

Transcription of Saint Paul Police Oral History Interview with

Joseph Kane Corcoran

*He Rode with US*

Saint Paul Police Officer  
March 2, 1964 – March 27, 1998



1964



2008

Interviewed March 14 and May 13, 2008  
By  
Kate Cavett of HAND in HAND Productions  
at  
HAND in HAND's office in Saint Paul, Minnesota

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All photographs are from Joseph Corcoran's personal photo collection or from the Saint Paul Police Department's personnel files.

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2008**

# ORAL HISTORY

Oral History is the spoken word in print.

Oral histories are personal memories shared by the narrator. By means of recorded interviews oral history documents collect spoken memories and personal commentaries of historical significance. Interviews are transcribed verbatim. Greatest appreciation is gained when one can read an oral history aloud.

Oral histories do not follow the standard language usage of the written word. Transcribed interviews are not edited to meet traditional writing standards; they are edited only for clarity and understanding. The hope of oral history is to capture the flavor of the narrator's speech and convey the narrator's feelings through the timbre and tempo of speech patterns.

An oral history is more than a family tree with names of ancestors and their birth and death dates. Oral history is recorded personal memory, and that is its value. What it offers complements other forms of historical text, and does not always require historical collaboration. Oral history recognizes that memories often become polished as they sift through time, taking on new meanings and potentially reshaping the events they relate.

Memories shared in oral histories create a picture of the narrator's life – the culture, food, eccentricities, opinions, thoughts, idiosyncrasies, joys, sorrows, passions – the rich substance that gives color and texture to this individual life.

Kate Cavett

Oral Historian

HAND in HAND Productions

Saint Paul, Minnesota

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[www.oralhistorian.org](http://www.oralhistorian.org)

Joseph Kane Corcoran  
Appointed patrolman Saint Paul Bureau of Police  
March 2, 1964

Promoted:

Sergeant October 3, 1970  
Lieutenant March 24, 1990

Retired:

March 27, 1998

KC: Kate Cavett

JC: Joseph Corcoran

JC: I'm Lieutenant Joseph Kane Corcoran, retired from the Police Department in 1998. Been retired for ten years now and living in Northern Minnesota on the largest lake in Minnesota, Upper Red Lake. My wife and I enjoy a nice retirement home there in a small community of about a hundred and fifty people. They're very caring people and, most recently, I found out when I had two aneurysms break loose in my head and had to be flown out by helicopter and operated on, the community responded extremely well. It's humbling too – a lot of people ask me why I live in a small town – it's because small towns are very caring places. And, so, we're very happy to be living there. It's about two hundred eighty miles north of the cities here, so we don't get down often, but we still have family and friends there that we come down and see.



KC: Where were you raised, sir?

JC: Well, I was born in Chicago, Illinois and then my folks moved me up here when I was about six or seven.

I went to Nativity grade school in the Highland,



Joe 1954

Groveland-Macalester area, and then went on to Saint Thomas Military Academy. My father had been a graduate of there and, so, it was Joe's time to go there, also. Then I went to the University of Minnesota for a year. Didn't really know what I wanted to be, but I

knew that we had to go into the military. We had a two year commitment, as young men, so, I had joined the naval reserve when I was a junior in high school. I

knew I had to go in the active duty and maybe I'd find out what I wanted to be when I was in the navy. I went into the United States Navy and went aboard an aircraft carrier that was homeported out of Quonset Point, Rhode Island.



Joe 1954

And I was fortunate enough to be on that ship when we picked up the first astronaut shot into space, Alan Shepard. I watched him come through the clouds with the capsule with the parachute on and watched him come aboard rubbing his rear end, saying what a kick in the ass that was. I was the starboard catapult shooter, which meant that I shot the planes off. So, they put him

in and then we shot him off the carrier to the Bahamas, where he was medically looked at. The capsule stayed onboard our aircraft carrier and we were in awe at the bravery of somebody to be shot up in a missile, and so I found out then, I really didn't want to be an astronaut, I didn't have the guts to be that. That capsule is now in the Space



Joe 1959

Museum in Washington, DC and I go visit it on occasion, it's called Freedom 7. I did two years on that aircraft carrier, come back home, still didn't know what I wanted to be. And, of course, my cousin, Larry McDonald<sup>1</sup>, was already on the police department. I'd stop over to his house and talk to him and he'd tell me the stories of the Police Department.

KC: Were you raised on the westside, too, sir?

JC: No, I was still living at home in Macalester-Groveland. His mother and my mother were sisters, so we were a quite close group. Larry at the time was a canine officer and he had a lot of stories. So, I decided then and there, that I was going to try and be a Saint Paul police officer and model myself after my cousin, as a good police officer. So, I took the test, passed the test. Passed the physical fitness part, passed the oral part and when it came time for the medical examination and measurement – you had to be five foot ten, and I was a quarter to an eighth of an inch short. I was

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<sup>1</sup> Laurence Francis McDonald was appointed patrolman July 11, 1955; promoted to sergeant February 26, 1966; lieutenant January 14, 1971; captain July 5, 1989; lieutenant January 12, 1991; captain August 31, 1991; and retired March 31, 1995. Awarded the Medal of Merit Class B on August 26, 1993.

crushed. So, Larry McDonald and his partner Paul Paulos<sup>2</sup>, told me to go see this chiropractor who was on Chatsworth and Selby, Dr. Skipstead, see if he could stretch me. So, I went there, he had me stand on a corner and then he put a plumb line down and he said, "Your back is crooked and I'm going to straighten it out and I'm going to give you some exercises. Does your mother have a clothesline at home in the backyard?" I said, yes. He said, "You're going to hang from that." So, anyway, he straightened my back out and I hung from the clothesline [pole] and my mother's neighbors thought I was really weird, and wondered what happened to Joe when he was in the Navy, he's hanging from the clothesline [pole].

KC: Hanging upside down?

JC: Hanging like this, stretching myself, hanging with my arms gripped around the metal post at the end of the clothesline. And, so, took the next test, and they had originally measured me when I dropped out, I was five nine and, I think, seven-eighths. So, the next test, the doctor told me don't go to work that day, lay in the bed until the last minute, because your taller in the morning than you are in the evening. I had Larry McDonald and Paulos help me and I went down and I was five ten and a-half and I made it and got on the Police Department.

KC: And the way I heard the story, you were taken down in a stretcher car so that you didn't even have to sit up in the car.

JC: It was an old station wagon, yeah. Right.

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Richard Paulos was appointed patrolman January 4, 1954; promoted to sergeant December 12, 1966; and retired September 4, 1990.

I was so happy that I passed. Then I entered the academy in the old National Guard Amory building near the Police Department. I was appointed patrolman on March 2<sup>nd</sup> of 1964 and started my career with the PD. It was exactly what I needed. It was exactly the job that I wanted to have, very exciting job.



1964 Academy Class  
Officer of the day Corcoran is front row left. Instructor is Paul Paulos.

KC: What made it exactly right to fit your personality?

JC: My personality was I liked to do something different every day and when I came to work there was something different.

When we were in the Academy, they asked for volunteers to go in an undercover position and work plain clothes because they were having trouble in the city, and they wanted guys that were willing to work evenings and that they could continue their education and go on and get a degree in college if they wanted it. So I volunteered. There was about eight of us in that class that volunteered for that job and we would report every day to the Detective Unit, in the evening and the late afternoon we would report to Sergeant George St. Sauver<sup>3</sup> and he would assign us some details.

The first detail was, they had some armed robbers that were robbing liquor establishments, and they were getting very violent. They were pushing people around and firing shots inside the bar. So, they teamed us rookies up with some of the older patrolmen that volunteered and we started doing some intelligence on them and we found out that they had scoped out a bar on Payne Avenue and they felt that that bar was going to get hit that night and so they teamed the rookies up with the experienced officers and we surrounded that bar, Stubbs's Bar on Payne Avenue. And, sure enough, we saw them pull up in an old Ford, put on their ski masks and enter into the building. Well, one of the older coppers stepped out of his car and the last robber going into the bar saw him, so they got inside the bar and they roughed some people, but then they were notified that

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<sup>3</sup> George W. St. Sauver was appointed patrolman January 3, 1950; promoted detective October 1, 1954; and retired July 4, 1975.

maybe there was cops outside. So, they come out blazing, with the guns firing and they jumped into that Ford and took off and that's when the chase started. The cops, all of us, were shooting at this Ford and, I think, we hit the car seventy, eighty times. But at that time our .38 specials [revolvers] were not the exact gun to penetrate cars. And I remember one bullet went through the rear windshield, traveled through the car and hit the rearview mirror, ricocheted off and hit the driver in the cheek and he spit it out. It was a kid by the name of Stamnes. The car went out of control at Arkwright and one of the leaders of the gang came out with a pistol and started firing it at the first squad, which contained John Splinter<sup>4</sup> and a couple other guys. And I remember seeing the shotgun come out of the police car and it fired and I saw [a portion of] the head of Larry Olson come off, he was one of the banditos. We picked up the other three guys, two of them were shot, and we solved that thing of robberies.

And I remember that night, I looked at my badge and I said, *This is gonna be a good ride and I hope I see you at the end of my retirement.* Because I thought, *wow, this is exciting, this is it, man,* you know. But I never knew whether I was going to be able to retire, but I was going to stay with the job.

KC: Seeing that much violence, you're a young copper and you're seeing that much violence, people have told me that the adrenaline junkies are the cowboys.

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<sup>4</sup> John Splinter was appointed patrolman January 4, 1954; promoted detective March 1, 1962; and retired June 3, 1988.

JC: Yep.

KC: Any other reactions to the violence?

JC: There was a reaction that I said, *I've got the right job, 'cause I'm going to make a difference in this community, and I'm going to try my best to eliminate this violence. And I set some goals. I wanted to catch some burglars doing a safe job, I wanted to stop the violence and stop the crime in this city.* That was my goals, I set those as my goals. And I said, *I'm in the right spot. All I have to make sure is I don't get hurt along the way.*

And I never really did get hurt. Had some close calls with high speed chases. But everyday you came to work it's - What are we going to work on now? We had rotating shift assignments, so every two weeks you changed from afternoons to days to nights and, so, we had a lot of different things to work on. At night, we would sneak down the alleys with the lights off, looking for people breaking into businesses and so that was my goal to make a difference in this town.

KC: What were some of the different assignments that you had?

JC: I was on patrol and bounced from area to area and eventually teamed up with Paul Paulos and Larry McDonald for a while, and then Dave Hubenette<sup>5</sup>. I worked the Selby district that was my favorite district. Most of the assignments were on patrol and they were my permanent partners.

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<sup>5</sup> David Hubenette was appointed patrolman April 24, 1961; promoted to sergeant March 6, 1971; acting lieutenant September 2, 1983; and resigned April 23, 1987.

And late my partners were Dick Simmons<sup>6</sup> and Joe Doran<sup>7</sup>. And later we decided we were going to study for the sergeants test, become sergeants.

The first time go around my two partners made sergeant, and I was farther on down the list and the budget came up that they couldn't promote any farther on down the list. Then I was trained as an evidence technician in what they

called the emergency cars. And they trained us to do fingerprints at crime scenes and collect blood samples, collect all kinds of evidence. And Michael Alfultis<sup>8</sup> was the director of our crime lab at the time and his people gave us the training.

CIVIL SERVICE BUREAU  
265 City Hall  
St. Paul, Minnesota

November 15, 1968

Joseph Corcoran

The Civil Service Bureau has received from your department head your service rating for the six - month period ending September 30, 1968.

We are happy to note that your rating is 10. (See explanation below.) Please accept our congratulations for a job well done. We hope that in the future your services will be such that your supervisor (s) will feel that he is justified in giving you the same or a better rating.

If you have any questions regarding this service rating or the service rating procedure, please contact your supervisor.

We are proud to have you as a City employee.

Joseph J. Mitchell  
Civil Service Commissioner

Rating	Description
10	Your work has exceeded to an unusual degree the level of that done by the general run of employees doing the same kind of work.
8	Your work has exceeded to a considerable degree the level of that done by the general run of employees doing the same kind of work.
6	Your work has met the standard of work expected of the general run of employees.
4	Your work has been somewhat below the level of that done by the general run of employees doing the same kind of work.
0	Your work has been distinctly below the level of that done by the general run of employees doing the same kind of work.

<sup>6</sup> Richard S. Simmons was appointed patrolman November 2, 1964; promoted sergeant December 21, 1968; and retired November 30, 1989.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph C. Doran Sr. was in the Park Police March 1957—March 31, 1961; appointed patrolman March 31, 1961; promoted to sergeant December 21, 1968; and retired December 15, 1989.

<sup>8</sup> Harold Michael "Mike" Alfultis was appointed criminalist I May 16, 1963—title changed to criminalist II January 13, 1964; provisional criminalist III June 10, 1967; criminalist III December 27, 1967; resigned March 23, 1973.



Officer Corcoran  
c. 1967

And so we also had first-aid training. This emergency vehicle had a district. There were four emergency vehicles and we patrolled the city of Saint Paul large district. We picked up people that were having heart attacks, bad accidents, women delivering babies, never delivered one, but came very close. Then we went to the major crimes scenes. The crime lab had trained us in this.

KC: Were there any times that you had to draw your weapon, discharge your weapon?

JC: Yes. I had a situation where three guys robbed the Clark gas station down on West Seventh, way out near Sibley Manor, they were dressed in white coats and they pulled a robbery. They gave us the information and we knew from their description they were Black males that they would be coming back into the area up here, Selby Dale area. So, we went looking for them, and there were several squads that went looking for them. One squad stopped them on Summit Avenue, right across from the Governor's mansion [near Lexington Parkway]. We pulled up behind and I could tell right away that the one squad—one officer walked back to us, to say, we think we got him.

And I could see the guys in the car getting ready to flee and, so, all of a sudden they took off, one of them took off running. And another squad

had come in from the other way, Joe Polski<sup>9</sup>, Officer Joe Polski, and, so, him and myself withdrew our weapons and started shooting and we shot the guy, and he dropped. Rosalie Butler, she was a city councilwoman, at the time [he] dropped in her backyard, she lived up there, also. He wasn't seriously wounded, but he was grazed in the arm and in the foot. He was [one of] the guy that was [in on the crime]. They were all convicted of the thing, but that was the first time that I actually ever hit anybody. I told you about the robbery when we first came on, they put us on special deployment on the east side, and we shot up that car, but this was the first time I actually hit somebody and that's the only time, I hit somebody.

KC: What is it like for you, when you hit someone when you are faced with the fact that you could have taken a life?

JC: After this happened, you know, I examined myself and I said, *I never want to do that again, I hope it never happens again*. Because, you know, I carry the gun to protect myself, but I don't want to carry the gun to use it on somebody, execute them or kill them. And, yet, sometimes officers are faced with that and they have to make that decision and, thank God, it never got to that point with me, but I worried about it. I worried that, you know, what happens if I do kill somebody with this gun. And, yet, I kept thinking, I need to protect my partner, I need to protect other police officers, so, it was something that I thought about, but really didn't want to get involved in, but I would to save an officer or save a citizen.

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Peter Polski was appointed patrolman January 16, 1967; promoted to sergeant March 6, 1971; lieutenant November 10, 1987; commander November 1, 1997; and retired December 30, 1997.

KC: After that experience, do you think you were cautious or, maybe, too cautious?

JC: I think it made me really evaluate the situation, of course, they taught you to evaluate the situation as it develops and make a determination what you're going to do. And, so, I just reaffirmed that belief and that practice. I was very careful, but there was times when you got scared, big time, that you were going to have to use your weapon.

KC: What is it like for an officer to be scared? Because, I think, the public persona is, you know, these are the tough men and women and they don't get scared?

JC: Well, when you go home, you don't sleep, you're scared, you process the event back, and back, again. The same thing keeps coming over again. *What could I have done different? What did I do wrong? What am I going to do the next time?* And then you replay that event in your mind and you don't go to sleep. You don't go to sleep, its kind of a wasted night and that's where some officers think--*Well, you got to sit down and have a few drinks, to get the edge off.* I'm not sure that that's the right thing to do, either. But, I think, you have to be prepared to talk to somebody about it other than replaying it in your mind. And it might be your partner, in fact, it should be your partner and then, maybe, your spouse, when you come home, but I never wanted to pour that out at home.

KC: Who did you talk to?

JC: I would talk to my partner sometimes and then sometimes, I didn't talk to anybody. I just replayed it and just thought to myself, *What is the best thing to do for the citizens of Saint Paul? What's the best thing to do for my*

*partner? And then from a Christian standpoint, what is the best thing to do, from a Christian standpoint and what would God want me to do here?*

KC: What did God tell you?

JC: *Do the best you can and protect the citizens, protect your partner, protect yourself.* That's what I always came back to, I hope that's what He was telling me, but He never talked to me, but, I mean, you know, that's--

KC: Well, now, I've heard all these stories where, I think, God has talked to you.

JC: He has and He's helped me, no question about it, but, I mean, there was no physical presence that showed up there, but, I mean, you know, things worked out for me and I'm very appreciative to that. Most recently, the brain aneurysms that I had, I should have died, but a lot of people were praying for me.

KC: We're not ready to have you go, yet.

JC: No, I'm not ready to go, either, believe me, it scared me. I'm grateful that I'm able to spend the pension that I earned. Some officers that will be, you know, mentioned tomorrow, never had that opportunity and I never forgot that.

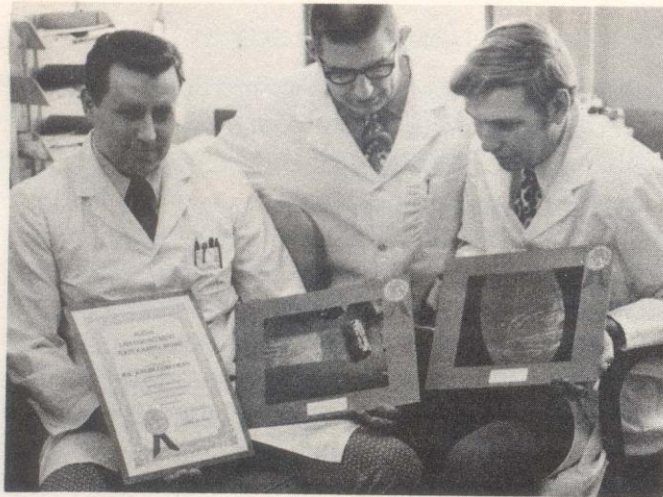


# S.P.P.D. REPORT

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER  
OF THE SAINT PAUL  
POLICE DEPARTMENT

VOL. I, No. 2

APRIL, 1973



## CORCORAN WINS PHOTO AWARD

SERGEANT JOE CORCORAN HAS RECEIVED A KODAK LAW ENFORCEMENT PHOTOGRAPHY AWARD FOR HIS PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPARISON OF EVIDENCE INVOLVED IN THE STRANGULATION DEATH OF A TWO-YEAR OLD GIRL. A PIECE OF "SARAN WRAP" WAS USED TO SMOTHER THE CHILD AND JOE WAS ABLE TO MAKE A PHYSICAL MATCH WITH A ROLL FOUND IN THE APARTMENT. JOE'S EXCELLENT USE OF LIGHTING AND COMPOSITION BROUGHT OUT THE JAGGED EDGES ON THE HIGHLY TRANSPARENT MATERIAL, MAKING THE COMPARISON OBVIOUS IN A PHOTOGRAPHIC DISPLAY.

THIS IS THE SECOND YEAR SERGEANT CORCORAN HAS WON THIS AWARD.

One day they asked me if I would consider coming into the major crime lab, and working as a patrolman to be fingerprint expert. So I came into the crime lab in the 1970s. And later was promoted as sergeant and

worked with Lt. Gerry Hanggi<sup>10</sup> and became a fingerprint expert. Testified in juvenile court, state court, federal court as a fingerprint expert. Went to a lot of homicide scenes, lot of rape scenes, burglary scenes, and became very familiar with evidence.

One of the disappointing things was that as the latent fingerprints which were developed from crime scenes came into us for screening. We kept the ones we felt could be identified. And some were beautiful fingerprints. The bad part of it was we had no way of going into our fingerprint file in our records unit which comprised about eighty to a hundred thousand fingerprint records. There was no way to get in there and make an identification. So, we relied upon the officers on the street and the investigators to provide us with a list of potential subjects that [could have been] responsible for leaving that fingerprint. Our success rate was minimal. We did make some cases.

But then we shared with Minneapolis Police fingerprint people, and they were having the same frustrations we were. So we decided to look at a system that would help us, an automated system that would help us identify fingerprints. We worked with the Governor's Crime Commission at the time, and there was a legislator who said there was L.E.A.A. [Law Enforcement Assistance Agency] grant money headed back to Washington, DC that had been given to the Governor's Crime

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<sup>10</sup> Gerald Anthony Hanggi, Sr. was appointed patrolman July 6, 1948; promoted detective August 10, 1957; lieutenant January 11, 1973; and retired February 16, 1990.



