

"I have a much easier time fitting in in Oakland."

Ricky Williams Does "60 Minutes"

Mike Wallace and his producer did their best to ridicule and incite jealousy towards Ricky Williams on "60 Minutes" during an interview that aired Dec. 20, 2004 —but they could not bring him down.

MW: We're about to tell you a very strange story about a football superstar name of Ricky Williams. He won the Heisman trophy in 1998 as the best football player in the country. (Cut to footage of Williams running in the open field — misleading in that his job mainly involved slamming straight into the line.) Then five years of glory in the NFL. He carried the ball more often over the last two seasons than any other player in the league! (Said as if it was some honor the ingrate didn't appreciate instead of a speed-up that any self-respecting worker would have resisted.) And he made millions doing it for the Miami Dolphins as the team's star player.

But then, just before Dolphins training camp this past July, he turned his back on all of it —the stardom, the fame, the salary of five million dollars a year. His sudden decision to quit stunned his teammates, infuriated fans, and ruined the Dolphins' entire season. He never really explained why he quit (actually Williams did explain to Dave Le Batard of the Miami Herald, but why not claim the scoop for CBS?) and he has stayed out of public view for the past six months (except for the interview he gave Tom FitzGerald of the San Francisco Chronicle). But wait till you see what he's doing now...

(An Om-like chant is heard. Wide shot of Ricky and fellow students seated on mats.) He's studying holistic medicine in the California hills outside Sacramento where, surprisingly, he agreed to answer any questions we asked about how, at the peak of his earning power, he could just walk away.

Ricky Williams: My whole thing in life is I just want freedom. I thought that money would give me that freedom. I was wrong.

MW: Why were you wrong?

RW: Because especially when you're 21 and you're given as much money as I was given...

MW: How much were you given?

RW: At 21 I received my first check, it was 3.6.

MW: Million.

RW: (nodding) Before taxes. After taxes it was 2.4.

MW: Oh, poor fellow.

RW: It bound me more than it freed me, because now I had more things to worry about, more people asking for money, I thought I had to buy a house and nice cars and different things that people with money are supposed to do.

MW: And you did not find that satisfying?

RW: No, it just created more problems.

MW: You would have made five million bucks this year. You said, "It's blood money as far as I'm concerned. The money is what made me miserable. I want to be free of that stress." Forgive me, but that's bulls—.

RW: It is bullshit. I agree. When hearing you say that, I agree, it is...

MW: (as narrator): The real reason he left, he told us, was to avoid the public humiliation over news that he had just failed a drug test —his third failed drug test.

RW: All right, here's what happened, okay? The thing I had the most trouble with was, after you fail your third test, it becomes public knowledge that you failed the test. And that's one thing I



couldn't deal with at the time —people knowing that I smoked marijuana.

MW: So the problem with failing your third NFL drug test was that it would be made public?

RW: That was my biggest fear of my whole entire life. I was scared to death of that.

MW: (narrating): So rather than face the music and the media about his failed drug test, he quit football and ran away, far far away, to Australia, where he lived in a tent community that cost him just seven dollars a day.

RW: (over shot of a tent): In my tent I had about 30 books. Every morning I'd wake about five in the morning and I'd take my flashlight and I'd read for a couple of hours.

MW: Books about what?

RW: Everything from nutrition to Buddhism to Jesus. I was trying to figure out, "What am I? What am I?" I just kept reading and reading and couldn't figure out what I was but I learned a lot.

MW: It was there he learned about an ancient healing science from India called Ayurveda.

RW: It's using nature to heal yourself, to put yourself in balance.

MW: Are you in balance now?

RW: I'm more in balance now than I was a couple of months ago, but it's a journey that people spend their whole lives on.

MW: What's balance?

RW: It's easier to talk about what's out of balance. Anytime you have any disease —meaning lack of ease, lack of flow — you're out of balance, whether it's jealousy, anger, greed, anxiety, fear.

MW: And you've had experience in all of the above.

RW: I've had a little bit of all of it —most people have.

MW: This fall he enrolled in an 18-month course at the California College of Ayurveda. Free from the structured life of the NFL, he's immersed now in (Shots of Ricky and other students on mats) the search for his soul.

RW: Playing in the National Football League you're told where to be, when to be there, what to wear, how to be there. Being able to step away from that I have an opportunity to look deeper into myself and look for what's real.

(Cut to Dr. Mark Halpern, who runs the Institute, a sent-from-central-casting California guru with a trim beard and a soothing voice. Even in slacks and a jacket he appears to be wearing drawstring pants.)

Halpern: I see burn-out in probably 60 to 70 percent of society at any given time.

