Transcript of a Saint Paul Police oral history interview with

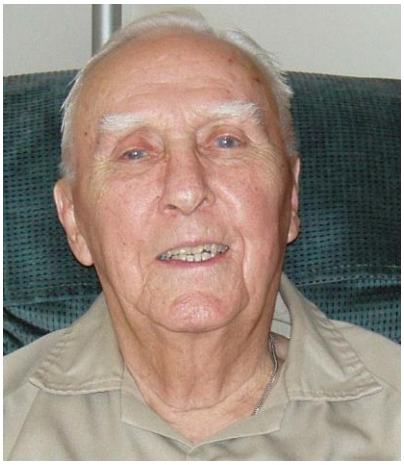
Chief

William F. Proetz

Saint Paul Officer

1937 – 1963

1955



2008

Interviewed on

August 8, 2008

by Kate Cavett of HAND in HAND Productions
at Proetz Home in Amery, Wisconsin

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This project has been made possible by the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the vote of Minnesotans on November 4, 2008. Administered by the Minnesota Historical Society.

All pictures are from the Saint Paul Police Department collections.

ORAL HISTORY

Oral History is the spoken word in print.

Oral histories are personal memories shared from the perspective of the narrator. By means of recorded interviews oral history documents collect spoken memories and personal commentaries of historical significance. These interviews are transcribed verbatim and minimally edited for accessibility. Greatest appreciation is gained when one can listen to 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 corroboration. 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 an 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.

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William F. Proetz was appointed patrolman March 1, 1937
Military leave July 13, 1943 to March 15, 1946
promoted to sergeant March 16, 1948
detective September 20, 1948
lieutenant December 1949
chief March 11, 1955
returned to the rank of detective lieutenant March 13, 1961
and resigned June 12, 1963
to become Hopkins, Minnesota superintendent of police until 1976.

WP: William Proetz
KC: Kate Cavett

WP: My name is William, middle initial F for Fred, and the last name is Proetz, P-R-O-E-T-Z, and I came on the department in Saint Paul, Minnesota on March 1, 1937. I was chief from 1955 to 1961. I believe I went to work for the Hopkins Police Department in 1963. Then I worked there until I retired, and I retired in January 1, 1976. They called it the superintendent of police. The city manager actually had the title of chief of police. I can't tell you why that was, but that was the way it was.

KC: In 1937, what inspired you to become a Saint Paul police officer?

WP: Well, I was working and the only jobs that were open were in the wholesale houses in Saint Paul and the pay there wasn't very great, but at least you had a job. And I worked in G. Summers Company, down on Sixth Street and Wacouta. And I worked at Scheffer and Rossim down on Kellogg Boulevard and Wacouta – Kellogg Boulevard and Wacouta. And they had shoe fittings and I was in the shoe fittings department. That's about all that I can recall.

The pay in all of those places was not great, and I had to have a little better income than I had. So that's the reason I looked around for another job and this one was a civil service exam and I was taking civil service exams as frequently as they opened up. Herb Lyons was the director of the Civil Service Bureau in Saint Paul, so that's how I happened to get into the police work line.

KC: Now, in 1937, the Saint Paul Police Department still had a fair amount of corruption from the gangster era.[1] They were beginning to come out of that. Did you have any exposure with running into any of the gangsters?

WP: Well, if I did, I didn't recognize them or know them, but I would say no. I didn't really have any connection with them or anything to do with them.

KC: [When you were hired, the chief was Hackert.[2] He was one of the good guys, a chief who changed the department after the many years of a corrupt department] Were you aware that in 1937, there had been a fair amount of corruption in the department?

WP: Well, if there was, I didn't know about it and I never heard about it. Although, I remember one name – his name was Crumley.[3] He was supposed to be on the take and so forth, but I never knew about it. All I heard was rumors.

KC: Can you share any of the rumors that you maybe heard?

WP: No, I didn't know anything about it other than it was all hearsay.