Sergeant Corcoran  
c. 1974

Commission for police departments to use, and she said, “We’ll help you write a grant and help you get this money, and if we get the money then you’re going to have to identify a vendor for fingerprint identification [system] that will help you search these files.” So, we were approved for

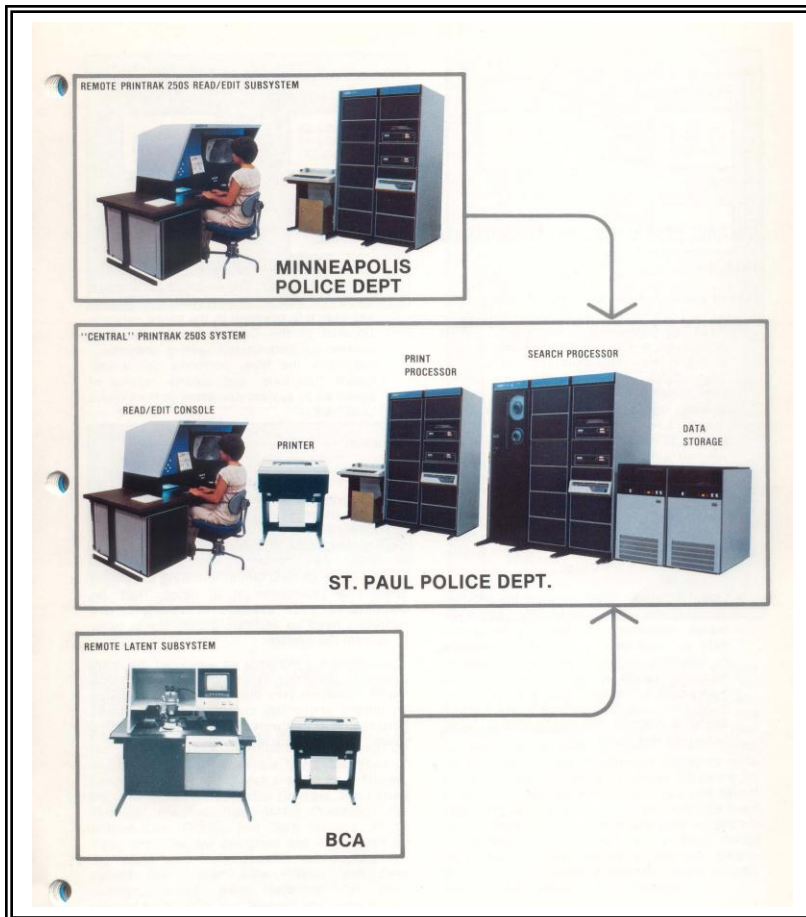
the grant, we looked at vendors and we selected Rockwell International of California. They had the best system and they had used their aerospace technology that they had acquired from putting satellites up. They were able to take the cloud cover surrounding earth, remove the cloud cover, and see locations on earth.

They were able to identify the USA, Russia, different places like that by using the computer software program. And that program was the same program that was interfaced with the fingerprint system. So when an individual was arrested and came in and was fingerprinted, if he smeared his fingerprints, this computer would screen that fingerprint and eliminate the smear portion and identify the points of characteristic that we use to identify people with. So we were happy to get that system and we were the first state in the United States that had a statewide fingerprint system that used computers to identify people.

[The system was known as MAFIN—Minnesota Automated Fingerprint Identification Network. It was formed by Saint Paul, Minneapolis Police and the BCA—State of Minnesota’s Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. The vender delivered the equipment and started training us in the use of

the equipment and how to search latent prints from the crime scenes.

While we were upstairs on the 3rd floor receiving training one of our staff left in the unit while we were trained, Officer Terrance Carroll<sup>11</sup> made the



first hit with the equipment. He cleared a house burglary and demonstrated how user friendly the equipment was to use.]

KC: So you were truly a pioneer in advancing the fingerprint system.

JC: Yes. The company, Rockwell International, decided

they needed a users' group. And I became the president of the International Users Group of Rockwell International. We were the first ones to get it, it was followed by Montgomery County in Maryland, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police also bought a system after we did, the Miami Police Department bought one and so did the Houston Texas

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<sup>11</sup> Terrance Carroll was appointed to the park police March 4, 1957; transferred to policeman for the Bureau of Police January 1, 1971; and retired July 18, 1986.

Police Department, bought one. So they wanted a users' group formed and so we all met in California and I was elected the president of the International Users' Group for Rockwell International Computerized Fingerprints Systems. That continued for about four years and we had a conference every year in California. People were invited to attend that were potential customers. A lot of people were international, we had visitors here come to Minnesota from Switzerland to look at the system, from Germany, from Norway, from Finland they came, and they all wanted to look at a system that was in operation. So, we had a lot of visitors come to Saint Paul.

One of the people that came to Saint Paul was a salesman for Rockwell International, that built the system, and he was on a tour of China. He worked for Rockwell in the windmill system, where they used windmills to generate power, and when he was in China the Beijing Police contacted him and said, "We know that Joe Corcoran is the president of this Users' Group and we'd like to be invited to attend their National Conference in California." So, this guy got a hold of me and asked me if I could invite them. So, through Rockwell International, we sent a telegraph message to China, inviting them to come to our Fall Conference. About a month later, I got a phone call from the U.S. State Department, a guy identified himself as R. D. Taylor of the China desk. And I thought, *what's the China desk?* He said, "Everything dealing with China comes through this desk and we understand that you've invited them to come to your conference and we

want to know why you're inviting them." So I explained to him that this is new technology to identify criminals. And he told me, he said, "Well, President Jimmy Carter doesn't want the Chinese to come to the United States, so he's going to deny their entrance into the United States." And I thought, *Oh my god, here, I'm a small time sergeant in a police department in the Midwest and now I'm involved in this political thing deciding what country can come to the United States.* Well, the United States and Jimmy Carter thought that this technology was so developed that countries would use it the wrong way. They would fingerprint everybody and identify who was the enemy of the country and then take out punishment on them. If they didn't agree with the political leaders of the country, they could punish their populations, because they would have their fingerprints in there. And there were some other concerns, too, I think. So, anyway, the Chinese never got a chance to come and look at the technology, but they kept their eye on it. The Taiwan Police Department came and they looked at it. They spent four days with us, watching it being searched and everything else. Before they left, they said if you ever invite the Chinese to come again, we'd like to be invited because we'd like to sit down with them face-to-face across the table. And I thought, *here we go again, we're involving ourselves into politics, national politics, you know.* That opportunity never came.

Anyway, the system has been improved greatly and we often brainstormed about where this technology was going. There was four of us that always sat down, the Mounties and Miami and Houston Police

Department, and our goal was someday to have a small little terminal mounted in the squad car, and a police officer pulls over somebody or sees him walking down the street. Wants to talk to him and the person has no identification, bring him over to the squad car and put their fingerprint on a prism and send it up to a satellite and the satellite would search that fingerprint through every police department in the United States, including the FBI, and come back with a report on who this individual was standing here. That was one of our goals. My understanding today, they have that technology. I don't know if it's in place, but – anyway, that was one of our goals.

We often used to laugh and just say, you know, “Do you think this could ever happen?” And it was something the company told us they could do if the money was available. If they could pay for the research and development costs by selling systems, then that would happen, and, so, right now across the United States, I think, every state has a fingerprint system that operates, like our old one operated. And, I know, there's inroads being made into accessing the FBI's fingerprint database. Each system operates a little differently, so they'd have to provide the right interface to get in there.

That was truly an interesting time in my career. I got to meet a lot of people. The Arab countries that came to visit us, were amazed that we treated our criminals the way we treated them.

KC: How did we treat them differently?

JC: How we treated them differently, is we incarcerated them, kept them in prisons. And at one table, at one of the conferences, there was an Arab General there and he asked us, "How many people do you have in your database?" Well, in our database at the time, we had four hundred thousand. Well, he almost jumped off the table. We went around, he went to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, they had two million. Went to Miami, they had a million and a-half. And he said, "Why do you have so many criminals in your communities?" He said, "In my community, if you're caught stealing, we cut your hand off, and after a certain period of time, we kill you. We don't incarcerate our criminals." And he was aghast at how the United States treated criminals. He said, "No wonder you have a high crime rate. No wonder you have a high homicide rate. Your people kill more of your people than any nation in the world today. You let people own firearms."

Well, the discussion went on and on and on, it was an interesting statement and most of the people that were from the United States, from police departments, just sat and listened. Because a lot of what was being said, struck a bone, you know. We often agreed that criminals were treated lightly in our country, but we didn't know whether we wanted to get to the point where we were going to be lopping their hands off and arms off and executing them, either, but surely we had a crime



Sgt. Corcoran 1978

problem. Their crime problem involved their government killing people. That's how we looked at it. So it was kind of an interesting time when we listened to those people.

But as technology became an important part of law enforcement, there was also the opportunity for law enforcement to abuse that technology and that was something we discussed and wanted to be careful we didn't do that.

KC: What would have been the opportunities of abusing that?

JC: Well, we could identify in the computer certain people that were pro-government, anti-government and we could see small countries using that to their advantage. If you didn't support the current leader, you were put in a file and when you were arrested, you were eliminated. And, so, you could identify people that belonged to different groups, had, maybe, a different thought process, for example, anti-abortion people, pro-abortion people, you know, you could set up files of those people. That was something we weren't interested in, but we could see the abuse of that coming forward. Small countries like Uganda, Idi Amin, very vicious leader, how would he use the fingerprint system?

And I remember, they wanted to hire some of us. The company was sold to De La Rue Print Track, an English company. So they sold the fingerprint system to De La Rue Print Track of England and De La Rue Print Track, printed all the money for third world countries. The only country they didn't print the money for was the United States. But they

had very fine fingerprinting, very fine technology that could print money. And because they were a large company, small countries in Africa spent a lot of money with them. In fact, if Uganda wanted to buy caterpillars, for example, they would contract De La Rue Print Track, because De La Rue printed all their money and, so, they had the contacts to help them buy these caterpillars.

When Uganda decided they wanted to vote for a new leader, they wanted all the people fingerprinted and put in a file and so when they came to vote they would have to leave a fingerprint, and that fingerprint would be checked to make sure they were a resident of Uganda. So, they came to us Users and wanted to hire us to go to Uganda to fingerprint all their people. Of course, we were all scared to do this, because we didn't realize what would happen, maybe, with those fingerprints someday that we were collecting. Would people be executed because we took those fingerprints because they didn't get along with the political leader at the time, they'd just pull them out of the house and execute them? So, none of us would go and be hired, and they were willing to pay us pretty good money to go in and fingerprint these people.

KC: Were there some people that wanted to consider it because of the money?

JC: Nope. Nope, we could see the future of this technology being abused sometime, and we didn't want a part of it.

KC: Has it moved to the point, where you think sometimes it is abused?

JC: I don't think so. I think the Users' Group and the police departments that have got it, they shared in our feelings and they themselves could see it

coming. And I think the companies that sell that technology today, they're aware of what it could be used, because we brought it to their attention. It's probably in the minutes of many of our agenda meetings that we talked about.

### MAFIN'S ABILITY TO ENHANCE POOR-QUALITY LATENTS RAISES THE PROBABILITY OF "HITS"

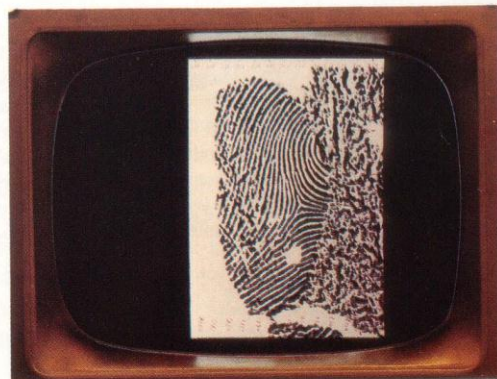
c. 1975

An especially important feature of MAFIN's Print Processor is its ability to enhance poor-quality prints. By means of this virtually dramatic ability to enhance, the Print Processor gives to otherwise unidentifiable latents and badly inked rolled prints a degree of detail and contrast that permits their rapid and positive matching with prints on file.

In order for minutiae to be located and used in identifying fingerprints, the Print Processor must transform the tremendous range of quality in fingerprint records and the many shades of inking present in prints to binary equivalents for digital processing. It accomplishes this by examining, point-by-point, each print with which it is presented and determining where ridges exist (black) and where valleys occur (white). It "looks" at each point and its surrounding area within the print, examines the average value of grey levels in the area, and performs a weighted averaging calculation to decide whether the grey level of that point should be identified as black or white. During this operation information is available to determine quality of the fingerprint image at each point, and low-quality portions of the print are edited from the final data output. The end product of the process is a print with recognizable ridges and valleys, permitting minutiae to be identified and a match to be made with a known print.



POLAROID PHOTO OF  
LATENT PRINT NO. 40



ENHANCED DISPLAY IMAGE OF  
LATENT PRINT NO. 40

KC: For laypeople, like myself, what are the specific things that this technology advanced that you couldn't do before?

JC: Well, if your home is broken into, the window in your bedroom is broken into, and the suspect has pulled the pieces of glass out before he enters and robs you, burglarizes you, maybe, even rapes you, his fingerprints that are left on that piece of glass are something that can be developed and entered into the computer and searched.

**Minutia-Based Approach Offers Advantages of Discriminability, Speed and Transmissibility**

The approach taken by the Minnesota automated fingerprint identification equipment to fingerprint identification is based on the use of minutiae data consisting of the location and orientation of fingerprint ridges at points of termination (ridge endings) or branching into two ridges (bifurcation). Patterns of such minutiae uniquely characterize individual fingerprints and are the universal means whereby fingerprint experts are able to positively identify specific persons.

The Minnesota equipment reads directly from card or paper input, which means there is no need for costly and time-consuming photographic processing of input information. The data which are stored for each fingerprint, and which are subsequently used for matching, are digital, binary-encoded descriptors, and are thus amenable to high-speed computer processing. In addition, sophisticated algorithms and dedicated processors make possible an extremely high processing speed which, in turn, makes the system highly cost-effective.

The minutia-based approach for automatically processing and matching fingerprints offers many significant advantages over other approaches. Foremost among these advantages is the discriminability of minutia-based systems which permits them to select with high accuracy one person, or a very few candidates, from a very large file. All other current approaches must identify a large number of candidates in order to provide any reasonable assurance that the individual of interest is among them.

Because the automated Minnesota system uses digitally encoded data and only 2500 bits of information are needed to uniquely describe a fingerprint, the system provides a means for transmitting fingerprint data both rapidly and inexpensively over ordinary telephone lines.

Another valuable feature of the Minnesota system is its ability to maintain its own file of fingerprints for subsequent comparison with unknown prints. Conversion from card or paper format to digital records for permanent storage in system files is performed at the rate of up to sixty 10-print sets per hour. Once established, the file can be developed and updated on a continual basis.

*Not least among the Minnesota system's features are its compatibility with the minutia-based system hardware/software of a rapidly growing number of users throughout the U.S.A. and abroad ... including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a number of major U.S. cities, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It is possible to tie these units together at selected times for cross-jurisdictional searches, if such are necessary.*

**FINGERPRINT READING**

The diagram illustrates the fingerprint reading process. It starts with an 'ORIGINAL PRINT' and an 'ENHANCED PRINT'. The 'ENHANCED PRINT' is then processed into a 'RIDGE DIRECTION PLOT' and a 'MINUTIAE PLOT'. The 'MINUTIAE PLOT' shows individual ridge endings and bifurcations marked with dots and lines.

**FINGERPRINT MATCHING**

The diagram illustrates the fingerprint matching process. It shows an 'UNKNOWN PRINT' and a 'FINGERPRINT MINUTIAE FILE'. The 'UNKNOWN PRINT' is processed into a 'STATISTICAL CORRELATION' plot, which is then compared with the 'FINGERPRINT MINUTIAE FILE'. The 'FINGERPRINT MINUTIAE FILE' contains various identifiers such as 681537A, 356849Z, 441561M, and 356824R.

KC: And before this technology, you couldn't search it?

JC: You couldn't search it, no. What we needed is somebody's hunch.

Somebody that says, "Joe, why don't you try this guy's fingerprints, he's done this in the past" or

“we’ve seen him hanging around the streets and we don’t trust him.”  
Well, sometimes that worked, a lot of times, it didn’t work.

So, that technology has moved us ahead where we’ve put people in jail.  
And it was interesting, once the other users got online with their systems –  
I’ll never forget the Houston Police Department gal that ran their system  
came to our Users’ Group conference the first year after they got their  
system and she said, “We just paid for our system.” I said, “Well, how  
did you do that?” She said, “Well, we had a house that was entered and a  
woman was raped and she was murdered and we developed a fingerprint  
and we ran it and we identified the individual and he had been released  
from prison the day before, and we went and arrested him.” And she  
said, “We prevented other robberies, rapes and murders. This individual  
was going to continue to rape, rob and murder.” And, so, she said, “We  
just paid for our system. We protected our citizens and there’s women  
out there today that won’t have to face this individual.” Those were the  
kind of stories we heard every year at our conference. It was just  
amazing. You think about it, how long would that individual continue to  
rape and murder in that community. Ironically, he was put on death row.

KC: Saint Paul is a capital city of a state, but it’s a small metropolitan area, you  
know, we’re a small town in many, many respects. So how does this  
small crime lab in a small metropolitan city, get to be a leader? What is  
the culture that created the environment for you to be reaching out and  
becoming a leader in this area?

JC: I think it was what I call A-type personalities. Our Police Department recruited A-type personality people that wanted to make the difference. And these were people, a lot of the times, that were born and raised here and loved their city, and they wanted the opportunity to make a difference, make a change. And the political process allowed them to do that, the mayors, the city council people, the leaders within the Police Department, they were willing to take the risks to make the changes necessary to make this a safe environment. That's how I looked at it. And I was pleased to be part of that team that did that, because I had friends that worked in the police department across the river that didn't have that opportunity. They didn't have that network of people and they didn't have that feeling within the government. And I never forget when our officers were killed, Ryan<sup>12</sup> and Jones<sup>13</sup>, and we were in the procession headed to the cemetery, there was Minneapolis cops that were sitting in the squad car with us and the people that were lined up on the street waving signs, little kids crying, women crying, and the cops from Minneapolis said, "You know what, they love you over here. They love you cops, we don't have that in Minneapolis."

And I think it was an attitude problem. I think when we came through the Police Academy they enforced within us a couple different things. One of them was that you work for this community, you work for these

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<sup>12</sup> Ronald Michael Ryan, Jr. was appointed police officer January 23, 1993; fatally injured by gunfire while responding to a "slumper" call (someone sleeping) August 26, 1994.

<sup>13</sup> Timothy J. Jones was appointed police officer October 31, 1978; fatally injured by gunfire while searching for the suspect in Officer Ron Ryan's murder August 26, 1994.

people. You don't work for the mayor, you don't work for the chief, you work for these people.

And the second thing, there was what we call the Brotherhood of Officers and that was pounded into us. And what that meant was, you become a Saint Paul police officer, you're going to give up your life for another Saint Paul police officer if you have to. If that officer needs help, you're going to go, you're going to fly there.

And that help thing continues on after you retire. So most recently I had two brain aneurysms break in my head. I had to have surgery and I almost died, and the Brotherhood of Officers came alive. I got cards, letters, and at the hospital they showed up visiting me. I've been gone from the PD for ten years and that officer brotherhood still is alive and well, and I think that's very strong in this town, in Saint Paul. Other towns, I'm not so sure it's as strong. I think it's there, but it's very strong here and that's why I'm glad I became a Saint Paul police officer.

Just the whole attitude of this community, allowed Saint Paul police officers to, not only do their job, but to grow and to become innovative, and to become leaders in police work across the country. There are things we did that nobody else even thought about doing.

CITY OF SAINT PAUL  
Office of Personnel and Labor Relations

Recruitment and Selection Division  
265 City Hall, Saint Paul, MN 55102  
612-298-4221

03/14/90

Joseph K. Corcoran  
512 Hyde Ave. No.  
Mahtomedi, MN 55115

CONGRATULATIONS!

We are pleased to inform you that you have passed the Lieutenant examination of 02/07/90.

The results of the examination are as follows:

Oral Interview (Weight 30.00%)	90.00
Assessment Center Evaluation (Weight 30.00%)	95.00
Written (Weight 40.00%)	95.00
Score for Exam	93.50
Seniority	2.50
TOTAL ADJUSTED SCORE	96.00

Your name is currently Number 1 on the PROMOTION list.

If you have any questions concerning this examination or any general questions about employment with the City of Saint Paul, call us at 298-4221.