MW: Halpern says Ricky is studying to become an holistic healer.

Halpern: He will help individuals to live in greater harmony with their environment through all five of their senses.

When we're living in harmony with our environment, our bodies naturally express themselves in the form of health.

(Cut to a tight shot of Ricky's back being lathered and stroked by two beautiful women. Long, sensual strokes guaranteed to inspire jealousy in some and/or a desire to enroll ASAP in the Ayurvedic Institute.)

MW: (voice over): Receiving this massage is part of his training to become an Ayurvedic masseur.

Halpern: The specific hand strokes in order to balance the various energies of the body And it's very calming and soothing and nourishing for the mind. And he's following the whisperings of his soul as opposed to the shouting of his own ego. It's our ego that desires the fame and the fortune. It's the whisperings of the soul that lead us towards the pursuit of harmony, the pursuit of health and well being. Including sometime facing the consequences of letting go of the fame and fortune.

MW: Fact is, Williams has gone from fortune to deep debt. And from fame to infamy. The Dolphins claim he owes them more than 8 million dollars —much more money than he has— for leaving in the middle of his contract. His sudden departure just days before training camp doomed the Dolphins to their worst season in franchise history and infuriated his former fans and especially his teammates. (Undoubtedly some of Williams's teammates and fans understood and respected his decision, but Wallace got away with the overstatement.)

Dolphins tackle Larry Chester says, "Ricky owes lots of people an apology. Not just the fans, but a lot of guys in the locker room." Do you want to apologize to them right now?

RW: If I can find a reason to apologize then I'd love to apologize. And if they want me to apologize just to apologize, then I'll apologize. But it doesn't mean anything unless I understand what I'm apologizing for.

MW: (as if it's all real simple): You're apologizing for letting them down. The Dolphins thought with you, and mainly with you, that they had a chance at the

Super Bowl.

RW: What if I disagree, do I still have to apologize?

MW: (momentarily confused; he is accustomed to asking the ques-



tions, not being asked): If you disagree

When would it have been okay for me to stop playing football? When my knees went out? When my shoulders went out? When I had two concussions?

with?

RW: That I cost them their season.

MW: (displeased, almost sneering): Oh, come on, Ricky.

RW: I played my butt off. I played as hard as I could when I put that uniform on, but I'm not doing that anymore, you know, I've moved on. So when is it okay for me to stop playing foot— When would it have been okay for me to stop playing football? When my knees went out? When my shoulders went out? When I had two concussions? When would it have been okay? I'm just curious? When

is it okay to not play football?

MW: Maybe if you'd given them a clue ahead of time.

RW: I didn't know ahead of time or I would have given them a clue. It happened in the course of two days, boom boom boom boom.

MW: Since you quit...

RW: (correcting him): Retired —I'm only kidding, I'm only kidding.

MW: Well, have you retired or did you quit?

RW: I retired from that lifestyle.

(Exterior shot of a cozy country cottage.)

MW: He's renting a one-bedroom house in Grass Valley, California, with no TV, no long-distance phone and no regrets. Do you like yourself?

RW: I love myself.

MW: You do? Why?

RW: Because I'm all that I have and if I don't love myself, no one else will.

MW: You don't dislike anything in yourself?

RW: Whenever I feel myself starting to dislike something I tell myself, "This is who I am," so what's the point in disliking it?

MW: You can't pay that 8 million dollars that you're supposed to pay. (Mocking Williams' high tenor) "Hey, I'm Ricky! I can just go through life the way I want to go."

RW: Let's look at the alternative, all right? If every day I woke up and I said, "God, I've got all this money to pay back, got all these problems," I wouldn't be sitting here with you with a smile on my face right now.

MW: Why are you smiling?

RW: Because I'm happy.

MW: And the people who are angry at you because you deserted them? Betrayed them. That doesn't bother you?

RW: No, because I did.

MW: Deserted and betrayed?

RW: To them I did, yeah.

MW: Do you care about what people think who are looking in?

RW: No.

MW: Right now.

RW: No

MW: This is from a Sporting News columnist: "Ricky has always been one of the most selfish, unpredictable, purposely bizarre and more than slightly off kilter athletes. He doesn't care how his behavior might affect anyone around him. It has always been about Ricky." Reaction?

RW: Half of it's accurate. But how can I expect him, if I don't know anything about him, to really know anything about me.

MW: Which half is accurate? Want to hear it again?

RW: Can I see it in print?

Wallace: (hands over the page he was reading from): Sure. Read it aloud.

RW: (after reading the harsh words aloud): He got the name right. I mean, I am unpredictable but who —what— is supposed to be predictable?

