road that I encountered over the years. I believe there is as much chance that the other direction could have been very negative, as the chance that it could have been more positive. The many relocations and the extensive travel can impact one's social and personal life of course. Even over a 40 year period, having many job changes is not generally viewed as a good thing to most employers, but it can make for a great consultant!*

**- What advice would you give to someone starting a career in security today?**

**MINIERI** – *I would recommend taking advantage of the related university degree programs that exist today and didn't in my time. I would think that would be an excellent foundation on which to build experience and achieve success. Pursue professional certifications and credentials; attend major industry events and training opportunities as well. Most importantly, to be good at the work and have personal satisfaction from it, determine if you have a real passion for it. If it's more about financial rewards, there are probably better career choices.*

**- Any plans for retirement?**

**MINIERI** – *When I started as a guard in 1974, the drinking age in Florida was 18, anyone could carry a gun at age 18, and I was only 18. Sure it's been 40 years in the industry but I'm still only 58 years young. I do have a plan....and the plan is not to ever retire! As long as my brain still functions well, my physical health remains good, my passion for security continues, and I can still do quality work, I will keep doing what I do.*

*ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Michael D. Colyott is a St. Louis area native and freelance writer with extensive personal experience in the security industry. He has been a professional colleague of Mr. Minieri first in 1974 and during several periods since then.*