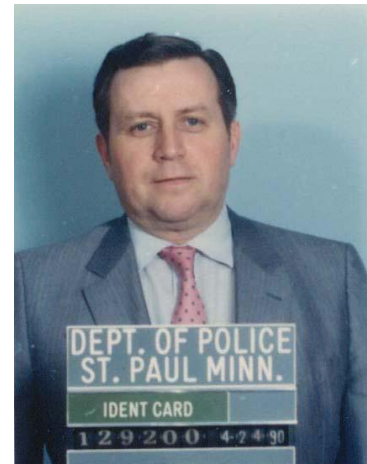
Dave Kigin, Personnel Specialist  
Recruitment and Selection Division

DK/mb

KEY: Assessment Center Evaluation = Promotability Index  
Written = In-basket Index

KC: Like what kind of things?

JC: Well, when I was promoted to lieutenant and put into the Homicide Unit, I soon realized that our survivors, the mothers and fathers and grandmas and grandpas and husbands and wives that survived a homicide, where their family members were murdered, we actually victimized them a second time by us not being with them through the process and telling



Lt. Corcoran  
1990

them where the investigation was headed, where it was at. We never provided any counseling for them. We never prepared them for the trip that they were going to take, without their loved one.

I went to a meeting that was set up by homicide survivors in a church in Highland Park. I forget the name of that church. Adelman<sup>14</sup> was my public information officer and we went there and we heard the terrible stories, how they were treated by the PD, how they were treated by the court system when they went to court, how the defense attorneys, you

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<sup>14</sup> Paul Adelman was appointed Saint Paul's Public Information Coordinator in August 1988, becoming the first professional communicator hired by a Police Department in the upper Midwest. Previously, he had spent 16 years at Twin Cities Television stations WCCO, KSTP and WTCN (now KARE) where he wrote and produced news programs and documentaries. In 1996, he was transferred to the Mayor's office, serving as the City's Director of Communications under Mayor Norm Coleman.

know, ripped them up in court. And at that time I looked at them and I could see their eyes, that they hurt, these were people that were going through a very emotional time and I told them, "I'm going to come back, but I'm going to make a change, this ain't going to happen." My public information officer was so taken aback and so insulted, he said, "I'm never going to come back here, they insulted us." I said, "No they didn't. They pointed out some fault that's within our system that I'm going to change."

So, I went to the Chaplain Force that we had, we had just started a Chaplain Force, and I asked them to help me with this problem. I said, "We need to set up a program that will help these people. Get them into counseling. We have to hire somebody in the Saint Paul PD that will interface with these people, hopefully, a victim himself or herself, that can tell these people what's going to happen and why they feel the way they feel and that there's help for them." This is a person that was also going to be a survivor that we hired. So, that was the beginning of the Victim Intervention Program, currently headed by Margaret McAbee, who is a homicide survivor. It's a great program and it's really helped those people. That was just one of the things that we were allowed to do because the way our Department is set up, and our leaders within the Department never challenged me on that. They never said, "Why are you doing this, Joe?"

KC: Do you just go off and do it, or do you go to the Chief and say, "I think we should do this."

JC: I went off and did it and then I told him later what I was doing and they never asked the question again. Later, the Department got an award at a Chief's of Police Conference out west for that program. And, I think, it's probably still in the Chief's office. That was the culture of the city and culture of the Department, and other guys in the Department did other things. Jerry Vick!<sup>15</sup> Look what he did with prostitution, was that allowed to happen in other departments? I don't think so.

The VIP program grew and became a very successful program that's now known as Survivor Resources, but it continues to provide help to homicide survivors, which was greatly needed. So, I often think about the meeting we had at the church and I've met several of those people since we've done this. I think they were very happy with what was done, in fact, some of them came to me crying during some of the meetings. And it wasn't all Saint Paul homicide cases either. We had people that were survivors from Hennepin County, Washington County, that had gone through the same thing. So this wasn't a unique problem that was just in Saint Paul. It's a problem that is across the whole United States and it deals with police departments, homicide units and the survivors. It's a very difficult thing when people lose a loved one, and police departments have to be prepared to react. Because we found in Saint Paul that if you don't handle the survivors right, they get to be a problem when the case goes to court.

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<sup>15</sup> Gerald Dennis Vick appointed police officer September 18, 1989, promoted to sergeant July 31, 1999; fatally injured by gunfire May 6, 2005. Receive the Metal of Valor 1991 and 1997.

KC: What were some of the things that you started doing differently, after working with the Victim Intervention Project?

JC: Well, first off, one of the things in the Police Academy, when I went through the Academy, nobody ever told you how you tell somebody their loved one is dead. We used to have to make notifications for the medical examiners office, where we'd have to go tell a family that their daughter had been killed in a car accident or something. Nobody ever prepared us for how to give that news. And, so, VIP or Survivor Resources, I know Margaret McAbee has given classes at the Recruit Academy about how to do that.

KC: How do you do that?

JC: You have to be very sensitive. You don't say that "you're going to get over this", or, in the homicide part of it, you don't say, you know, "You can forgive these people for doing that." Forgiveness is not something that is necessarily ours to do. That's something for God to do. And this just annoyed the people, especially if you'd say, "Well, you're going to get over this", you know. You don't walk in that person's shoes, so you don't know what they're going through. You think you know what they're going through. So there's a lot of things you don't say.

And there's other things that, you know, you can hug them and tell them that you're going to help them, that you love them, you care for them, and that you're going to help them. What I would do, is make sure that the chaplains always went with a police officer to make the notifications. I always made sure that I met with the family right away and told them

that I was in charge of the investigation and that I was going to do everything in my power to hold these people accountable for this crime. And that I would be available to listen to them, [and] to talk to them,

And that we would have a VIP survivor contact them, Margaret McAbee was going to contact them and that she would be the interface between them and us in the Department. After we developed this program, the County Attorney's office also developed that program and they had a resource person that would work with the families. [I told them] that after the case was totally over, they could come in and look at every documentation piece of material we had, including photographs, and I would be with them, along with the investigating officer, and we would lay the whole case out on the table for them to look at. And they could spend as much time as they wanted reading the files, if they wanted to. We became a very open investigative unit.

When I first joined the Police Department, the Police Department kept a lot of information to itself, they wouldn't share with the media, they wouldn't share with the public, because information was power, and they wanted that power to be kept within the Department. And as a result, the Department eventually was sued by the Pioneer Press and that was the beginning of the Data Practices Act that we have today as State Statute.

I think, Deputy Chief Redding<sup>16</sup> was one of the people that negotiated the agreement with the State of Minnesota and the Pioneer Press. But when I took over, when I was promoted to sergeant in 1970 and later went into the Records Unit, I had to find out about the Data Practices Act and learn about it, to find out what information I could release. So, I suspect that this was done in the early '70s and late '60s, is when the Data Practices Act came in, I believe. But, even after the Act was put into law, the Department still held a lot of information close to its chest. Didn't want to share with the public and the media and it affected the survivors. So, when I opened that up, I think a lot of people questioned it, but when they saw how the people were affected by it, it was never a problem. When I opened it up to the media, I think a lot of people in the Department wondered why I was doing it, but I had a reason to do it.

KC: What was your reason?

JC: My reason was, I was using the media as a tool to solve the crimes. Conrad Defibre was the newspaper reporter for the Minneapolis Star and Trib and he spotted it right away. He said, "You're using us." And I said, "We're using one another. You have to fill this paper full of stories, this is a crime that's been reported and you need to put a story in your paper and I need to get my message to the community."

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Lloyd Reding was appointed patrolman January 23, 1971; promoted to sergeant January 14, 1978; lieutenant February 1, 1982; captain February 23, 1987; deputy chief January 29, 1991, reinstated captain August 16, 1992; commander November 24, 1992; deputy chief June 21, 1999; senior commander November 3, 2000; deputy chief November 4, 2000; assistant chief November 18, 2001; and retired June 11, 2004.

The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (MGDPA) was originally enacted in 1974. Act of April 11, 1974, ch. 479, 1974 Minn. Laws 1199, and is set out in Minnesota Statutes Ch. 13.

This chapter regulates the collection, creation, storage, maintenance, dissemination, and access to government data in government entities. It establishes a presumption that government data are public and are accessible by the public for both inspection and copying unless there is federal law, a state statute, or a temporary classification of data that provides that certain data are not public.

See Minn. Stat. § 13.01, subd. 3.

Comprehensive law enforcement data is governed under § 13.82, which applies to agencies which carry on a law enforcement function:

**Subd. 7. Criminal investigative data.** Except for the data defined in subdivisions 2, 3, and 6, investigative data collected or created by a law enforcement agency in order to prepare a case against a person, whether known or unknown, for the commission of a crime or other offense for which the agency has primary investigative responsibility is confidential or protected nonpublic while the investigation is active. Inactive investigative data is public unless the release of the data would jeopardize another ongoing investigation or would reveal the identity of individuals protected under subdivision 17. Photographs which are part of inactive investigative files and which are clearly offensive to common sensibilities are classified as private or nonpublic data, provided that the existence of the photographs shall be disclosed to any person requesting access to the inactive investigative file. An investigation becomes inactive upon the occurrence of any of the following events:

(a) a decision by the agency or appropriate prosecutorial authority not to pursue the case;

(b) expiration of the time to bring a charge or file a complaint under the applicable statute of limitations, or 30 years after the commission of the offense, whichever comes earliest; or

(c) exhaustion of or expiration of all rights of appeal by a person convicted on the basis of the investigative data.

Any investigative data presented as evidence in court shall be public. Data determined to be inactive under clause (a) may become active if the agency or appropriate prosecutorial authority decides to renew the investigation.

During the time when an investigation is active, any person may bring an action in the district court located in the county where the data is being maintained to authorize disclosure of investigative data. The court may order that all or part of the data relating to a particular investigation be released to the public or to the person bringing the action. In making the determination as to whether investigative data shall be disclosed, the court shall consider whether the benefit to the person bringing the action or to the public outweighs any harm to the public, to the agency or to any person identified in the data. The data in dispute shall be examined by the court in camera.

I'm using you to get that message into the members of the community's homes, businesses, and I'm using you because there's people in the community who knew who committed this crime and I want them to call me." And so he said, "You're using us and we're using you, it's a good team." So then we became a team.

Well, there were people at the PD that still wanted to shelter that information, but when they started seeing how we cleared crimes with it – and, I can tell you about two little girls that helped me up on Hague Avenue, not far

from where we're talking right now, where a grandma was murdered – the media helped me solve that crime and those little girls saw me on TV.

KC: Tell me the story.

JC: How it worked in this specific homicide, we got called to an apartment on Hague Avenue, not too far from the Cathedral here, and there was an elderly woman in her basement apartment and she had a butcher knife in her chest, she was murdered. And her apartment was just full of things, she was a gal that went to every garage sale, probably, around and it was just cluttered, plus there were signs of violence. There were things overturned and everything else. There was no name on the door and we looked for a name on the mail boxes, there was no name there. We started knocking on doors and we couldn't find anybody home, so we didn't know who this woman was. And I knew that our crime lab was going to come in and they'd probably spend two days here, looking for physical evidence. There was stuff strewn all over the floors.

The media was outside and wanted to interview me for the 6:00 news. I went out and gave them the information where I was at and that there was a homicide in the basement, an elderly woman, and that I needed the public's help identifying this woman in giving me any information considering this crime scene. And I had sent one of the officers in the apartment complex to look at every doorknob, and I said, "When you find a doorknob that's got any red substance on it, you make note of what apartment this was and you come and tell me." Well, after I gave the

press conference, it was snowing out and everything else, and the media left – and it was the TV media, they left with their tapes.

I went inside and one of the female officers said, "Lieutenant, I found a blood stain in apartment 207, on the doorknob. It looks like a bloodstain, its all red." And I said, "Okay, when the crime lab gets here, tell them to collect that."

I went back to headquarters and I was checking that address, apartment, as to what had previous calls for arrest or reports there, and I found out that she had had several complaints against individuals. She had threatened them and they had threatened her and she had initiated minor law suits against people and this one guy threatened to kill her. He lived in Minneapolis, so I told the guys, "Go over and get him. Bring him here, I want to talk to him."

They had no sooner left, then I had a phone call from a little girl, she said, "I think I know who that woman is in the basement." She said, "Is this Lieutenant Corcoran?" I said, "Yes." She said, "I saw you on TV." I said, "Very good, I was on TV." And, I said, "Do you think you know who was in the basement, apartment?" "Yep." And I could hear in the background, dishes being washed, and I said, "Who do you think it is?" "I think it is my grandma." Then I could hear a woman say, "Who are you talking to." "I am talking to the police." Pretty soon I could hear the phone wrestled away and a woman gets on the phone and she says, "Who is this? "This is

Lieutenant Corcoran of the homicide unit." She said, "Why are you talking to my daughter?" I said, "Your daughter called me. I am in the homicide unit. I am investigation a case. The media taped me, and we have a person, believe me I don't like to do this on the phone. We normally send out our officers and a chaplain. But your daughter called, she thinks she knows who the person is in the basement that was murdered." I could all of a sudden hear her start sobbing. And then she said, "Did she say Grandma?" I said, "Yes." "Is the address this address?" And I said, "Yes."

She screamed. I could hear the phone bounce off the floor of the kitchen. The next person who picks it up is the husband, and he says, "What in the HELL is going on? So I had to explain to him again what had happened. And I said to him, "We don't normally do this, we send a chaplain out, but your daughter responded to that she saw me on TV." And I said, "I am very sorry, that this has to be the way you are notified, but your daughter responded to seeing me on TV. I am glad she called because we can't we can't really start this case unless we know what we've got. And the starting point is, 'who is your victim'. So he could understand. He had to come down to the morgue and identify that body, which he did.

And so about an hour later I get another phone call from a little girl. And she said, "I know who killed the woman in the apartment in the basement." Well, I about fell off my chair. I said, "Who." She said, "My mom's boyfriend." I said, "Where are you at?" She said, "My mom took

me over to my older sister's place, I'm on Grotto Avenue. She wanted me away from there." I said, "Well how do you know your mom's boyfriend killed the woman in the basement? "Cause he came up, he had blood on his hands and he said, "I fixed that bitch in the basement."" I said, "What apartment do you live in with your mom?" She said, "Apartment 207." I knew then we were on our way. I sent the guys out to get a search warrant for that apartment.

I called the two guys that I had sent over to Minneapolis to pick up this guy that had threatened her and said, "Where are you at?" "We're ready to go through the door." I said, "Don't go through the door, get back in your car and come back and go over onto Grotto Avenue at this address and talk to this little girl." So they did that and got a statement from her.

We got the search warrant. I stood outside and I watched this big tall guy exit the apartment and then he come back and went into the apartment and so when we got the search warrant we went in there and we arrested him, collected the evidence, we found more blood inside. Eventually, he admitted to killing the woman, he went down there to borrow some cigarettes from her, she didn't have any and they got into an argument and he stabbed her multiple times with a butcher knife. He was a gang-banger from Chicago, Illinois. We got that confession, because we confronted him with the evidence, we didn't tell him about the little girl.

Every Christmas thereafter, Sergeant Freichels<sup>17</sup> was my investigator, he went and bought that little girl a doll for a Christmas present.

That showed me the power of the media. What they can do. Would we have solved that case? I don't know. But I know one thing, it would have cost the City of Saint Paul a lot of money to solve it. A lot of investigator time, overtime that would have went into that.



Wm Finney

One of the things I was always concerned about is, I had to get rid of homicides because when I took over the Homicide Unit we averaged nine homicides a year in 1990, quickly the number rose up to thirty-five and I had nine people to help me with that. So I went to Chief Finney<sup>18</sup> and he said, "We don't have any money in the budget to promote anybody or move anybody into the Homicide Unit. You have to solve that problem yourself." So, one of the tools I used was the media.

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<sup>17</sup> Richard Julian Freichels was appointed patrolman April 1, 1968; promoted to sergeant July 22, 1979; and retired June 27, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> William "Corky" Kelso Finney appointed January 4, 1971; promoted to sergeant April 1 1978; the first Black male promoted to lieutenant March 8, 1982; captain February 23, 1987; and Saint Paul's first Black chief July 17, 1992; and retired June 30, 2004.

St. Paul homicide comparison				
Police solved all 14 homicide cases that occurred in St. Paul in 1991. Eight of the 27 homicides that have happened in the city so far in 1996 are unsolved.				
1991				
No.	Date	Victim	Method/ weapon	Cleared
1.	Jan. 31	Daniel Zuercher	Hands	✓
2.	Feb. 2	Steven Webster	Knife	✓
3.	Feb. 26	Michael Villalobos	Shovel	✓
4.	Apr. 27	William (Tex) Johnson	Gun	✓
5.	May 5	Gene Capocasa	Knife	✓
6.	July 7	Rodney Urban	Gun	✓
7.	Aug. 17	Shay King	Keg/tapper	✓
8.	Sept. 21	Jeffrey Barlow	Gun	✓
9.	Oct. 13	Marcus Housley	Gun	✓
10.	Nov. 18	Alphonso White	Gun	✓
11.	Dec. 7	Jessie Adams	Gun	✓
12.	Dec. 8	Bradley Murch	Fists	✓
13.	Dec. 27	D'Andre Suggs	Knife	✓
14.	Dec. 27	Ruben Perez	Knife	✓
1996				
No.	Date	Victim	Method/ weapon	Cleared
1.	Jan. 5	John Lee Jones	Gun	✓
2.	Jan. 6	Phillip Leroy Parks	Gun	
3.	Jan. 9	Edward David Bruyere	Gun	✓
4.	Jan. 12	Genelda Campeau	Knife	✓
5.	Jan. 31	James Charles Wildenauer	Gun	✓
6.	Feb. 4	Jerome Nixon	Gun	
7.	Feb. 19	Jason Dewayne Vaughn	Gun	X
8.	Mar. 9	Juventino Garcia	Knife	✓
9.	Mar. 20	Susan Marie Bauer	Hands	X
10.	May 2	Donald Matrious	Knife	✓
11.	May 4	Rita Tolchinskaya	Knife	
12.	May 7	Jack Weiss	Beating	✓
13.	May 8	Estara Johnson	Beating	✓
14.	May 10	Lorraine Miller	Gun	✓
15.	May 30	Scott Michael Neuman	Knife	X
16.	June 1	Florencio Morales	Knife	✓
17.	June 5	Stacy Allen Brooks	Gun	
18.	July 5	Rita Anne Walker	Gun	✓
19.	July 17	Botha Tha Thin	Knife	✓
20.	July 17	Se Meng Lo	Knife	✓
21.	July 20	Davisha Brantley-Gillum	Shot	X
22.	Aug. 2	Tony Zamora	Shot	✓
23.	Aug. 14	Shaunessy Walker	Beating	✓
24.	Aug. 25	Yvonne Lagrone Thompson	Gun	✓
25.	Aug. 25	Freddie Lee Bowen	Gun	✓
26.	Oct. 24	Anthony Michael Johnson	Shaken (infant)	✓
27.	Nov. 6	Robert Duane Benson	Gun	✓

Source: St. Paul Police homicide public information office

Note:

Of the eight homicides  
not cleared in 1996,  
four more have been  
cleared by June 2008--X

When McCutcheon<sup>19</sup> was the chief. He got into trouble with the media.

Mayor Latimer<sup>20</sup> told him, "You hire somebody to handle the media."

And they hired Paul Adelmann, who was a producer at Channel-4, TV.

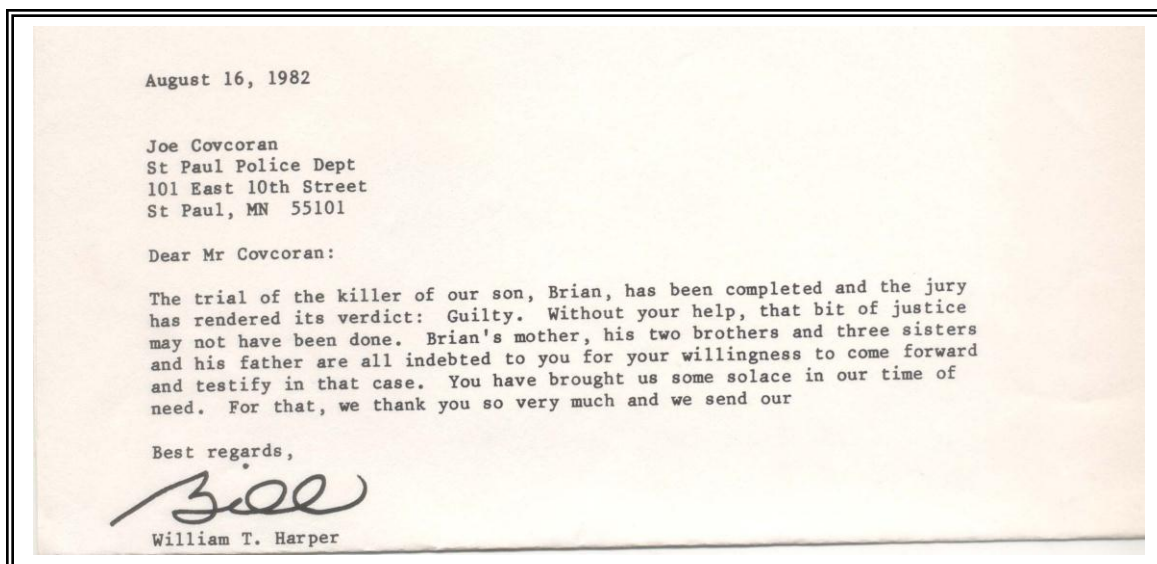
<sup>19</sup> William Wallace McCutcheon served the Saint Paul Park Police 1948 to 1954, appointed patrolman January 4, 1954; promoted to sergeant August 22, 1960; lieutenant December 12, 1965; captain June 20, 1969; deputy chief February 4, 1972; chief April 1, 1980; and retired July 15, 1992.