MW: (reading again): This is more from him: "You know the type. They fancy themselves as shining knights in a dull world, they try to be unique. Instead of looking brave, they look foolish."

RW: I look very foolish, that's accurate. To a lot of people I look foolish in what I'm doing and I understand that.

MW: And it doesn't bother you at all?

RW: No, the only thing that matters is how I feel and if I let how they feel

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Society Notes

Dennis Peron Will Run English Hotel

By Fred Gardner

Dennis Peron, the founder of the San Francisco Cannabis Buyers Club and the prime mover behind Prop 215, has accepted a job offer to run an old hotel in Dartmouth, England. It's owned by **George San Martin**, who in the late '70s worked at the Big Top, a marijuana dispensary run out of Dennis's Castro Street flat.

George was a small, wiry man — Mexican, with Indian features and thick black hair which he wore long. He moved to London at the end of the '70s and put his past encounters with law enforcement to good use. A lawyer hired him to instruct newly arrested clients on their rights and how to behave in custody. This turned out to be a much-needed specialty and George created a business of his own. He did well enough to buy an old hotel in Dartmouth, a beach town in the southwest of England with relatively mild weather. "A navy town, the Penascola of the British Riviera," according to **Alexander Cockburn**.

Dennis has seen a slide show depicting the town — "so beautiful!" — and the hotel, Agincourt House, built in the 13th century and restored in the 16th. "It looks like the House of Pancakes," says



Dennis, Pinky Lee and Deputy AG Jane Zack Simon, prosecutor of Tod Mikuriya, at a meeting of the Medical Board in 2004.

the prospective manager. "I told them we're going to have to serve pancakes."

Dennis's Pomeranian, **Pinky Lee**, already has had a chip implanted (proof of a rabies shot, a requirement for bringing a dog into the UK). They leave on July 12.

In recent years Dennis turned his house on 17th Street into a B&B of sorts, renting out rooms via Craig's list for \$60 a night. Some people may be surprised to learn that his vow of poverty was for real. Not long ago I rode in an elevator with a San Francisco narcotics officer who told me, as if he really knew, "Your friend Peron has a million dollars buried in a hole in Mexico." I said, "I sure hope so."

Wayne's Whirl

Dennis gave us the update at Club Cocomo, which was filled on Sunday night, Jan. 22, with more than 300 people celebrating **Wayne Justmann's 60th** birthday. Wayne's friends include the poor and the powerless as well as the pols. Everybody had come to have a good time. Nobody was selling anything. Nobody was there as a customer or a clerk. There was gaiety in the air, and mutual respect based on collective political accomplishment. It's so rare that the class divisions seem to break down, even for a minute, and it sure feels good when they do.

Three cannabis club proprietors and a cultivator had picked up the tab for food and entertainment. Party planner Michael Ramos had made all the arrangements, and Rush and family of Club Cocomo had donated the space.

"Wayne has done so much for the movement," one of the organizers explained, "and he's never been in it for the money. When I first moved here three



Former SFPD Chief Earl Saunders and Wayne Justmann at the launching of the San Francisco medical marijuana card program in April 2001.

years ago he trusted me and made me feel needed and introduced me to people... He's just a great friend and fun to be with."

Wayne's contributions to the movement/industry include security at Dennis's Market Street club; co-creation of the Patients Resource Center at 350 Divisadero (urgently needed when Dennis was forced to close); campaign work for **Terence Hallinan** and other pro-cannabis politicians; mediating internal disputes; making useful connections; effec-



Wayne with one of the party organizers, Erich P.

tive lobbying at City Hall for a medical marijuana card program run by the Dept. of Public Health (Wayne got card #1), and now Prop S to involve the city in cultivation and/or distribution.

In 2000 Wayne made a serious effort to organize club proprietors, growers, and patient advocates into a political action group. His "consortium" never coalesced, but the monthly meetings he and **Randi Webster** held at 350 Divisadero fostered a sense of community and enabled people to keep abreast of legal and political developments.

The epidemic isn't killing people overnight anymore. What a good reason for a party.

Wayne's a name-dropper and a back-slapper but he does it like he's playing a part. He's a big man, maybe 6'3, 225, calm and friendly, like **Alex Karras** in "Victor Victoria." Wayne was diagnosed positive in 1988 and here it is 2005 and he looks hale and hearty. The epidemic isn't killing people overnight anymore. What a good reason for a party.

Dennis had a long conversation with **Ross Mirkarimi**, the new supervisor from the Haight/Inner Sunset. Wayne says Mirkarimi has been very receptive to input from the movement. (He's a Green Party leader, and for sure the medical marijuana issue could do wonders for the Greens nationally.)