<sup>20</sup> George Latimer was Saint Paul's mayor 1976-1990.

Paul and I worked together as a team, and I said "Paul, I want to invite the media to every homicide scene. When they call me, they're going to call you, the PD, you come in and get on your computer and tell them where the homicide is at and that Lieutenant Corcoran will give them a sound byte at that scene, once they get to the scene." I said, "We're going to use the media to solve these homicides, because somebody in the community knows who committed it."

KC: And it also strikes me that your public persona, when you were on television, had to have been very inviting, or maybe grandfather-ish, that these young girls were willing to call you. It wasn't just the media, there had to be something about the way Lieutenant Corcoran did it.

JC: Well, my goal was to touch a tender bone in their body and let them know that that could have been them, and that they live in a great town and this town's going to stay great, if we get rid of this kind of activity.



And I can tell you another story about a homicide and how we used the media to our advantage there. In fact, I can tell you an awful lot of stories. We had a woman pick up her mother, who had a hip replacement and the mother was in her late seventies. She picked her up at the hospital to bring her home, put her in the backseat of the car and drove towards home and then remembered she had forgot something at work, she wanted to pick up at work. So she went down University Avenue, in the industrial area there, parked the car running, because she wanted the heater on her mother. She went into this office building and she came back the car was stolen, gone, with grandma in the back.

The two individuals who stole it had been walking down University, walking toward Minneapolis, saw that, "Well, here's an opportunity, here's a ride for us right here." They hopped in the car, took off with it and they went about three blocks before they realized grandma was in the backseat, because she whipped around her purse and hit them in the back of the head. So they thought, "Oh my god, what are we gonna do with this?" Anyway, they drove around the area and they decided they were going to dump the car and then they decided to dump grandma. So they pulled over to the Ace Box Bar on Vandalia and University and behind that bar was an old van, with four flat tires, it looked like it had been there awhile. They pulled alongside of it, this was on a late Sunday, the place wasn't open, the community was quiet, not a lot of traffic. So they load her into the van and take off. That night the temperature got low.

As soon as I knew about it, I went to the media and we started a press conference. The first one was, tell me where she's at, where you put her, she's on medicine, needs the medicine, it's going to get cold tonight. There was a massive volunteer effort, search effort, now underway, people were going to start looking for grandma. So, I knew that these two guys were probably laughing like heck about stealing a car with grandma in the backseat, getting hit in the back of the head, and they were probably going to tell some people about it, maybe, their girlfriends. So, I was appealing to the public to help us, but also appealing to these individuals, "Make a phone call to me. Tell me where grandma's at. We need to find her." And, sure enough, I was on TV and they were sitting with their two girlfriends in Minneapolis watching the TV set. And the girlfriends said, "Well, call him." And they said, "No, they'll tape the phone call, they'll be able to find us." "Well, go over to the phone booth, there's a phone booth a couple blocks away, just make the [call]." "No, we don't want them to know we came to Minneapolis, we're not calling." So, anyway, they didn't call and this didn't set well with the girlfriends.

We find grandma, she's dead, she dies of exposure in that van and I go on TV again and report it that we asked these people to call us, let us know where grandma's at and they didn't. The message I'm sending is to whoever their friends are, girlfriends, boyfriends, whoever knows about their crime, I'm sending a message, these individuals need to be held accountable for this because they could have saved grandma's life. They didn't. So they're watching the TV and the girlfriends now are upset, but

I got a new twist, I'm offering a reward for them, anybody who has information to come in. The next day, one of the girlfriends comes in to Saint Paul PD and says, "I have something to tell you." And our crime lab had lifted a fingerprint off the rearview mirror of the vehicle, and she went onto say, "I'm here for the reward, but I'm also here because I'm upset by what they did. They could have saved grandma's life." So, she gave us the names of both individuals and where they were at. We went and arrested them and identified the fingerprint on the back as being one of theirs, and they're both in Stillwater Prison today.

That's the power the media has, if law enforcement uses it the right way. And to this day, Paul Adelman and I teach a class for the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, called Police Media Relations. The thrust of the course is how you can use the media to your advantage.

The media has a bad rap with the community and law enforcement and some of it's deserved and some of it isn't deserved. But I recognized that as a tool that I could use in law enforcement. A lot of my fellow officers at first didn't, but when they saw the results coming in, and I could tell you story after story, how they helped me solve cases. I gave them credit, too. When we solved a case, they got a press release from me, saying thank you for helping us solve this case.

1970 was the first police officer killed [in Saint Paul for eleven years], and that was a case that was never solved. The Sackett killing.

That was the first crime lab case I went on. That night I watched his blood flow down the street into the gutter and that was something I never forgot, because it was like God was so upset he sent this storm to erase all evidence of this crime.



James Sackett

When I was promoted to Lieutenant his wife called me and said, "Will you solve this case?" And, so I reopened it, looked at it and saw the problem with it, and so I said, "Well, we'll just keep looking at it." She came and saw me, in fact, at Ryan or Jones [funeral], she came and hugged me and said, "I hope you can do the same for me with my husband." She never forgot what happened.

Well then Tom Hauser at Channel 5 called me, after Ryan and Jones, two of our officers were killed, he looked back to see when was the last time a police officer was killed and wasn't solved, and it was Jim Sackett.

Connie Trimble was the gal who made the phone call to lure the police officers into the home on Hague Avenue, under the pretense that there was a woman delivering a baby. She made that phone call from the phone



856 Hague

booth on Victoria and Selby. She made the phone call. She was charged with a crime, but she was never held accountable for that crime.

Tom Hauser located her in Denver, Colorado, driving a bus. He went out there

and tape interviewed her and she admitted she made the phone call, under the direction of [Ronald] Reed and [Larry] Clark, and then she shut up. He called me and he said, "I have a videotape to show you, Joe, can you come out to the studio?" I had a good relationship with Tom Hauser. I went out there and I saw that videotape and I said, "Holy smokes, here we go." I sent two of my men out to Denver – went to [Chief] Finney and said I need a thousand dollars to get the guys out to Denver. So, they went out and talked to her and she kind of clamed up. At that time we needed help and so we turned that case over to the FBI Task Force, Tom Dunaski<sup>21</sup> and crew.

KC: And Jane Mead<sup>22</sup>?

JC: They did a heck of a job on it. And it was because of Tom Hauser that that case became alive again, and because it was solved. And it was because of Dunaski's tenacity and all of his people that worked with him and the

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas Dunaski was appointed patrolman October 26, 1971; promoted to sergeant October 10, 1979; named officer of the year 1977; received the Chief Richard Rowan award in 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Jane Mead was appointed police officer June 30, 1986; promoted to sergeant June 26, 1994; International Homicide Investigators Association 2007 Cold Case of the Year Award; and 2007 Minnesota Women Police Association Officer of the Year.

prosecutor, federal prosecutor, and the county prosecutor. I testified on both those cases in 2006.

And, once again, it was the power of the media that helped us do that. We should have used the power, many years before that, to our advantage, but we never did. I called Tom Hauser and congratulated him and I wish I'd have been notified when he was given the award by [Chief] Harrington<sup>23</sup>, because I'd have drove down. He saw me at the trial and he kept waving to me and I said, "You're the reason I'm here and I'm awful glad I'm here."

KC: Now you were working in the crime lab. Can you talk a little bit about the work that you did on that case?

JC: Well, we were sent out that night and that was my first call out on the crime lab. The week before I had been in the squad cars myself and we had been lured several times to locations on calls and when we got there and there was nothing there, and we were wondering what was happening. It was part of that Black Panther attitude that *we're gonna take some cops out*. So that night we got there and Sackett and his partner had responded, they thought there was a woman having a baby there, so they went up to the door and knocked on the door. When they didn't get a response, Sackett's partner Glen Kothe<sup>24</sup>, ran around to the back door to

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<sup>23</sup> John Mark Harrington was appointed police officer July 11, 1977; promoted to sergeant September 7, 1983; acting lieutenant January 4, 1997; lieutenant November 1, 1997; title changed to commander January 1, 2000; senior commander July 1, 2000 ; assistant chief May 8, 2004; chief July 1, 2004.

<sup>24</sup> Glenn David Kothe was appointed patrolman November 13, 1967; promoted sergeant November 14, 1982; and retired June 30, 1997.

### **Reed gets life for killing Sackett**

Ronald Reed will have to serve at least 17½ years in the St. Paul officer's murder. "Today I feel comfort," said Jeanette Sackett-Monteon, the slain officer's widow.

**By Paul Gustafson, Star Tribune** Last update: March 1, 2006 - 10:56 PM

Ronald Reed received a life sentence Wednesday for the murder of St. Paul police officer James Sackett. But Jeanette Sackett-Monteon told Reed in court that she had received her own life sentence long ago. The fatal ambush that killed Sackett, she said, "took away my husband, my lover, my best friend. But most of all it took away my children's father. "I had to live with 36 years of crying, of pain, of missing Jim. Today, I feel comfort." The unsolved case of who killed James Sackett ended Wednesday when a Ramsey County jury convicted Reed, 55, of first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder in the killing of the St. Paul police officer. It was a day of reckoning for Reed, a Chicago pipefitter who prosecutors said advocated killing a police officer to get national attention for his group of young St. Paul black radicals.

For Sackett-Monteon and her four fatherless children, however, it was perhaps the first day of consolation since the officer was cut down by a sniper's bullet shortly after midnight on May 22, 1970. Reed sat quietly with hands folded and showed no emotion as Ramsey County Chief District Judge Gregg Johnson read the jury's guilty verdicts. An hour later, Johnson sentenced Reed to life in prison.

Under 1970 sentencing standards, Reed must serve at least 17½ years before he can ask for parole. Before he was sentenced, Reed called the convictions "unjust." But he added: "If my unjust conviction brings consolation and closure to officer Sackett's legacy and beloved family, then I accept the consequences gladly and without malice toward anyone." Jurors announced at 3 p.m. that they had arrived at a verdict, after perhaps a dozen hours of deliberation on Tuesday and Wednesday. Juror Raymond Cleveland, 45, of St. Paul, compared the prosecution's case to "a pile that was building and just got bigger." According to Cleveland, the first vote taken when deliberations began found seven jurors voting to convict and five undecided.

By Wednesday morning, 10 jurors favored conviction. The final two holdouts moved to convict after the jury listened again to a tape of Reed's then-girlfriend, Connie Trimble, placing the fake emergency call that lured Sackett to his death. Defense attorneys John Pecchia and Marcus Almon said Reed's convictions will be appealed. "It was a difficult case," Pecchia said.

Reed's family members said they had no comment to make as they left the courtroom. Prosecutors Susan Hudson and Jeffrey Paulsen said they could not comment about the verdicts because of the scheduled April 10 trial of Larry L. Clark, who is accused of participating in Sackett's murder along with Reed. Clark, 55, who lives in the Twin Cities, faces the same charges as Reed.

### **Controversial testimony**

Sackett was 27 and working his first shift after a leave for the birth of his fourth child when he was fatally shot in front of 859 Hague Av. on May 22, 1970, while responding to the call placed by Trimble. At her own trial for Sackett's murder in 1972, Trimble admitted that she made the bogus call from a nearby telephone booth. She was acquitted, despite her refusal to say who had her place the call.

In 2004, however, she told a Ramsey County grand jury that Reed had her make the call and then drove her to Clark's home at 882 Hague Av., only minutes before Sackett was killed about 100 yards away. She repeated that statement in court last week, but added that she believed that Reed also had been tricked into making the call and that he wasn't involved with Sackett's death. Prosecutors said that Reed told her that story and that she didn't want to believe that Reed used her to kill Sackett. Jurors heard from a series of middle-aged men who said they were in meetings in the late 1960s where Reed advocated killing police in hopes of getting a Black Panther Party chapter in St. Paul.

One man, Joseph Garrett, said Reed tried to recruit him to kill an officer only a week before Sackett was ambushed. And prosecution witness John Griffin said Reed confessed to him several years later that he had shot Sackett. Pecchia called those witnesses unreliable and said prosecutors had to use them because they had no murder weapon or eyewitness to the shooting. But the defense rested Monday without calling a witness of their own -- including Reed.

#### **A long time coming**

Tyrone Terrill, St. Paul's human rights director, predicted that Reed's conviction could heighten racial tensions in the city. He said it was hard to believe Reed could be convicted despite the lack of evidence. And he wondered if jurors would have reached the same conclusion had Sackett been a civilian and not a police officer. "Somebody did it, but the question is: Are you sure you've got the right person?" Terrill said.

St. Paul Police Chief John Harrington, who was in the courtroom as the verdict was read, said Reed's conviction brings some consolation to Sackett's family and to police officers who had worked with Sackett. But he added: "It certainly doesn't heal the wounds that his death brought to the police department ... [and] it doesn't bring Jim Sackett back." Ron Ryan, a longtime St. Paul police officer and head of the Minnesota Gang Strike Force, went to the courtroom even though he admitted he was a bit afraid to go. "That night is burned in my mind. It's a long time coming," he said. For City Council Member Dan Bostrom, who was the supervising sergeant the night Sackett was shot, the verdicts brought relief. "This is something I've lived for nearly 36 years," Bostrom said. "It's not as if it's something that you dwell on every day. But it's something nagging that never goes away."

to see if he could get in because they felt maybe she was on the floor having the baby, couldn't respond to the door. At that point in time, the sniper was across the street somewhere in there and fired the shot and hit Sackett, just missed his badge and took out his aorta and Sackett died immediately. The bullet had come out here in his right shoulder and went into the porch post, oak post that was there. So when I got there, of course Sackett was gone, he was dead, and I cut that post off, almost collapsed

the porch on that house, cost the City about five hundred dollars, but nevertheless, I got the projectile out of that post. We collected some blood and then all of a sudden there was a rainstorm. I was just taken aback, because here's the people we're hired to protect are killing us now.

I stood there and I watched the rain, it just poured for, like, about ten minutes, and I watched his blood go down the elevated sidewalk that goes into the house. I watched the blood come down, drip and then go into the street and go down into the sewer. And it was like God wants to erase all signs of this terrible crime, you know. And that was something that stayed with me for years. This terrible crime was committed, a peacemaker was killed here today. Then I became a very cautious individual and I just couldn't believe that people in this town would kill us. I think it affected a lot of people.

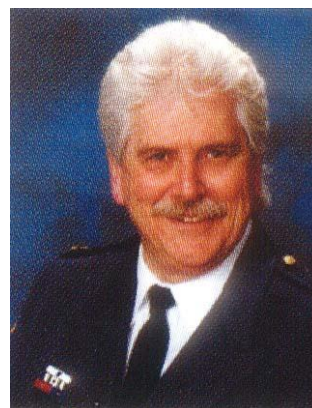
When I was promoted to lieutenant and put in charge of the Homicide Unit, there was one thing I dreaded. I dreaded that someday, one of my family would be a victim, and I would have to handle that case. And I prayed that that wouldn't happen, but it happened to my family, work family. Ron Ryan<sup>25</sup> and I were on the same lieutenant's list. I was number one and he was number two, and we were promoted the same day. It was

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<sup>25</sup> Ronald Michael Ryan, Sr. was appointed patrolman June 26, 1968; promoted to sergeant May 8, 1972; lieutenant March 30, 1990; title change to commander January 1, 2000; and retired April 29, 2005.

on St. Pat's day that we were promoted and our wives pinned the badges on, and then about three years later, I was put in charge of his son's homicide. His son became a Saint Paul police officer and he was killed, along with [one of] the officer that came to assist, [Tim] Jones. They were both killed.

So, what I had dreaded came true. It wasn't one of my personal family, my daughters or wife or cousins, but it was my police family and that was a very difficult case, very difficult time. It affected our Department. I saw it affected many of the officers, in different ways. Many of them never went in for counseling, and they should have went in for counseling.



Ron Ryan Sr.  
1999

KC: Did you go in for counseling?

JC: No. No, I didn't.

KC: So what made it different for you? Did you work through it?

JC: I worked through it. I grieved, I cried, and got that off my shoulder. I think, cops don't like to cry, you rarely see a cop cry. Because they think they're supermen and they're an example to society and that's a weakness, they think, crying. But I'll tell you what, I got it off my shoulder when I did that and it still affected me, because I still couldn't believe people did this. But my Unit and my people did such a good job that day out there for that case, and I told them, "I don't want this case to go to trial. I don't want Ron Ryan and his wife and his family, to have to

face this trial in court and listen to defense attorneys defending the guy that killed their loved one. I don't want that to happen, so build me a case that's airtight and he'll plead guilty." And that's what we did.

And Ronnie Ryan that was murdered, was a fine young officer that worked the midnight shift, and he would come into my unit, because I'd come into my unit early in the morning about 06:00, just to see who was being held for my unit and talk to my secretary and get the watch commander's report, and he'd come in and talk to me. He'd say, "Well, I'm gonna to get married, this wonderful girl and then I'm gonna go to Hawaii. We're gonna go to Hawaii, take a nice trip." And, I said, "Well, that's good, go there." I said, "That's a wonderful place." I never worked with him on the street and I knew him.



Ronnie Ryan Jr.

KC: What kind of an officer was he?

JC: I think he was an outstanding officer. I think he was aggressive, but I also think he was concerned about people.

The morning he was killed, he received a call about a slumper in a car at Sacred Heart parking lot on the east side, Sacred Heart Church<sup>26</sup> parking lot on the east side of Saint Paul.

KC: And a 'slumper' is someone sleeping in the car.

JC: And the slumper was the guy who killed him.

When I got to work that morning, I just got in and got a cup of coffee and was printing out the watch commander's report and I could hear on the radio, "Police officer's just been shot, Sacred Heart parking lot," and I grabbed my radio and jumped in the squad car and headed toward him and I was hoping he'd be driving towards me, well, he wasn't. He went the other way, out I-94 to a remote area and entered into that area. When I got there, paramedics were just loading Ronnie into the stretcher and I could tell the way he was breathing and everything else. [With emotion in his voice] He couldn't talk to me, he was going to die, I just knew he was going to die. And I thought, *oh, my god, what do I tell his father?*

But I looked over and there was a piece of passport laying there and I thought, *oh my god, he didn't need a passport to go to Hawaii.* So, I said a prayer, *God, please make that passport belong to the guy who killed him, he didn't need a passport to go to Hawaii, please make that happen.* So, when our crime lab people came, I told the sergeant, Don Hanson<sup>27</sup>, I said, "Put your rubber gloves on and pick up that passport and tell me whose name is in

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<sup>26</sup> Sacred Heart Church is located at 840 E. Sixth Street.

<sup>27</sup> Donald Howard Hanson was appointed patrolman March 2, 1964; promoted to sergeant October 3, 1970; and retired November 29, 1996

that passport.” So he did and he said, “It’s not Ronnie’s passport, it’s Guy Harvey Baker.” And that was the guy who killed Ronnie. And, so, that’s the power of prayer.

KC: What did you do after you saw Ronnie taken to the hospital? What was your next step in directing the homicide investigation?

JC: Well, I had to get my crew together because there was a street bus that had witnessed the shooting and it was full of people. Then there was a guy, who lived in the apartment across the street from the parking lot, and he saw the shooting and he pulled out his gun, and he was a marksman. He told me he had the opportunity to kill the driver of the car and decided that he’d get in trouble if he killed him. So instead he shot the back window out with a pistol. So, I had to rally my crew together, because we had a lot of people on that bus to talk to, see if they could identify him.

We also had a name and we found out that the passport had been issued in Iowa, so we had to get a hold of the Iowa authorities and run that name, so I was getting my team together. When I had left my office to respond to this shooting, I told my secretary, “Get everybody in here. Everybody, even the afternoon shift, people off on days off, I want everybody in here. This is a big case.” It was getting them together. I met them down at headquarters and while we were reviewing the case, going over, I was giving assignments. I gave an assignment to two guys that, “You find out about this individual in Iowa, I want mug shots, I want records, I want everything about this individual.”

So while we're doing that, I can hear the radio and I can hear Jones get killed out there. And I said, "Oh, my god, we got two officers killed now." I had to assign somebody to that crime scene out there. And it shocked my unit, I mean, I could see the people, their heads bowed and everything else. And I said, "Listen, we're the best homicide unit in the United States and I want you to hold off grieving for these officers until you find out who did this and get them in custody. We owe it to the family and we owe it to the people in this community." So, I said, "Let's grieve later, and when we grieve, we'll really grieve, too." But, I said, "Right now, let's do what you guys do the best. Let's find out who did this and get them in custody." And, so, away they went.



Timothy Jones

Then later, [Tom] Dunaski finds Guy Harvey Baker laying underneath a piece of plywood, brings him in. I assign two of my people, [Neil Nelson<sup>28</sup> and Jerry Bohlig<sup>29</sup>] that were the better interviewers to interview him at the hospital and they got into his head. They kind of made him feel good, they said, "You know, you're the best guy we've ever seen that can take

out cops. You must practice this." And he said,

"I practice drawing my gun everyday out of the holster, and I prepared

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<sup>28</sup> Neil Paul Nelson was appointed police officer July 11, 1977; promoted to sergeant June 15, 1986; promoted to commander June 12, 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Gerald Joseph Bohlig Jr. Gerard J. Bohlig Jr. was appointed patrolman January 16, 1967; promoted sergeant March 10, 1977; and retired July 30, 1999.

myself for this day.” So they got him on videotape explaining that. And then they had him draw a diagram how the thing took place, then where he went afterwards.

He had climbed through a fish house, through the hole in a fish house, fish hole in a fish house, and he was so excited he had to go to the bathroom, so he went to the bathroom, number two, he went in that hole. So when Jones’s dog, [Laser] comes by he smells that smell, keys on it, and Jones doesn’t realize the guy’s in the house.



Laser  
Drawing by  
Amy Handford  
<http://www.amysart.net>

Baker shoots through the house and hits Jones and hits his dog, then goes outside and puts another one in Jones and then his dog comes and bites him in the leg. He explains all this on videotapes to us. He doesn’t admit the coupe de grace, Jones, but we know he did it. He puts all this on videotape and they’re kind of making it as a friend type of thing, you know, “you are, you’re just a, you’re a super shooter.” He said, “I practice every day.” And he actually showed them how he could draw his pistol out and everything else. We got all this on videotape and I’m thinking. *no defense attorney in the world is going to go to trial with this, we’ve accomplished our goal.*

He thought he was going to get killed, [never arrested]. He knew the cops had surrounded the area and they were coming for him. But, he also

wanted my people to kill him. He made reference to, you know, "If I grab one of your guns, you guys could shoot me right here." And, so, he thought of police suicide, after he made the statements to my people. And, "No, we're not going to allow you to do this, we're going to allow you to sit in prison someplace and think about this crime that you had committed".

His parents are schoolteachers in Iowa, very wonderful people, and they were just devastated by what happened here. I never talked to them, but they did interface with some of my people, limited. And then we found out from the Chief of Police down there that they had an outstanding warrant for him at the time. But, anyway, the videotape, when it was shown to the defense attorney, he had him plead guilty to the murder.

Then, one of my men felt so bad he felt like he was a traitor. I said, "No, you're not a traitor. You did what you had to do. I told you I wanted this an airtight case, so you got in his head, you patted him on the back. That's okay, because he's not going to be free to kill anymore police officers. You did your job." I had to go out to his house and talk to him. He got over it, but I think it was part of the grieving process, because he felt bad. But, I said, "Look what you did, you got a videotape of this guy explaining how he killed two of our officers." And, I think, it just affected inside that, once again, people out here are killing us, they can kill us.

KC: Well and to do that, he had to befriend him, he had to open his heart to him. And then close it again, and that's difficult for human beings.

JC: That's right, he did. It was very difficult for him. We had conversations about that, and I think he got over that. It was a cost that all of us paid for that crime and a lot of the officers paid a dear cost. I'm sure they got divorced, I think alcohol played a role in some of their careers, because of that. And even when I got retired up north, you know, some of the officers said, "You know, Joe, it still affects the Department, Jones and Ryan's killing."

KC: Was there anything specific that was done to help with the grieving or did the offices just shy away from it?

JC: Yep. Our Employee Assistance Program, Denny Conroy<sup>30</sup>, set up a program especially for them and a time for them to come in, and very few come in. They just couldn't bear their souls, I guess. And I said, "God, I hope they do." He said, "Well, you need to come in." And, I said, "No, I need to finish this investigation and make sure it goes all right." Because I owed it to Ronnie Ryan and – we met with the Ryans, his wife and daughter, and went over the case, both the investigators and myself. We've never shown them the videotape that I know of, because we didn't want them to see that, but we told them about it. They just wanted to understand how this could happen.

The guy was sitting in the front seat of the car and he had his hand under his sweater where his gun was, and when Ronnie come up to him, he asked him for ID, the guy gave him the passport. So, when Ronnie turned

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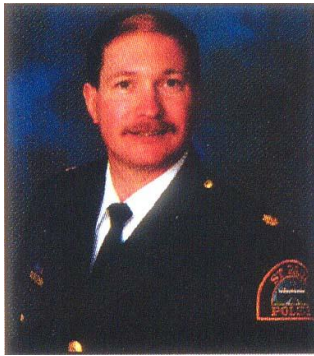
<sup>30</sup> Dennis Lee Conroy was appointed patrolman May 22, 1971; promoted to sergeant June 6, 1978; and retired November 29, 2002.

around to walk away to check the guy out, the name out in the squad car, the guy pulled out the gun and fired, and that's when he shot Ronnie. I think he hit him four times and then Ronnie died in Regions Hospital, right after they got him there. That's how that started and we had to explain that to the Ryans.

[Emotionally shared] I kept all of his personal stuff, Ronnie's shirt and his gun belt, and kept it in my office and told Senior, Ron, Senior, if you want it, you come and see me. But, if you want me to destroy it, I'll destroy it. Ron, Senior came later, maybe, a month later and got the stuff from me. Kept it in my office, I didn't want it to get lost. I don't know what he threw away and what he kept, but, you know, it was a difficult for all of us. When I said the prayer that it wasn't Ronnie's passport and we would be able to solve this case. That's the power of prayer.

I used that – I decided many years ago, when I took over the Homicide Unit, I prayed to God and I said, "Look it, when I go with my team to these homicides, give me some help, you know, allow my team to find the evidence, you know, do the interviews, help us solve these crimes. And if we can't solve them, after I throw everything at them, I know that you want to take care of it yourself. You'll do that Judgment Day, but let me have a crack at it." So that was my philosophy and I said those prayers.

And later my men found out, and when we had a homicide on the freeway early in the morning – a guy came through the loop with his



Kenneth Reed  
1999

girlfriend, they were eating someplace and another car pulled up alongside with three guys in it and they gave them the evil eye, well they got on the freeway and right down by Marion and 94 they pulled alongside the guy with his girlfriend, pulled out a gun and shot into the

car. The bullet went right by the guy's front face and hit the girl in the side of the head and killed her instantly. I got the call and I said, "Send Sergeant Reed<sup>31</sup> and Sergeant Charmoli<sup>32</sup>, I'll meet them there at the freeway." So we got there and I met Reed and Reed said, "LT" they called me LT all the time, and he said "LT, we don't have anything. We don't have any evidence, we got a driver, the boyfriend, he's got a vague description of the individuals. No other witnesses seen anything. We don't have nothing." And, so, Reed looked at me and he said, "Did you contact your Friend?" I said, "You bet." We got back to headquarters and put out a vague description of these individuals, and within an hour, we had all three in custody, and within another hour, we had confessions from all three. And Reed said, "I can't believe what just happened. He was there with us." And I said, "Yep, He's there with us all the time when we go on these, because I pray for it."

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<sup>31</sup> Kenneth Wayne Reed was appointed police officer August 5, 1984; promoted sergeant July 13, 1991; Lieutenant May 30, 1998—rank changed to commander January 1, 2001.

<sup>32</sup> James Michael Charmoli appointed patrolman January 16, 1967; promoted to sergeant September 6, 1975; and retired August 31, 1999.

And so, when I got sick, I was down at St. Joseph's Hospital<sup>33</sup>, he found out I was there. Reed came to see me. He's been assigned commander of the Fraud and Forgery Unit now. He had one of his investigators, Sgt. Mark Johnston,<sup>34</sup> with him. He said to me, "Do you still talk to your Friend?" And I said, "Yeah, I'm in here and I almost lost my life, I talk to Him very often." This Johnston said, "What's the story about that?" And so Reed told him the story about what I did all the time and he said, "You can't believe how that worked." He said, "Can I tell that story?" And I said, "Yeah, you can tell it whenever you want", you know. But, anyway, Reed said, "Do you still talk to Him?" I said, "Oh, yeah", and I said, "You should talk to Him, too."

But that was part of the reason, I think, we were able to solve a lot of the cases we solved, and, you know, a lot of guys will probably say I'm crazy. But that, in my mind, was the way I solved a lot of those cases. I didn't really want the guilt of not solving these cases. I didn't want to think back in retirement, *Why didn't you solve this one? Why didn't you solve that one?* And there was some we didn't solve, we couldn't solve them all. But there was two years we solved every one of them.

May 13, 2008

JC: One of the things they stressed during the academy is that you have to have the ability to talk and sell yourself and that someday, your ability to

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<sup>33</sup> St. Joseph's Hospital, founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in 1852, is located at 69 W. Exchange Street.

<sup>34</sup> Mark Johnston was appointed police officer November 1, 1980; promoted sergeant March 1, 1987; and retired February 29, 2008.

talk, will save your life. So, we used to practice that in the academy. They'd have situations come up and you'd have to handle them - they'd have a domestic or something like that. So, one day I was working, I didn't have my regular partner, I had a new partner, Ray Grosberg<sup>35</sup>, who I had hunted with and everything else, Ray had been around, he came on [the job] after I did. We got a call up on Concordia, to see a lady. And the 'see a lady' calls could be some of your more dangerous calls, because you didn't have a lot of information to go on when you went in there and, so, we went in there, and as we got on the porch and knocked on the door and said, "police department", and I could hear somebody say, "come on in." So, in we walked and as I walked in, this big tall kid, he was a Black fellow, put a butcher knife on my chest and said, "I ain't goin' back and that fuckin' bitch ain't makin' me goin' back." And I said, "Who's that?" And he said, "That's my fuckin' mother" and he said, "I ain't goin' back." Then all of a sudden the mother broke in and said, "This is my son and he's in the mental health ward at Saint Paul Ramsey Hospital, he's dealing with some situations and I took him home for the weekend on leave, and he refuses to go back." And this kid started, just calling his mother every name in the book and he had that butcher knife laid on my chest.

In those days, we didn't have a bullet proof vest and, so, I know my partner, Ray, behind me, he's got his hand on his gun. So, I knew I had to do something, because it wasn't too good of a situation. The kid was

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<sup>35</sup> Ray Andrew Grosberg was appointed patrolman June 28, 1968; promoted Sergeant May 6, 1972; and retired June 30, 1994.

getting madder and madder and screaming at his mother. So, finally, I said, "Listen, can you do me a favor." This is my first day back [on the job], my mother died and I buried her and I sorely miss my mother and this upsets me that you're talking about your mother that way, because my mother loved me, just like your mother loves you, and she's got you in that hospital for you to get well, and you will get well, and she loves you. Please don't talk about your mother like that in front of me, because I just buried my mother and I'm having a difficult time dealing with it."

And, so, he quit talking. So, I said, "You know, just bear in mind your mother loves you, and, we'll help you back, we'll get you back there, but you don't need to do this." So, I put my hand out and I said, "Just put the knife in my hand." And it was, maybe, about ten, fifteen seconds, and he's thinking and pretty soon the knife comes off my shirt and he puts in my hand. So, I said, "We will take care of you, nothing is going to happen to you, and you'll be coming back home again, but this kind of thing that's happening now, is going to prevent you from coming home. Just work with the experts, and your mother loves you." And I could see her nodding her head, like, this, every time I said something positive about her feelings for him. So, I said, "You just come with me."

Well, Ray had re-holstered his gun and I thought *thank God*, because if he'd have shot, he'd have probably shot us both, you know. Anyway, we took him out to the car-and he was about six foot eight, six foot nine, a real tall kid-put him in the car and took him down to Saint Paul Ramsey

Hospital and took him in and I wished him good luck. I said, "Things are going to work out, just have a positive thought about your mother and about your health."



Ray Grosberg 1983

Anyway, we got back in the car and we left and Ray, my partner, said, "I have to apologize to you. I didn't know your mother died. I would have come to the wake and the funeral. I didn't see it in the paper." I said, "Ray, my mother's alive and well on 2137 Wellesley." I said, "I had to come up with something to save us, 'cause." And, he said, "You're kidding, your mother's alive?" And, I said, "My mother's alive." I

never told my mother how I used her to save my life, because she really didn't want me to be a Saint Paul police officer. She kind of wanted me to be a mailman or something else. And it was because she was afraid I'd get hurt. So, I figured, *God, how do I tell her this? You know, she's not going to believe it and she's going to have a heart attack or something.* I never did tell my mother what had happened that day. But, that was what training did for us, you know, and it saved my life and, probably, Ray's life. Ray probably would have shot the guy. Every time I see where a mentally ill person is killed by the police, I thought, *that could have happened to us that day.* It could have really happened to us and we were able to take care of the situation. I never did follow up to see what happened to that kid. I seen him in the area a couple years later, but I never talked to him, I never talked to his mother.

KC: What creativity when your life is being threatened, to come up with that.

JC: Oh, geez, yeah. But, Ray felt a lot better that my mother hadn't died and he hadn't missed the funeral. But, that's what kind of happened, you know, so.

KC: In the training had they really inspired that level of creativity?

JC: Yup. Well, they just said, you know, "You're going to be faced with things that, all of a sudden, you have to make some judgmental decisions and you have to make the right decisions and you have to be creative." And we were, many times we would get into situations where the people at the house were out of control, I mean, the emotions were out of control. We came in and we had to try to control those emotions and control people. You had to be able to talk your way out of situations. That was the gist of the training, you know, "this is going to help you live."

KC: Do you remember who did that training?

JC: It was Paul Paulos, Larry McDonald, Ed Hoeller<sup>36</sup>, who's gone from the Department and deceased now, he was in there. They put on those little skits and had you handle things and just, re-emphasize that - that you had to be able to talk. You're going to be meeting people of all different walks of life, religions, races and economic situations, and difficult situations in their life, and you're going to have to learn to deal with that. That worked for me that day, I'll tell you that.

KC: What's another story you have for me?

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<sup>36</sup> Edward D. Hoeller was appointed patrolman January 23, 1927; promoted to sergeant January 12, 1942; and retired June 29, 1979.

JC: When I was in the Crime Lab, they transferred me up to the Records and Identification section, and it was to do an audit. But they also wanted me to help supervise the records clerks and disseminate the information that the media needed. Also, I had three shifts of identification officers that would roll the ink impressions of people that were arrested and either create new criminal records or add to their criminal records - it was an identification function.

KC: When you say 'roll' do you mean, roll the fingerprints?

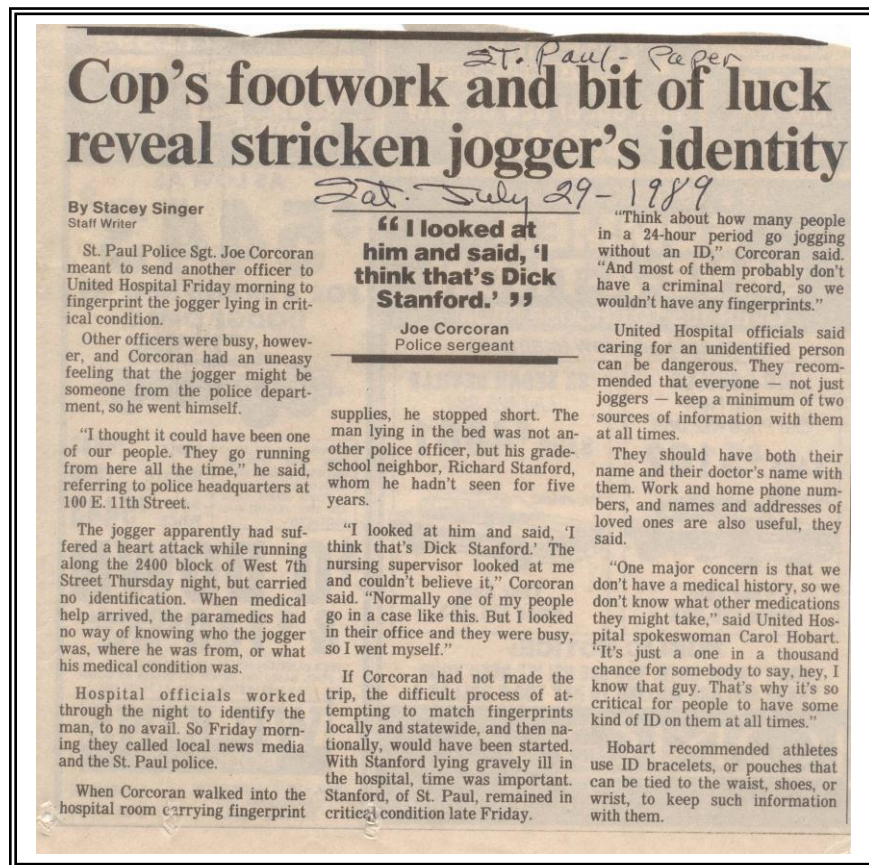
JC: Roll the fingerprints, roll them on an inkpad and then roll them onto a fingerprint card. A lot of people would pay for having their fingerprints taken if they were getting a record check done, or they had to have a check done because of a job that they were getting.

Well, anyway, it was on July 29, 1989 that I got a phone call from United Hospitals and they said, "We have an [unconscious] jogger that was found on the street in heart attack condition. He was rushed to our hospital and we don't know who this individual is. There's no identification on him and we need to find out, if he's been a patient here before. He's got heart problems and we feel that somewhere, maybe, in our own hospital, we have records that we should be accessing to find out how to treat him." They were trying to enlist the help of the media, also, but they said, "Will you send somebody down here and take his fingerprints and run it through your system?" Normally, I would go back into the Identification Unit, where the booking area is and take one of my guys and say, "Go over to United Hospital and here's the problem, ink this guy's

fingerprints, come back and check them.” But something told me, *I gotta go, I got to go there myself.*

Paul Adelman, I think, he went with me, he was my public information officer, but I went over to United Hospital and told them I’m here to take fingerprints of the guy they got, and, so, they took me up onto the Intensive Care ward and I walked into the room and I recognized him as my neighbor that I had grown up with him, Dick Stanford. And, I said, “That guy’s Dick Stanford.” And the nurse said, “Yeah, come on, come on, you’re probably good with fingerprints, but you’re not that good.” And, I said, “No, that’s Dick Stanford, he grew up with me.” I said, “You run his name through your system and you’ll find out.” And, I said, “He also has a brother that’s a University of Minnesota police officer.” She said, “Well, this is all we got.” And she showed me keys and the keys belonged to - It was an unusual car—[a Volkswagen bug] - and I said, “You just call his kid [brother] over there at the Police Department and ask him if this is his car.” But, I said, “More important, run his name through your system, this is Richard Stanford.” So, anyway, this is the article the media wrote on that incident. And, that day -- my horoscope, I’m a Leo - and you can read what my horoscope says, and that was pasted on there.

KC: Leo - July 23 through August 22. Do special favors for others and you will be well rewarded. Your detective skills are splendid. Someone who has always liked you, now loves you. You may not feel the same way. July 29, 1989. [Laughs]



JC: [Chuckles] Dick was a school teacher for many years and then he became a volunteer, later became a volunteer at United Hospitals. He was going to write an article in the Reader's Digest about this. I told him, I said, "Something told me, I had to go and do this job myself." And, normally I wouldn't do it.

KC: But, now, from our last conversation, it wasn't just *something told you*, I mean, I would imagine, "*He*" told you, you need to be the one that does the identification.

JC: Yes.

KC: In 1989 were you in as much active communication with your Higher Power?