State Sen. Mark Leno read a proclamation honoring Wayne and Wayne pointed to Dennis in the throng and called him "the man who opened the door for us..." The entertainment was anchored by the Extra Action Marching Band and included a hard-not-to-dance-to rap act, **Los Marijuanos**.

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Ricky Williams *from previous page*

affect me it'll change how I feel.

MW: Another columnist: "To some Williams is a selfish quitter. To others he's a hero who took his job and shoved it, leaving a brutal game before it brutalized him. To close friends, Williams is a deep-thinking free spirit, who despised the stereotype that came with football, fame and fortune."

RW (*relieved*): That's a little more accurate.

MW: Got a girl?

RW: I have a daughter but I don't have a girlfriend.

MW: How come?

RW: Just haven't found anyone that fits the bill.

MW: And the bill is?

RW: I'll know when they fit it.

MW: Never married?

RW: Never married. But I have three children.

MW: What about the mothers of those three. They're all different.

RW: They're all different. They're all special.

MW: Do you support the mothers of these children?

RW: Financially. Yes. (*still smiling but understanding Mike's drift*) Of course I do! I'm a very generous person. At least I try to be.

MW: Who's your hero, if any?

RW: I would say Bob Marley, probably.

(*Cut to footage of Marley in performance.*)

MW: Bob Marley, the legendary

reggae star from Jamaica inspired Ricky to wear dreadlocks for years. But in Australia, while he was off taking pictures, Ricky cut them off.

RW: So I set up my tripod and started taking some self-portraits.

MW: And the dreadlocks got in the way.

RW: And the dreadlocks got in the way so I ran up to the top of the hill, I had scissors in my van, I cut my hair then and there.

MW: Beyond the dreadlocks, Williams named one of his daughters "Marley," and he and his hero have something else in common... (*to Ricky*) He used hash.

RW: He smoked a lot of marijuana, yeah.

MW: And you've done the same.

RW: I have done the same.

MW: Could you pass an NFL drug test today?

RW: No.

MW: So you still smoke marijuana.

RW: Mmm-hmm.

MW: Anything worse than marijuana?

RW: Worse? What do you mean by worse?

MW (*annoyed by the question*): More addictive. More dangerous, conceivably.

RW: Sometimes I have sweets. (*Wallace doesn't react*) Sugar.

MW: (*sarcastic*) Oh, I see, yeah.

RW: Sometimes I'll have a glass of wine, but that's about it.

MW: Steroids?

RW: No. Thank God I never needed that.

MW: Why?

RW: I was gifted. I'm very blessed. I never needed anything to help me play football.

MW (*hushed tone, as if discussing the sacred*): Do you think you'll ever play football again?

RW: I have no idea.

MW: Oh, come on.

RW: I really have no idea. I can't even tell you what's going to happen tomorrow.

MW: I'll make you a bet. You'll play football again.

RW: Okay. What are we going to put — what's the wager?

MW (*Surprised that Williams took him literally*): You don't care about money.

RW: We could bet dinner, lunch. Why do you think I'll play football again?

MW: Because I think that you will want to have the freedom that you have now but you're going to need more money to have the freedom that you now have. You've said that you might like to play for the Oakland Raiders.

RW: I did say that.

MW: And Raider fans like weirdos like you.

RW: I have a much easier time fitting in in Oakland.

MW (*narrating*): He did admit that from time to time he still misses the game. (*Cut back to the interview*) You're 27. When you're 50, what do you want

to be?

RW: Alive.

MW: You like what you're doing here.

RW: I love what I'm doing here.

MW: Why do you love it?

RW: Just because I'm doing whatever I want to do. Like I said, I've followed freedom for a long time and I finally feel I've got more of it.

MW (*wrapping it up*): So for Ricky Williams, money couldn't buy happiness. But he says that now he's never been happier.

RW: People talk about the money that I've given up and the money that I've lost. But the knowledge and the wisdom that I've gotten from this experience is priceless. So, the way I look at it I'm still way, way, way up. Way, way up.

Although Williams was once a spokesman for Paxil, Wallace — an unabashed shill for pharmaceutical antidepressants — didn't ask whether he still uses Glaxo's SSRI and, if not, when and why he quit? How Paxil compares with marijuana? How much Pfizer paid him? When and why he severed his relationship? And other questions that would have been meaningful to millions of viewers but distasteful to CBS's drug-company sponsors.

Wallace's attitude going into the interview may have been cynical and biased, but he was won over by Williams' intelligence and openness during the course of their encounter, according to a New York media source.