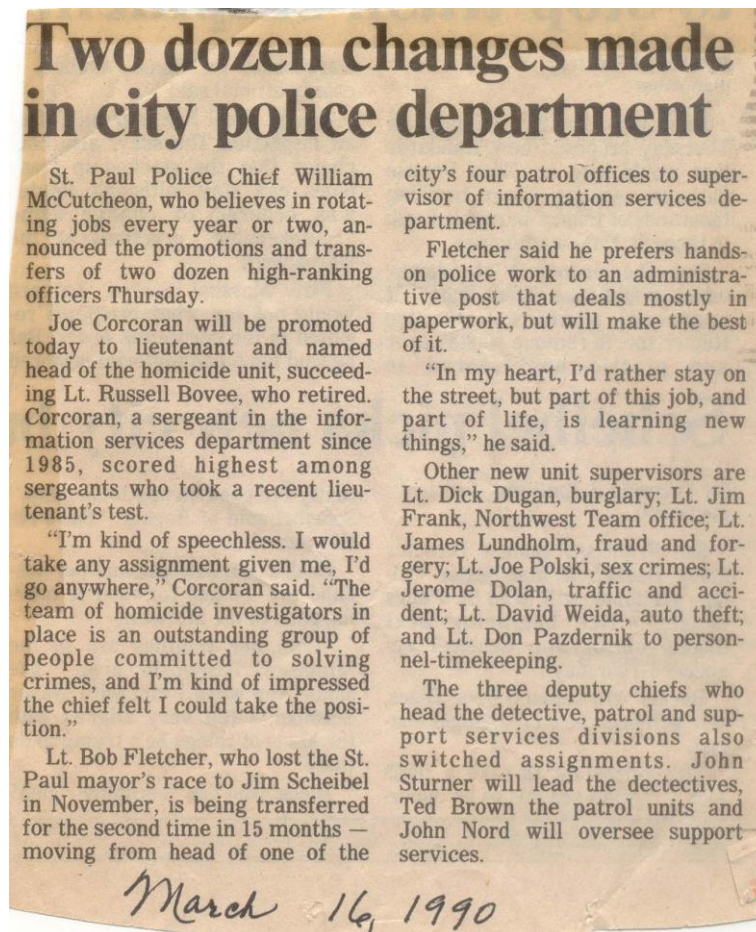
JC: Not really, no. Not like I was when I was in the Homicide Unit. But, while I was a sergeant in the Records Unit, I had an individual show up one day that wanted to get his guns back. He couldn't get his guns back because the police had been called to a situation where he was in a car with all his guns, threatening suicide, so they confiscated all his guns. And, of course, this was out in the suburbs, Woodbury, and they wouldn't give his guns back. So, he came to me because I was the sergeant that gave permits to purchase [firearms] out for people, they had to have a record check. I refused to give him his permit. I said, "I'm refusing this, because I don't want you to kill yourself." "Oh, I won't kill myself." He would call me just about every day and then he'd say, "I'm praying for you." He said, "I pray to God every morning, I go for a walk every morning and the police stop me and wonder what I'm doing, but I'm praying to God." And, I said, "Well, that's good." And, so, we kind of formed, kind of, a little relationship. He always kept pushing me to give him the permit to go out and buy more guns. He was an artist. He said, "I'm going to do something for you to hang up in your Record's Unit." So, one day, he shows up with this long piece of paper and it's a painted

shark, he wants to hang it up in the Record's Unit, of course, I couldn't do that.

So, he said, "I'm talking to the Lord and I told him about you" and he said, "He says that you're going to be promoted to lieutenant, around St. Patrick's Day." So, I said, "Did He say anything about a new car or anything like that?" Just kind of making small talk with him and he said, "No. . ." he said, "You're going to be a lieutenant." And I said, "Well, Bob." His first name was Bob. Then he showed up one day with these paintings, drawings, and it was him in Vietnam under the influence of drugs. He had one painting of what marijuana did to ya, what cocaine did to ya, what heroin did to ya, and he said, "These are yours." And, I said, "Geez, I can't accept them." And he said, "Nope, you are." He had them in a little pouch and everything else. So, just to get rid of him, I said, "Okay, just leave them there." [I gave him \$5.00 and he gave the artists case and drawings] I said, "You're going to get them back." "No you're not."

Anyway, I took the lieutenant's test and right before St. Patrick's Day, Ron Ryan and I were promoted to lieutenant. And, he kept telling me its going to happen. Well, when it happened - I never told him I took the test, I never told him I took that test - well, he saw it in the newspaper where I was promoted, so he called me and wanted to know why I didn't invite him to the party at the Chief's office. [Laughter] He kept pushing me for the gun - and I wouldn't give it to him.

Then I got into Homicide. Well, his two sons were arrested and charged with aggravated assault and my unit handled it and they were found guilty and put away in prison. Well, Bob, moved out to California, Long



Beach, California, and he would call me in the Homicide Unit and say, "Will you pray with me this morning?" I said, "Sure." My secretary,

Carol<sup>37</sup>, thought I was crazy. She said, "This crazy guy's on the phone from California, he wants to pray with you." I said, "Okay." So, he called, maybe, two or three times, and then one day I got a call from the police department and he had committed suicide. And, so, it was a sad end to a little short relationship I had with a guy. And I knew he was mentally ill to the point that he would eventually take his life. Just, life wasn't fair for him, you know, he didn't feel it was fair for him. But I still have those paintings in my basement. I don't know what the heck to do with them. They're pencil and charcoal type of things, but you'd get a kick out of seeing these things, but that's what he envisioned was happening when he was under the influence of drugs. That got me thinking. This guy, how did he know that I was going to be [lieutenant?] He didn't even know I took that test, and then to tell me that - and I kept egging him on about other things - "Did he say anything about a new car? Did he say anything about this, me coming into any money?" He said, "I told Him, I'm getting disappointed, how come he's not promoted?" He said, "I was told you're going to be promoted around St. Patrick's Day."

KC: So, at that time it seemed strange, now, with a broader understanding of relationship with a Higher Power, does it make sense?

JC: It makes sense. The police out there, how they got to know him, was they would stop him early in the morning walking down the street and he was

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<sup>37</sup> Carol Schwartz was appointed temporary clerk typist I January 30, 1974; provisional clerk typist I September 28, 1974; promoted clerk typist II May 21, 1977; and retired July 16, 1999; returned as temporary employee May 30, 2006 – June 23, 2006.

praying. He told them, he was praying for them, too. So, they knew what was going on with him. I don't know the details of his suicide, I don't know if he did it on the street or what happened out there, but I just was hoping it would never happen. But, you know, some people are just committed to that course of action and it's difficult to change them.

KC: Well, the pain, the pain that some people experience is so intense that that's the only way they see in being able to get out of the pain.

Being trained as a chemical dependency counselor, I use the term Higher Power, what is the name that you use in reference to God?

JC: You know, I believe in the Higher Power thing, because it's a term that's used, you know, in alcohol and drug rehabilitation and I believe in that. You know, it's a personal relationship I think you develop with the Lord. Like, right now, I pray two and three times a day, because of my health and because of things that have happened to me and I'm grateful for. I could have died with my aneurysm, I could have died on this job as a police officer.

There's another story I'll tell you about. You know, back in the 1970's it was a very difficult time to be a police officer or a government worker, because we had the Vietnam War, people weren't happy with that, they were protesting that and they weren't happy with how the government

was handling things. So out of the colleges came a lot of the radical groups. The SLA<sup>38</sup> group that eventually were shot up out in California was a group, the Black Panthers<sup>39</sup> was another group and, here, they showed up in Saint Paul and they eventually killed one of our officers. They were trying to decoy us and Officer Sackett, paid the price.

Also, during that time, they trained those Black Panthers on how to make bombs, and we had a lot of bombing incidents take place. And the Department wasn't prepared for the bombs, because we had nobody trained in bomb detection, bomb disarming, like you have Bomb Squads today. So, when the bombs started showing up, they said, "Send the Crime Lab guys." That's where I was assigned. So, Michael Alfultis, myself, and Sergeant Will LaBathe<sup>40</sup>, he was a National Guard member, also, would respond to these things. We also could use the arms plant<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Symbionese Liberation Army (S.L.A.) was an American self-styled urban guerrilla warfare group that considered itself a revolutionary vanguard army. The group committed bank robberies, two murders and other acts of violence between 1973 and 1975.

<sup>39</sup> Black Panther Party was a Black-American organization established to promote civil rights and self-defense. It was active in the United States from the mid-1960s into the 1970s. Its objectives and philosophy changed as it grew to national prominence and became an icon of the counterculture of the 1960s. The group's political goals were often overshadowed by their confrontational and militant tactics, and by their suspicions of and violence toward law enforcement agents.

<sup>40</sup> Willard B. LaBathe was appointed patrolman April 24, 1961; promoted sergeant October 14, 1972; and retired October 13, 1981; deceased January 2000.

<sup>41</sup> Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant of the Federal Cartridge Corporation covered a four square mile area in New Brighton. In 1942, it began production of four billion rounds of ammunition for war efforts. It was placed on inactive and stand-by status from 1950 – 1965, and again began production of ammunition during the Vietnam War. Placement on layaway status began in 1971. In 2002, some land was transferred to Ramsey County Parks. The Ordnance Plant, as it was known, hired Blacks at all levels according to their skills, education, and training. At one point it employed 20% of the state's adult Black population.

[in New Brighton] that had a detachment of National Guard that were trained in bombs, so, they would call them to come assist us. We had a bombing in the Dayton's Department store, where a gal was seriously injured and then a second bomb was in there and, luckily Sergeant [John] Gelao<sup>42</sup>, stuck his hand in the box and found all the wires and we were able to get that bomb out of there, before it went off. And then there was other bombs.

One day, we got sent out to the Midway National Bank at Snelling and University, on a bomb. So, Michael Alfultis, LaBathe and I, took off and went out there. Got there and they were controlling the crowds, moving people away. Snelling and University was a major traffic intersection, the freeway hadn't been completed yet, at that time. So, they were moving people out and there was the bomb, laying alongside the building. I looked at it and on the clock we had eight minutes to go, to do something with that bomb. The arsenal people were coming, but they were fifteen minutes out. That bomb was going to go off. So, there's the three of us, I had the camera to take a picture of it, a graphics camera, it was a big camera.

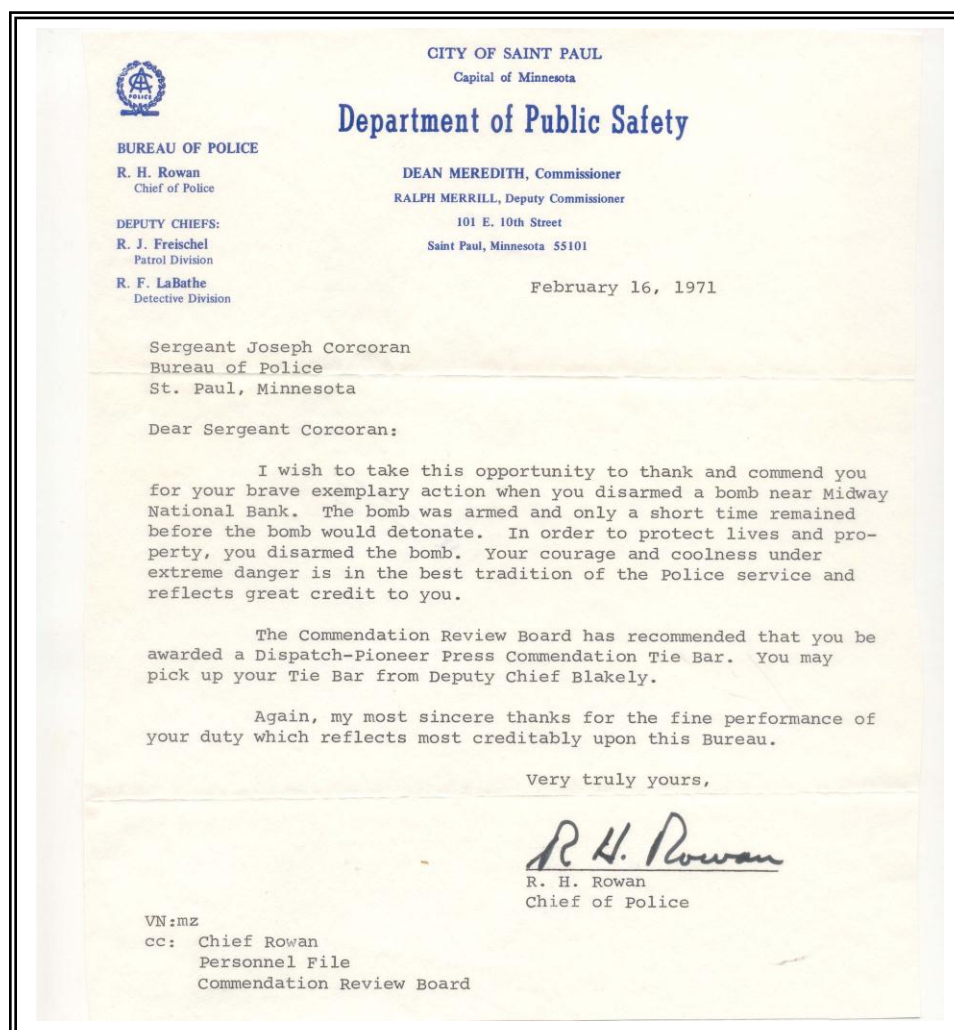
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<sup>42</sup> John Joseph Gelao was appointed patrolman January 4, 1954; promoted to sergeant March 22, 1969; acting lieutenant August 22, 1980; reinstated sergeant October 25, 1981; acting lieutenant April 2, 1984; reinstated sergeant May 13, 1984; and retired April 6, 1990.

And Will LaBathe and Michael Alfultis, got out their wire cutters. And this is a scene that's out of a movie, Lethal Weapons, with Mel Gibson and Danny Glover. Where the Black guy [Glover] is sitting on the toilet and [trying to disarm the] bomb underneath it. And Gibson's saying, "Well, do I cut the white wire or the red one?" That happened to us out there. When that movie came out, I laughed, because I knew what they were thinking. And Mike and Will were saying, "What wire do I cut? Do I cut the white one or the red one? And, I go, the camera ready to go, and so I take a picture, the flash goes off, well, they thought the bomb went off and they fell over on their side and it's *oh, my god*, then they realized the bomb didn't go off then they got back to cutting. It was a hysterical thing of events, you know, but we did disarm that bomb and later the Bomb Squad from the arsenal showed up.

What these Black Panthers would do, is they would set a bomb up in one location, have it go off, and they knew the police would send the squads there to the scene. Then they would pull a bank robbery over in another part of town, knowing that the district squad was probably gone to the bomb scene. Well, two days later, a bomb goes off under the Wabasha Street bridge, near the hotel down there where the Hilton was at. So, they sent us down, and as we're driving down Jackson, a bomb goes off at the Burlington Northern building and almost blows our vehicle over - we're on two wheels going down the street. So, we get down to that scene and

I'm walking along the cliffs and we're looking for residue of the bomb, and I'm feeling along the crevices of the cliff, and I stick my hand around to get a handhold and I can feel a gun, and it was a 9 millimeter gun, the bomber had left his gun there. He had hurt himself in the explosion.



But, those were scary days and, eventually, the Department sent people away to be trained in bomb work and, also, bought X ray equipment, where we could x-ray the bombs and take a look at them, but it was a scary time in law enforcement, in the 1970's.

KC: How did you deal with that, knowing that the danger was much higher than it had been when you first came on?

JC: Well, it was - we had a job to do and who else was going to do this job? We were the police, we had to go do it and, so, we had to just be careful. A lot of us grabbed books and anything we could read about this stuff, there wasn't much at that time. And we brought in retired Army people to talk to us about bombs and stuff like that. This was a new era, because they were training these guys [potential bomb makers] out of Iowa and sending them up to us. In fact, Minneapolis had one individual walking down the streets with a bomb and somebody must have keyed their garage door opener and the bomb went off and blew that kid all over the trees, he had body parts all over the tree. And, so, we were very concerned about it and quickly we had to get people trained, but we would go to the scenes and do the best we could. Most of the scenes we went to, the bomb had gone off, you know, but the one at the Midway National Bank was different. And, I laugh every time I see that movie, because that was us guys there that day - *What wire do I cut, the white one or the red one?* Will LaBathe is deceased now. Michael Alfultis just sent me a notice the other day, he's down in Ohio, he's getting remarried, his wife had died of cancer.

KC: Any stories that you remember, where you had to make the choice of family or to the Department, to the citizens?

JC: That was a terrible Christmas Eve for that family and for all of use, too, all of the investigators on the case. A city inspection worker that was killed

and taken to Wisconsin and buried in a grave. Jim Charmoli<sup>43</sup> had that case. We went out that night, spent with the family and trying to work up the case and, eventually, we convicted the guy. He was a--what they call a dumpster diver--he would collect stuff and put it around his property and try and sell it, and it got to be a junkyard and, so, the city was always on him to clean up his yard. Well, the inspector came out there and he killed the inspector. all of the investigators on that case. Charmoli ended up in Wisconsin digging up the body, finding the body.

KC: When you get assigned a case like that and you get the call, you're heading Homicide, and you get the call, do you just put blinders on and focus on the case?

JC: Yes, yes. As you're driving in, you're thinking, *What do I have to do?* And the limited information you get, you're processing in your mind, you know, *Where do I have to start here? What needs to be done?* The first one is control of the crime scene and, usually, that's done, we had good sergeants on the street. And then you need to make sure you got enough resources in, and you get to the scene and you, of course, I used the media to help me solve the cases, so, you had to deal with the media, you had to find out what happened. Then you had to make sure that you had all your resources there to do the job.

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<sup>43</sup> James Michael Charmoli appointed patrolman January 16, 1967; promoted to sergeant September 6, 1975; and retired August 31, 1999.

What I would do, was have murder meetings, and that was something the previous commander had done, Lieutenant Bovee<sup>44</sup>. I expanded upon that and I made sure we had plenty of those meetings. I would have them in the unit, we had a little conference room and a chalkboard and sometimes I did it in the Chief's conference room. We would go over the case and list where we were at and what needed to be done, and people were given assignments. Information was very important to get out to everybody, so then when my day shift came in—and they weren't out at the crime scene. They were brought into the murder meetings and told what we had, and we did a lot of brainstorming. But, we were totally focused on solving that case. Because we knew the community responds very well to you right after a homicide is committed and they're willing to help you, if you go to them with the media and explain what happened and why you need their help.

The suspects, the people that committed the homicide, its good to get them in custody within forty-eight hours, because they're vulnerable and they'll most likely give you a statement about the crime. But after forty-eight hours, they justify the act to themselves, that they did the right thing by killing that person. So, they kind of firm up and they get very difficult to deal with, in terms of getting a confession. And, the community does somewhat the same thing, they've heard the story, and after a week, they get hardened and they wait for the next thing to happen. So, you need to

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<sup>44</sup> Russell W. Bovee was appointed policeman January 2, 1957; promoted to sergeant October 1, 1964; lieutenant January 11, 1973; and retired January 1, 1990.

key-in to both of those peoples, right away, and stir their emotions to where they're willing to help you and they are willing to listen to what other people have to say and, maybe, call you with what they've heard. We keyed on those emotions. The murder meetings were important and so was dealing with the media and, so, we would invite the media to our homicide scenes, to meet me.

KC: Did you ever have investigators say, "If I don't go, my wife's going to divorce me—I can't be here, I have to do this for my child--give me an hour off?"

JC: No. No, they never came to me with that. It was difficult sometimes to know who to call, because the calls would come in--some nights, I'd get three and four calls--so, it was difficult to remember. And I told them, "There's two things, if you need to be someplace, tell me you can't make it, and if you've been drinking, tell me you've been drinking. I don't need you out there under the influence. You know, you could go out with your wife and have a few cocktails or something, I need to know that. Don't be ashamed of it, I just need to know and we need to not cross that bridge." On times they would do that and then there was times they didn't.

KC: Somebody came in a little bit high, what did you do?

JC: Told them, "Look it, just sit here and run me reports, but you're not going to get involved in doing an interview or taking a statement." But, you know, one drink or two wasn't a big thing, but sometimes, you know, they're out enjoying a meal with their family and with their wife, you know, so.

JC: It was a great feeling when you solved a case and you were able to charge somebody with a crime and deal with the survivors. So many times, during a homicide investigation, you develop a theory as to what happened and you start down a path towards a suspect and you get information that sounds real good, that this is what happened and this is who did it. So, you focus on that and you go down that path and then you find out that isn't the person, that isn't what happened. Then you have to regroup, you get back to the murder meeting and you get regrouped and you say, "We got to get refocused and head out again." Those were what were called, peaks and valleys. The peaks were, *Geez, we're going to get this* and the valley was, *No, this isn't the guy, he's got an alibi or this didn't turn out.* In a homicide, normal homicide case, you'd have several of both, peaks and valleys, and then all of a sudden the peak came that was the good one and you solved the case. It was such a feeling, you went through a lot of emotions to get to the end, where you got the right person and, so, you felt so good about it, you went home and everything was all worthwhile, what you had sacrificed--the bad food, the long hours, the hours away from home and your family--and, now, you were able to hold somebody accountable for that crime. That was a real high. And, I think, all the investigators experienced that, because there was a lot of frustration as you went through those cases and you weren't getting anywhere and then all of a sudden, you got somewhere. That was a real unusual feeling and it made the job all well worthwhile.

KC: Do you have trouble sleeping with that high or is it an exhaustion?

JC: No, it's an exhaustion. You have trouble sleeping when you're in the valley. If you go home and you haven't solved that case--and let's say you've gone two days without sleep—you go home, you should get sleep, but you lay in bed and just say, *What can I do differently?* You get kind of frustrated over it, so that causes a lack of sleep. But, not the peak, when you hit the peak, boy, you just--*Oh, my god, I got it!* And, of course, everybody's happy you got it, you know, the Chief, the Deputy Chiefs, the County Attorney, everybody's happy that it's solved.

KC: Were there ever times that your administration or the mayor's office is putting pressure and saying, "You got to do something, the public is unhappy."?

JC: No, I never had that happen. About the only criticism I had from the Mayor's office--we used to keep count of the homicides--so when we write the press release, "This is the fifth homicide this year," the Mayor said, "Don't keep track of the numbers, I don't want the numbers to go out to people." But, that was a minor criticism, it didn't affect us at all, we just stopped doing that. But, no, I never felt the pressure from them to solve it, and in some cases, the Mayor's office helped us get reward money for things. When the Coppage <sup>45</sup> kids were killed up there in the arson fire, that was a terrible case, and the Mayor actually went out and found \$50,000 in reward money for us. Eventually, the Federal Task Force

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<sup>45</sup> Five young children, ages two to eleven of the Coppage family died in a fire on February 28, 1994, on Saint Paul's East side. This fire was set by members of the older brother's gang which mistakenly believed the brother had broken the gang's code of silence. Through the work of the FBI Task Force five key members of the 6-0 Tre Crip gang were convicted of racketeering charges involving not only large-scale drug trafficking but also six murders including the 1994 arson murders of the five children of the Coppage family on August 5, 1998

solved that case for us, Sergeant Dunaski and crew, solved that for us. In fact, Dunaski told me, "That's your retirement present, Joe."

KC: Did you know early on who had done it, but there wasn't enough evidence?

JC: Yep. We knew who did it, yeah, and I was trying to build a case against them. And, some of those bigger cases where gangs are involved and drugs are involved, you need a lot of resources to help you solve those cases. It's not just one investigator, it's, like, multiple investigations going on at the same time to build a case, a huge case, and, sometimes, there's other indictments for drugs and stuff, other than homicide, and it helps build a case.

KC: Dunaski, who is a Saint Paul sergeant and he is assigned to the Federal Task Force. How does that work? What is that connection with the Federal Task Force?

JC: Well, the Federal Task Force is the FBI, of course, and the FBI is out there to assist law enforcement agencies, but they are also involved in drug trafficking, gangs, and, you know, many of these gangs, it's a big conspiracy and they don't limit their criminal activities to Saint Paul. On the Coppage case, they had indictments that came up for people that were down in Illinois and Iowa, and they were selling drugs, transporting them across state lines and violating a whole bunch of federal laws. But, the FBI has the resources, the manpower, the crime lab--huge crime lab--and they have connections across the United States that you can use.

KC: So, Saint Paul sends a couple of officers that are assigned to the FBI task force, Minneapolis does, different departments do, and then they work together and use the federal resources?

JC: Right. And then when I left, I told the Chief, Finney, "Whatever you do, don't ever move Dunaski out. Do me a favor, don't ever move him out of that Federal Task Force." Because he's well worth the Hope Diamond, as far as I'm concerned, and he has done extremely well, because after I left, he solved the Sackett homicide and several others.

KC: I believe with the Coppage children's murder there were a number of people on their way to prison, who were given deals, for their testimony, to finally prosecute that case.

JC: Yes. That's correct. I mean, once you get into that, you know, the case may turn out to be a homicide, but it also involves a lot of drug activity, a lot of other illegal activity, stolen goods and things of that nature, and that means there's more people involved. And you can use those people. I mean, those people, if they're looking at indictments, they're willing to talk to you and tell you what they know. That's important to those cases, because they give information you might not have gotten any other place.

One of the things the Department didn't train us too well on in the academy, was a situation that showed up in Saint Paul. We had a woman that, periodically, would call the Department and say, "I need to see a police officer out here, right away, as soon as you can get one out here." She wouldn't give much more information other than that. So, an officer would be sent out there, and got up on the porch and knocked on the

door, the door would open and there would stand this woman with no clothes on, absolutely no clothes on. Which was, *Oh, my gosh, what do we do here?* So, the officer, if he would say, "Well, what's your problem, ma'am?" She would answer back, "Well, can't you see what my problem is?" Anyway, the officer upon leaving, would call the Communication Center and tell them what had happened. So, this person and address got to be flagged down at the Department and she would call periodically, maybe, once a month. They would try and send a recruit officer, the Communication's Center, wouldn't send an experienced officer. They would send someone new. And, of course, the rookie didn't know anything about what was happening at this address. Many of the older officers, when the word got around--that address was circulated around, and when they heard the call go out, they would see who got the call and it would be rookie officer. Well, they'd pull their squads up and park outside and then watch them go up and be confronted and they'd be laughing in the squad cars, just tickled over--*look at this situation that's developed*, you know. It got to be a funny type of situation. But after awhile, pretty soon nobody would go on the call, because they didn't want to be confronted with this situation. They didn't want to be accused of anything, either. That was an interesting call and an interesting person, and I don't know what ever happened to that person. It was just one of those things, when you came to work, you never knew where you were going to go and what you were going to encounter and she definitely was a challenge, I'll tell you.

KC: [Chuckles] How do you train for that?

JC: I don't know, I just think, as police officers, we're morally tempted. We're tempted with sex, we're tempted with money, we're tempted with drugs, and we're tempted with alcohol, and the temptation is forever present there.

Many times you'd stop a car and there'd be a couple gals in there and they'd want to date you. They were very much interested in dating a police officer. They didn't care whether you were married or not. So, there was a lot of temptations that the job provided. You had to have some kind of moral backbone that said, you know, *I'm not going to go do this* or *I'm not going to participate with that*.

And, I think, today, with the drugs the way they are--I went through training before I left the Department, on seizures, how they seize places from drug dealers. It was put on by a commander out of Florida. They were having tremendous problems with somebody stopping a car late at night and searching the car and finding an attaché case with two hundred, three hundred thousand dollars in it and some drugs. And the drug dealer would say, "Well, you can have both of them, just let me go." Well, there's the temptation. You know, as a police officer, you probably won't make that kind of money in five, six, seven years, and there it is, cash, laying right there in front of you. So, they were dealing with that in Florida because they had a lot of dope dealers that were running money and buying stuff and so, that was the gist of the training. They were

seizing horse ranches and houses and property, but the big one, was the cash money.

KC: Did you ever run into situations where a fellow officer was suspected of, maybe, taking something?

JC: No, I never did. We had a couple occasions, where people out of Chicago, we stopped them and they handed us their license with a twenty dollar bill behind it. We handed it back and threatened to arrest them for bribery and everything else. Of course, it wasn't a verbal bribe, but it was a bribe that was coming to us with the driver's license and they basically said, that's how we operate in Chicago, you have to have a twenty dollar bill behind your license. Different places operated different ways, you know, but once again, the temptation was always there.

KC: Does Saint Paul have a different standard than other departments?

JC: Yes, definitely they do. That came up in the training. Although, the drug thing wasn't that big at the time, but it was, you know, you go to a crime scene, for example a florist's place is broken in and stuff is scattered around, you don't help yourself to the plants and take one home for your wife or girlfriend or something like that. The same way with a grocery store or something like that. Those were temptations that could be out there, if the officer was the wrong person. So, the Department said, "You're to take the report, you're to recover this property and return it back to the owners." That was a big emphasis on that. I think they dealt with it very well. But, of course, at the time, the drug thing hadn't developed, the way it developed. Today, we have gambling casinos. You see some people getting into trouble, stealing from their employers, to pay

off gambling debts. They're compromised, too, a lot of people are compromised, with what's out there.

KC: Was there ever a time where you had to intervene with another officer or provide a friendly warning or go to a supervisor?

JC: No, I didn't.

KC: Was there ever a time you should have?

JC: No. You know, we never had that kind of problem. When I was on the street, we were a close knit group. We had our captain that was in charge of our unit and, also, lieutenants, and we were just a close knit group. We didn't want to bring shame upon our organization, so, no, it never even came close to that--never came close.

KC: Did you hear stories about surrounding departments that might have had a different ethic?

JC: Yup. That would show up and there was people that would show up when the drug thing came, that they would show up by using drugs and stuff like that and, sometimes, it was their wives or their good friends that got them involved in it.

There is one, an investigation going on right now, out of the Ramsey County Sheriff's office, and, so, it's a big thing, money talks, big time, especially when you're not making that kind of money yourself.

KC: When you were on the streets, was there the ethic that you arrested officers from other departments? There are those in the community that believe there was this brotherhood of law enforcement and somebody

from another department, they're in Saint Paul, they're drunk and they're not arrested.

JC: I didn't see that happen, I never had the occasion to stop one that was a police officer or be involved with a police officer's misconduct on the street. I heard about religious leaders, though, that were stopped, priests and bishops and ministers and stuff of that nature, and they were given consideration, I heard. Never happened to me--but I heard of others that it did happen to.

KC: Do you think some people should be given consideration because of their public position?

JC: No. I think if they break the law, the law is there for everybody. On the law books it doesn't say these people are exempt because of their position, you know. I think it sends the wrong message.

Of course, as a police officer, you have a lot of latitude on, who you let go and who you arrest. There was quite a few women that I stopped for traffic violations that just broke down crying and everything else, you know. I thought that was penalty enough, I mean, a twenty, twenty-five dollar fine, wasn't going to change their way. It was, their crying, the fact that we stopped them, changed their way. They didn't ever want to be stopped again, they didn't want to go home and tell their husband they had a ticket. From time-to-time, you'd stop people, you gave them the advice and they accepted it, told them what they did wrong, you didn't necessarily have to always tag somebody, it wasn't a money thing, where

the city needed the money, you know. Most of the money went to the State of Minnesota, anyway.

KC: Tell me another story.

JC: Well, and I can let [Paul] Paulos, kind of tell you this story, too, but will lead you up to him and you can ask him later.



Sgt. Paul Paulos  
1975

Before I got off the street, the Department purchased new sirens and new lights to put on our emergency vehicles. We had emergency cars—there was four of them--that would split up the cities four districts and we handled major crime scenes. This was before the paramedics came, and we were the guys that would go haul heart attack people, delivering babies, and, so, we needed this.



Emergency car  
c.1968

They decided to put the new sirens on, and the sirens had the wail, the traditional wail siren, and then they had one that sounded like a Martian flying saucer--blip, blip, blip, blip. So, we got those, and one day Paulos and I

were working out in Highland and this woman went through the stop sign, so he tried to stop her and he said, "I'll put the siren on." He put that one that sounded like a flying saucer on, and she took off and we're following her and we go the siren going, and she pulls over, jumps out of

the car and runs in the house. And, her excuse was, she thought a flying saucer had landed and some aliens were trying to stop her. And, I said, "Paul, we can't use that siren."

Well, they also had a PA system in the siren, where you could pick up the microphone and you could talk into it. So, we're up here on Selby Avenue on one midnight shift, and right by the Angus Hotel, the old Angus Hotel, stands a very intoxicated individual. And he's leaning against the bus stop, he's very intoxicated, so, Paul pulls around on the other side, goes down the opposite side of Selby, the north alley, and we sneak in behind the bar parking lot and we look over there and there he is, and he's just barely hanging onto the sign, he's weaving and everything else. So, Paul, picks up the PA system and turns it on and goes, "Psssst, psssst, hey buddy, help me out of the sewer, I'm in the sewer." And this guy, you can tell he hears it and he looks around and he's staggering and everything else, and he's looking around. Well, he looks down, well, right underneath him there's the slot on the curb for the water to go down into the sewer. So, the guy looks down there, and Paul, again, says, "Psssst, hey buddy, I'm caught in the sewer, help me out." Well, the guy gets down on his knees. Well, Paul and I start laughing, and I'm thinking, *Oh, this is something else*. And the guy sticks his head in this hole, looking down into the sewer, and I thought, *oh, my god*. Well, Paul, he's laughing so hard, and he's saying, "Psssst, put your hand down here, help me, pull me out." Well, pretty soon, the guy's whole arm is down in this hole, well, I look down Selby Avenue and here comes the bus. And, I thought,

*Oh, my god, the bus is going to run this guy over and we're playing a game on this guy.* So, I run out of the squad car, of course, Paul's dying laughing. I run up to the guy, says, "Get off the street the bus is coming." [And he says], "There's a guy down here, I'm trying to help this guy out of this hole." [Laughter] He won't get off the street, so I'm flagging the bus down, waving my hands, trying to get him to stop, so we don't run over this guy. So, the bus goes around the guy and I said, "Get up, get on the bus, there's your bus." "No, we gotta help this guy." I said, "We'll help him, just get on the bus."

So, I finally have to physically pick this guy up and, of course, the bus driver sees the condition of this guy and doesn't like me pouring him into the bus, you know. This guy said, "I can't believe you won't let me help." He's arguing with me and he gets in the bus, I tell the bus driver, "Close the door and be gone." So, away he went. Well, I get back to Paul, he's still laughing, you know. That was something that--we laughed about that a long time after.

KC: That sounds like "A Paulos".

JC: I think Paulos pulled the same trick, when Larry McDonald was building his house, he pulled the same trick with some guys that were working on the roof. He did the same thing, he said, "I'm stuck in the ventilator system here." You can ask Larry McDonald about that. That was a trick that Paulos pulled. That was our test of all the sirens and the new doodads they put on the emergency trucks.

KC: [Chuckles] You put Paulos out there testing them and you will definitely find out more crazy opportunities than anyone else would discover.

JC: You had to have some laughter in your career and laughter when you went to work. There were things that you would see that were funny and, so, laughter helped eliminate some of the tension, I think. And, that day, we got rid of all of our tension.

KC: Do police officers have a different sense of humor?

JC: I think they do. They've got a weird sense of humor, because of the weird things they see, and sometimes when they bring up these things, some of their close friends, look at them and say, "Geez, they're kind of tainted", you know, "They've got a weird sense of humor", you know. And, some of things police officers say, too, you know, maybe offend people, but it's stuff they pick up on the street, too. From some of the things they see, you know.

KC: Is there a need for police officers to have a lot of their social life with each other, so that this unusual sense of humor is normalized?

JC: I don't know, I think, police officers socialize with one another because of the goofy hours they work. And, so, you kind of lose your social fabric when you become a policeman, because a lot of times you're socializing with your friends, is the time that you're working. You're working the afternoon shift or the midnight shift and, so, you got to get home and get some sleep. So, it interrupts your social fabric—existing fabric—that you have, and so then your next fabric is the people that you work with, so there's tendency for you to, you know, develop those relationships

beyond your professional life and socialize with other police officers, especially, if you're a uniformed officer on the street.

KC: Was your social life and raising your children more around the police culture?

JC: No. I never got too much into the police culture socialization thing, because I had a family, I had kids and we had a lot of medical problems with our kids when they were born and raised, so I was glad to get home. Then, I always worked a part-time job, because I always had a doctor bill and always had a hospital bill that I had to pay. And police officers are A-type personalities that they want the things everybody else have, so a lot of times they worked part-time jobs, alongside of a full police job.

KC: What were your part-time jobs?

JC: Larry McDonald set up a security--United Hospital had some problems at United Hospital, with guys coming in there and harassing the nurses. Larry found out about it and he got a bunch of us, Paulos, myself, and Ed Hoeller, and quite a few other of the officers, to start working part-time at United Hospital Security. And then it was later expanded to Children's Hospital and then later to St. Joe's for awhile there, and then St. Joe's got their own. There was always openings there, timeslots for you to work. So, if you worked days, then you went down to the hospital and worked afternoons. We got the nurses home after the midnight shift came to work, and the afternoon shift went home. You made sure the nurses got to their cars and got home safely. I did that for a long time. And then later, I got into the art business and had a store, [Art Trails] in Stillwater [on Main Street]. The art business was a good business to be in, because I dealt with

a different clientele of people, really nice people that liked the arts and they were very easy to get along with, very nice people and, so, that was a good career for me. I had that for about ten years.

KC: Very different then.

JC: Very different, yeah.

KC: The creative element.

JC: Yup, yup.

I started my volunteer work then, that's carried on to--I got volunteered and worked a lot for the conservation groups, the deer hunters, the ducks unlimited type of people, organizations. And then after I retired, it carried on for me when I moved up North, got involved in a lot of volunteer activities. I think, today I'm on thirteen different board of directors up there. And it's all good things that we do and it's interesting to see it work out. But, it keeps you busy in retirement, you know. It gives you something to do.

When I left the Homicide Unit, it was a bad day, I knew I had to go, but I left the greatest crew in the world that I had, the best investigators, and there was something always going on, my life was always busy. I got up there and the phone never rang, and there was nothing to do. So, that's when I got involved in the volunteer activities. But, I had my replacement

[with the homicide unit, Lt. Vomastek<sup>46</sup>] promise to call me on every homicide. So, John Vomastek, would call me on every homicide and would brainstorm it on the phone. And the first year we did that, we solved every homicide in the City of Saint Paul. But, it really gave me an opportunity to get into retirement, slide into retirement.



March 21, 1998

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<sup>46</sup> John Edward Vomastek was appointed police officer March 13, 1978; promoted sergeant June 1, 1988; acting lieutenant August 2, 1990; return to sergeant November 4, 1990; acting lieutenant August 14, 1994; return to sergeant September 29, 1994; title change to inspector sergeant January 8, 1995; return to sergeant July 13, 1995; lieutenant July 14, 1995; title change to commander January 1, 2000; title change to senior commander April 28, 2001; return to commander June 29, 2002; title change to commander June 12, 2004.

KC: I'm sure those first couple of weeks were difficult and lonely.

JC: It was, yeah, yeah. Yeah, and you had to ask yourself whether you made the right decision or not. My doctor said I made the right one, so, that was all that was important to me.

KC: Well, its ten years later and you're here.

JC: That's right. You know, you work hard for your pension and you need to prepare yourself to go into retirement, so you can enjoy it. And, I wasn't going to be a quart-a-day guy, that was going to use the alcohol or anything else, I was going to enjoy my pension.

KC: Do you go home and do you talk with your family about what happened that day that the job is more dangerous?

JC: They never heard any of those stories. I never brought the job home with me. I probably was, maybe, not in a good mood all the time when I came home or, maybe, I was in another place, thinking about it, but I never shared with my ex-wife or my kids, the job.

KC: In hindsight, were those good decisions, or did that create extra stress in your home life?

JC: It probably wasn't a good decision, I probably should have shared. But, at the same time, I didn't want to cause undue concern for them to be worried about it. But, you know, home was different for me, it got me away from the challenges of the job and it was relaxing for me. It was difficult for me to share that information. And when we had parties with other cops, of course, it was shared openly, you know. Sometimes the wives or the girlfriends would hear about it then.

KC: As a wise retired officer, what would be the advice around that that you would give young officers?

JC: I would talk about it. I'd talk the job, because I think stress builds up within you and it comes out in an ugly form. A lot of the officers, you know, would turn to drink and that's not a healthy thing to do. And, you know, we've got an Employee Assistance Program that we never had before when I was on the street. I participated in that as a result of the Homicide Unit and it was a good program. It helped you release your stress. And, if there's a problem you had with an incident, you needed to talk about it, you know. So, some officers do, others don't. My advice would be to talk about it, get it out, air it out. We're not perfect, we do make mistakes. But, it's not intentional and they're not the only ones making those mistakes.

KC: Did you ever make any mistakes, where the next day, the next month, you said, "That was an error?"

JC: There was times where I should have arrested people and I didn't and I worried about it, and then later the individual went on and did some other things. Those were some of the mistakes, I think, I made. And then sometimes, I questioned, whether I did a good enough job - people went to trial and got off on charges. So, I'd look at myself and just say, *what could I have done different to make that a better case, these people are paying me to take these people off the street and hold them accountable*. The court system was a very stressful situation, especially, if you made a lot of arrests, because justice wasn't always the thing that was melded out in the courtroom, you know. I saw too much of a cozy relationship between the

judges and the defense attorneys and, I think, that sometimes impacted the decisions the wrong way.

KC: How do you deal with, "I work hard to arrest someone to build a case and then they get off?" Does that feel personal? How do you deal with that?

JC: It did feel personal and we would share it amongst our partners and stuff like that - *what could we have done differently?* In many cases, there wasn't a lot we could have done differently. Sometimes it was the county attorney or the prosecutor [who] didn't present the case in the right way, either. Well, we can't do their jobs for them, you know. So, you had to just let it go after awhile, and if you didn't let it go, it got to be a problem.

KC: How do you learn to let it go, how do you let it go?

JC: You just say, *well, where is this getting me? I'm feeling upset, I'm going to be going home, it's going to be difficult on the family and I'm not feeling good about that, so, what's the option, I just keep it within me and just feel miserable or I let this thing go?* And, so, we had to let it go.

KC: Did being a police officer take a toll on your personal life? Did it affect your family?

JC: I think it did affect the family. I don't think they talked a lot about it, but I think it affected them, I know my ex-wife did a lot of praying. She'd hear the sirens at night and she would pray. You know, there was things I missed, just like every police officer misses—baptisms, weddings, graduations, parties and sports events—you're working and the kids maybe wanted you there, you know, and you couldn't be there. And then in the Crime Lab and the Homicide Unit, you responded at goofy hours of the night, you were gone, and then you didn't come home until you got

the job done, so you missed out on a lot of that. Police officers, all of them, all of us do that, and I think it does take a toll. You have to have a very understanding wife and very understanding family. But, at the same time, you're trying to raise your family, so, it's difficult, some officers can do it and others, it gets to be a problem.

KC: Your children, how many children do you have?

JC: I have three. I have two girls and a boy.

KC: So your children are grown, have they given you any feedback about how it may have affected them?

JC: No, not that I'm aware of. When I'm done with this, I want to give them a copy of the disks and the hard copy and then the [scrap books full of articles and award certificates about my career] albums that I gave you, they'll get those and, maybe, they'll see, you know, how my career went and everything else. And, maybe, understand it a little more, but I did apologize to them that I could have been, probably, a different dad or a better dad, and I got to be a good policeman, and that wasn't the plan. What I had planned to happen, you know, but it happened. Hopefully, they'll understand when they get this.

KC: Are you saying that you think you were a better policeman than you were a dad?

JC: Yes.

KC: Is it possible to be both?

JC: I think it is. And, I think, there's police officers that were in front of me that were, you know, now that I look back, they were very good at what



Larry McDonald  
1984

they did, both ways. I mean, they were busy people. Larry McDonald is one of them, he is my cousin, but, I mean, he was very close to his girls and his boy. Then we all worked part-time jobs, too, to boot, to pay, so, that took you away from your families, too.

Everybody gets there chance at being a parent, I guess. Then everybody gets there chance at having a career someplace and I'm grateful for my career, it was a lovely career, I couldn't have picked a better one. I hope all officers, male and female, that come on the Department, have the success and good time I did, and be able to retire healthy and enjoy their pension. They worked for it and they earned it.

KC: Any stories that you remember, where you had to make the choice of family or a responsibility to the Department, to the citizens?

JC: There was times I was called out, where you knew that you were supposed to go to something that day and you went to the job. But, you know, everybody in police work encounters that same thing.

KC: Tell me another story.

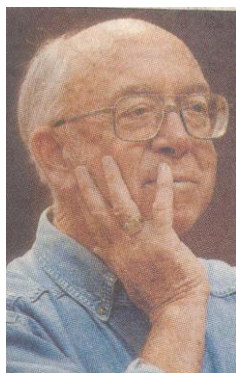
JC: I think I'm about out of them, but, you know, my involvement with the Parents of Murdered Children<sup>47</sup> and Victim Resources or Victim

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<sup>47</sup> Parents Of Murdered Children (POMC)<sup>®</sup> is the only national helping organization which is specifically for the survivors of homicide victims and which follows up with supportive family services after the murder of a family member or friend. The Minnesota Hope Chapter of Parents Of Murdered Children, Inc. holds monthly meetings, provides a telephone network of support, supplies information about the grief process, organizes a speakers bureau and provides accompaniment for survivors who must attend court proceedings. The Minnesota Chapter also publishes a monthly Newsletter.

Intervention, was<sup>49</sup> one of the highlight of my career, helping those people. And it continues on today. When I was sick, Jim Lym, his son being killed, the cab driver.

Here was a mentally retarded son that wanted to prove to his parents that he could get a job and make money and have a life of his own. So, he hired on as a cab driver and the second night driving cab, they killed him. That was my case. And, Jim and his wife and his daughters—men and women grieve differently when there's a death in the family and it sometimes drives them apart and I knew that could happen. So, I encouraged Jim to go into counseling and, at first, he refused to go.



Jim Lym  
2003

He refused to go and I kept after him and then, finally, I told him, "You're going to go or I'm going to drag you there." So, he always refers to me as the 'tough Irish cop' that got me into it and, to this day, he's the president of Parent's of Murdered Children. He's done such a tremendous job. So, that's one of my accomplishments that sits high in my mind, because he's helped so many people get through the death of their children. Parents shouldn't have to bury their children. I don't care, that's something that shouldn't happen and it happens too much in our society today. So, Jim is the local president, he's done an awful lot for the people and he always pays me tribute for it,

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<sup>49</sup> The Victim Intervention Program/Victim Resources began in May 1995, offering services around immediate crisis support, continuing grief support, spiritual support, education, training and consultation, issues of traumatic death.

but it was him that did it. I got him to get in there and he's the guy that carried the torch and did the work. So, I consider that one of my big accomplishments, along with Victim Intervention Program or VIP, you know.

Not only children, but when a mother is killed or a father is killed or a brother is killed, you know, they need to have people help them. Its something the Police Department never did because it wasn't our job. Our job was to prevent that from happening, arresting people. So, the social work came into the Police Department and it was accepted by me.

It was something we had to do, we had to help these people. Because we needed them to build a case and we needed them in our community, and they needed to get through the grieving process. That and the fingerprint system, were the highlights of my career. And I'm glad that I was able to do those and make a difference, because when I came on as a rookie, I said, *I'm going to make a difference in this town, that's my goal*. And, at times, you never knew whether you could do it, you know. But I feel good about it. I hope everybody who takes the badge, lo makes a difference in the community, because ther that need to be fixed.

LT. Joseph Corcoran  
1996





U.S. Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of Investigation

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No. 87D-26237

392 Federal Building  
United States Court House  
110 South Fourth Street  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401

September 23, 1982

Mr. William W. McCutcheon  
Chief of Police  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

Dear Chief McCutcheon:

Sincerely,

For the past three years the Federal Bureau of Investigation has been investigating a major theft ring specializing in the fraudulent use of stolen Travelers Express and American Express Money Orders. The group's activities have centered in the Midwest but numerous banks throughout the country have been victimized through split deposit schemes utilizing the stolen money orders.

Supervisory Special Agent

Losses incurred thus far appear to be approaching one half million dollars. Many of these checks were originally stolen from Twin City area drug stores. Thus far, there have been at least four arrests made of principals in this matter including Kenneth Dale Johnson who, along with fugitive Cardell Richard Frierson, apparently stole the checks and then recruited and thereafter trained females to defraud banks with them. Several of the major passers remain unidentified due to extensive use of excellent false identification and elaborate measures to alter their physical appearances before bank surveillance cameras.

Recently, investigation determined that an unknown female who had been the most active of the passers was utilizing a State of Colorado Identification Card which carried one index fingerprint. A photographic copy of this card and fingerprint was presented to Sergeant Joseph K. Corcoran and Lieutenant Gerald A. Hanggi, Sr., of your Crime Laboratory for search through the Minnesota Automated Fingerprint Identification Network. After examination and search, your officers positively identified the heretofore unknown perpetrator as Julie Ann Trogstad.

After receiving copies of Trogstad's known fingerprints from your department's files, the FBI Identification Division reported that her prints were found on many of the stolen money orders. At this time several federal districts are preparing prosecutive action against her.

The expertise and professional assistance rendered by Sergeant Corcoran and Lieutenant Hanggi are recognized and sincerely appreciated. Without it, the investigation would not have progressed nearly as rapidly or as extensively as it has.

I am most impressed with the contribution made by these officers.

Sincerely,

RICHARD H. BLAY  
Special Agent in Charge

By:  
Richard J. Donovan  
Supervisory Special Agent

Feb-11-98 08:08A National

February 9, 1998

Mary, Pamela, Polly, and Peter  
757 Pontiac Place  
Mendota Hts., MN 55120

Letters to the Editor  
St. Paul Pioneer Press  
345 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, MN 55101

Dear Letters to the Editor:

JOE NEVER FORGOT US

In your article about the retirement of Joe Corcoran, Lieutenant of Homicide for the St. Paul Police Department on Sunday, February 8, 1998, you wrote of the experience Joe described with family members of homicide victims back in 1992.

We wanted to let you know that we were a large part of that group of homicide survivors and that the father of our family, Lyle Philblad, had been recently murdered (January, 1992). We had been victimized by the police department in many ways and were quite angry and hurt.

We did not remember that Joe had told us "I will not forget you" until we read your article. But we did not need to. We soon discovered that Joe did not just say words like that like many people do in a tough situation. He meant them. Joe Corcoran led a charge to change the way homicide in St. Paul was handled for victims loved ones and did so with a lot of questions from fellow officers about his sanity. Joe has developed a model for other departments about the way homicide needs to be handled from a victims perspective so they are not further traumatized from the systems that can and should protect their interests.

As simple as this sounds, it is quite unusual. The systems put into place in St. Paul are the first of its kind. Just a few of the notable victories that Joe Corcoran has helped accomplish for families and friends who have had a loved one murdered:

1. personable and professional death notification with outside resources and referrals for help
2. attendance of top St. Paul police officials to annual memorial services to let survivors know that the police care including Police Chief Finney
3. the victim intervention project, linking homicide "veterans" with new survivors for support and also grief groups that specialize in homicide alone that are ran by homicide survivors
4. an open door policy for all family members that are not suspects for information that will not ruin the case answering many questions that keep survivors up at night
5. a wake up call to other affiliated departments and organizations like the coroner's office, chaplain department, and news media on what families want and deserve after a homicide
6. the hiring of a coordinator, Margaret Macabec, who is a survivor of homicide herself that goes out to families of homicide victims personally, delivering resources and understanding
7. the understanding to fellow officers that they have a job to do—to find their perpetrator—but that it can be done with a sympathetic and gentle approach to the family members

We know that this journey was hard for Joe, because we saw his face the night we confronted him, fallen and gray, almost sick. We thought we really might have done nothing but bring up the issues and our grief to no avail. But we could never know that Joe Corcoran could forever change the way that victims were hurt and make that in the past. He never forgot us.

And so to all police officers, present and future, and all homicide survivors, past and present and future, we have lost a warrior for the victims of homicide and a model for what one caring person can do above and beyond their job. WE WILL NEVER FORGET what you did for us and what you taught us, Joe.

Sincerely,

*Mary Philblad*

Mary Philblad, Wife of Lyle Philblad

*Pamela Philblad*

Pamela Philblad, Daughter of Lyle Philblad



## Homicide chief toasts team with mugs at holidays

By Herón Márquez Estrada  
Star Tribune Staff Writer

When St. Paul Police Department homicide investigators arrive at work early this morning, they will find on their desks new blue coffee mugs filled with candy.

The presents will be from the Big Guy. No, not Santa Claus; Lt. Joe Corcoran, the head of the homicide unit.

"I wanted to create an *esprit de corps* with them," said Corcoran, who has been handing out coffee mugs since he took over the unit in 1990. "It's a very hard [job]. They see a lot of bad things; it's very stressful."

The mugs are intended to relieve some of that pressure, inspire and amuse his troops and help the 10 investigators face life-and-death issues daily.

"Our day begins when yours ends," reads the message on the first coffee mugs Corcoran handed out.

That's a popular saying in homicide units nationwide. Most take it to mean that investigators are called out only after someone dies.

But Corcoran, who was instrumental in starting an award-winning support group for friends and families of homicide victims, said he didn't mean it that way. "That's not very sensitive to survivors," he said.

He wanted his investigators to know he appreciated the long hours they often work. Investigators often go up to 48 hours without sleep when they're working on cases.

"They spend a lot of time here," Corcoran said. "Their families suffer, their lives suffer. They miss a lot of baptisms, weddings, school functions."



Star Tribune Photos by Richard Sennot  
Secretary Carol Schwartz is one of the workers in the homicide unit who receive mugs from Lt. Joe Corcoran.

Corcoran's 1991 mugs said: "Thou shalt not kill, the Lord saith, and I work for him."

And the 1995 message was: "We will try to solve all cases [but] some will wait until Judgment Day."

Corcoran said: "I've got an agreement with the Lord. We'll try to solve them all, but if we can't, I know he'll handle them upstairs."

This year, the mugs say: "Peace will come when the power of love overcomes the love of power."

Many killings, he said, are the result of power struggles. "People just have to learn to get along. If people could just learn to follow this philosophy there wouldn't be so much killing," he said.



The 1996 mug

### At a glance

#### Messages on the mugs

For the past seven years, St. Paul Police Department Lt. Joe Corcoran has given members of his homicide unit coffee mugs bearing slogans reflecting the difficult and often frustrating nature of their jobs. His messages follow:

- 1990: Our Day Begins When Yours Ends
- 1991: Thou Shalt Not Kill, The Lord Saith, And We Work For Him
- 1992: If You Do The Crime Be Prepared To Do The Time
- 1993: St. Paul's Finest CAPERS Unit
- 1994: Your Voices Were Silenced But We Will Speak For You
- 1995: We Will Try To Solve All Cases; Some Will Have To Wait Until Judgment Day
- 1996: Peace Will Come When The Power of Love Overcomes The Love of Power

## TO THE POINT

### He showed what it takes to be seen as great cop

Often, the image of a police department is defined by a small minority: the department's most inhumane or unlawful members. I'm referring to the "thumpers," those unconcerned with civil or constitutional rights, those selling or using drugs on the side or fencing stolen goods.

It takes the retirement of someone like Lt. Joe Corcoran, until Friday the head of the St. Paul police homicide unit, to restore a sense of perspective. Probably more good words and praise have been used to describe Corcoran, his contribution to law enforcement and the humane qualities he brought to his work than many clergy get to hear at their retirement.

That's not entirely inappropriate. Corcoran is described as a deeply religious person, and he clearly had a ministry. He was an advocate of justice, healing those with battered souls and psyches, teamwork and leading by example.



Corcoran

He is the kind of person who gives cops a good name.

Those who know him best describe both his hard and soft sides. They say he was tough on crime, extremely exacting, highly disciplined, enormously dedicated to finding killers. But he blended that with other qualities: humility; a sense of humor; kindness; empathy, especially for victims and survivors.

His personality and dedication is not easily spotted in the TV cop shows.

Not only did he go above and beyond what was expected of him during his eight years as homicide chief, he helped redefine the job. He did that by concluding that paying attention to the needs of survivors of homicide victims was a much neglected part of the duties.

His response was the creation of a Victim Intervention Project in 1995. The unit's purpose is to forge better links between survivors, police and the medical examiner's office.

It's one of the reasons why it was so easy in the last few months for the media to dig up relatives of homicide victims who would speak as highly of Corcoran as if he were their son. Corcoran would be the first to tell you that the department's unusually high rate of solving homicides — 80 percent during his tenure compared to a national average of 64 percent — was a team effort. But he was the one who promoted the importance of teamwork in finding the guilty, and tapped the necessary resources.

Too rarely does a community take the opportunity to say thanks to an exemplary public servant, a humanitarian in Blue. Joe Corcoran made it easy to change that pattern. He showed what it takes to be regarded as a great cop.



RONALD D. CLARK  
EDITORIAL  
PAGE EDITOR

## Concern for survivors marked homicide chief's tenure

As he retires, some say religious beliefs helped Corcoran address frustrations of victims' families and cope with unsolved cases.

By Herón Márquez Estrada  
Star Tribune Staff Writer



Star Tribune photo by Bruce Blasing  
"We react to the sins of society," Lt. Joe Corcoran says of job the St. Paul homicide investigators do.

the book — to Lt. John Vomastek. Vomastek and others acknowledge that Corcoran, an internationally known fingerprint expert, will be a hard act to follow.

"Joe is tenacious and creative, and he's got a real humane approach. After seeing so many dead bodies, he's not hardened, he's not cynical," said Chief William Finney.

"He's a real star. He has enlarged and broadened the role of a homicide commander," said Chuck Wexler, executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum, a think tank in Washington, D.C.

"He's gone beyond what's expected in dealing with victims. He's set a standard of how homicide units should deal with [survivors]," said Wexler, who has been working with the Minneapolis and St. Paul homicide units on ways to reduce violence in the Twin Cities.

Turn to CORCORAN on B7 for:  
— His unit has had noteworthy success solving cases.

Also on B7:  
— About his successor, Lt. John Vomastek.

Inside Lt. Joe Corcoran's government-issue brown desk sits the book of the dead, a tattered accountant's ledger in which the name of every man, woman and child murdered in St. Paul since 1967 has been faithfully recorded.

"The little kid ones are the most troubling," said Corcoran, a deeply religious man who took responsibility for the book after becoming head of the St. Paul Police Department's homicide unit in 1990.

This week, after 34 years with the department and more than 200 homicide investigations, Corcoran, 58, will retire and pass responsibility for the unit — and

Minneapolis Star Tribune  
March 1998

3-30-98

## Grounded in religion, he had compassion for living victims

Corcoran keeps a photograph of Janel Wonsewicz, who was stabbed to death last year. The picture is the cover of an invitation to her memorial service. Her family sent one to each member of the homicide unit; many, like Corcoran, display it on their desks.

"It's a reminder to me of how we've changed, it kind of reaffirmed that we're doing the right thing," Corcoran said recently. "When I first started, we never got cards, we never got thank yous. A lot of officers forget . . . survivors have a thirst for information."

In the old days, he said, police often considered themselves too busy trying to solve a crime to notify survivors in person, keep relatives apprised of what was going on or even clean up the crime scene.

But Corcoran changed all that, creating the Victim Intervention Project (VIP) in 1995 to serve as a bridge between homicide investigators and the relatives of homicide victims. The program was voted one of the 10 best community policing ideas in 1996 by the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

VIP was born of a 1992 meeting with a group of relatives of homicide victims. Although only one of the 13 victims represented at the meeting was killed in St. Paul, the relatives unloaded their frustration with the police on Corcoran.

"You could see Joe was like falling apart inside," said Pamela Philblad, who came to the meeting to talk about her father, who was beaten and stabbed to death in St. Paul in 1992. "The police had victimized us in a lot of different ways [and] we kind of let him have it."

"To his credit, Joe got it. He told us he'd never forget us and he never did," she recalled recently. "Joe changed the way things happen around St. Paul. He made St. Paul [police] sensitive to homicide survivors."

with the pressures of the job and the cases that remain unsolved for years. "Someday, they're going to have to justify [what they did] to the guy upstairs," he said.

During his tenure, Corcoran transformed the homicide unit with business concepts such as teaming, empowerment, hands-off management and consensus building.

After each homicide, he brings together as many of his 10 investigators as possible and discusses the case as a group. His most frequent question: What do you need to solve this case?

Last year, the body of a 26-year-old woman was found in a snowdrift near an industrial park. Not wanting to disturb evidence, Corcoran got his investigators a city truck with a "cherry picker" so the scene could be photographed from above. A 27-year-old man was arrested a few days later.

Corcoran also has been unconventional when dealing with the news media, making himself readily available to reporters and frequently using the media to tell the public about crime suspects and encourage witnesses to come forward.

### Uncommon success

Going to such lengths has produced one of the highest homicide clearance rates in the country for a metropolitan police department. On average, about 65 percent of the homicides in the country are marked solved by police, according to the FBI.

In St. Paul, under Corcoran's tenure, that figure has been above 80 percent. The Minneapolis Police Department's clearance rate last year was 60 percent; arrests have been made in most of the Minneapolis homicides this year, according to Lt. Dan Grout.

Corcoran's unconventional methods may stem from his never having worked as a homicide investigator, allowing him an

outsider's view of how cases could be or should be handled.

He joined the force in 1964, following in the footsteps of a cousin. After six years as a patrol officer, he joined the crime lab. He developed an interest in fingerprints and became an internationally recognized expert who helped establish Minnesota's statewide computerized fingerprint system, the first in the country.

Karen Corcoran, who retired last year from the St. Paul School District as an aide, said she and her husband plan to retire to their cabin in northern Minnesota, traveling, fishing and perhaps volunteering at a local school.

"We decided we'd like to go out with our health," she said.

### Religious compassion

Corcoran's compassion, according to those who know him, stems from his deep religious beliefs. "We react to the sins of society," Corcoran said when asked to describe the homicide unit. "I think he talks a lot with God," said Karen Corcoran, Corcoran's eighth-grade girlfriend and his wife since 1992. "God knew what he was doing when he put Joe as a police officer."

Although Corcoran said he's not the kind of man to attend church every Sunday, he readily admits to praying for divine intervention during homicide investigations. And a belief in Judgment Day helps him cope