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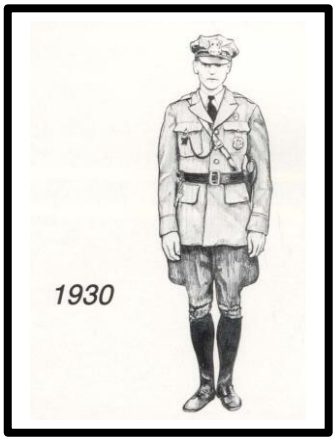
[1] Appendix A: Page 37

[2] Clinton A. Hackert **(** Jun 21, 1897 - Jul 30, 1943) was appointed motorcycle patrolman (temp.) April 30, 1919; motorcycle patrolman (Perm.) September 1, 1919; promoted to sergeant October 1, 1925; lieutenant May 1, 1932; chief June 2, 1936 – 1943.

[3] James P. Crumley (March 2, 1872- February 7, 1939) was appointed detective June 15, 1914; promoted to inspector of detectives (provisional) June 5, 1930; reduced to detective June 14, 1932; discharged for misconduct & other June 26, 1935.

KC: How long was your academy? Or what was your training like in 1937?



WP: As much as I can remember of it, it was just about a month. During that time, we received our uniforms, which we had to pay for ourselves. We had to buy our own guns, and everything else that we wore in the way of a uniform came out of our pocket. So we didn't have much of a salary. I think the salary at that time when I went on the department was about a $119 a month.

KC: [laughs] It's changed a bit since then.

WP: Yes, it has. Then in about another two or three months, we got a pay raise up to a hundred and $145 a month. So that helped out quite a bit.

KC: What was your first assignment in the department?

WP: The first assignment was the mayor's funeral, the mayor of Saint Paul, and he died in office. He was a well-known person who was well respected all over, and I was at his funeral. I was in the honor guard and I was in the – there were twenty-five men in my class and then another twenty-five came on the next month, and we all stood turns where the big Indian[4] is standing in the court house. In that area. And that's where

Indian God of Peace

[4] The **Vision of Peace** is a statue in the three-story memorial concourse lobby along the Fourth Street entrance of the Saint Paul City Hall and Ramsey County Courthouse in Saint Paul, Minnesota, United States. The memorial to Minnesota 20th-century war dead was created by Swedish sculptor Carl Milles. He drew on memories of a Native American ceremony he witnessed in Ponca City, Oklahoma, when he designed the statue, *Indian God of Peace*.

we all stood. And we had, I think it was about half hour each, periodically throughout the day.

KC: How old were you then, sir?

WP: I was twenty-two when I went on the department.

KC: What are some of your other memories of those first years as a rookie?

WP: I can remember the market down on the – The Produce Bank – was on the corner of Tenth and Jackson Street, and the farmers would come in. Tom Dahill[5] was an ex-chief and he ran a restaurant – and it was called Dahill's Restaurant – that was in the same area, and the farmers all came in there and had their breakfast. The produce bank was open to them real early in the morning, so that they didn't have to carry around a large chunk of money in their pocket.

KC: Did you patrol that area?

WP: Yes, I was on Squad Thirteen down there. And then I worked with Pete Barrett.[6] And then following that, we had relief officers come on and would work with each of us in the squad cars.

KC: Any situations that you remember having to handle in that area?

WP: None that I can recall right now that stands out vividly, but it was the usual domestic troubles in the homes. And the usual – the mission was down there

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[5] Thomas E. Dahill (Oct 29, 1888- July 10, 1960) was appointed patrolman May 1, 1911; resigned May 9, 1912; Re-appointed patrolman July 31, 1914; promoted roundsman August 7, 1918; detective June 16, 1919; detective sergeant May 24, 1924; inspector of detectives September 8, 1924; junior captain of detectives December 1, 1924; acting chief January 22, 1930; assistant chief (provisional) Mar 15, 1930; re-appointed junior captain of detectives June 2, 1930; assistant inspector of detectives January 1, 1931; chief June 7, 1932; re-appointed assistant inspector of detectives July 18, 1934 ; volunteer reduction to detective lieutenant July 25, 1935; re-appointed assistant inspector of detectives June 8, 1936; resigned voluntarily July 16, 1936; re-instated inspector of detectives July 7, 1938; resigned July 8, 1938.

[6] Peter D. Barrett (September 25, 1890 - Jan 22, 1945) was appointed patrolman; April 1, 1924; plainclothes duty May 15, 1927; promoted detective (provisional) March 10, 1932; re-instated patrolman August 1, 1932.

and, of course, they provided us with a lot of drunks and we had to go down there and get them out every once in a while. So it was more or less run-of-the-mill incidents.

KC: Do you remember what assignments you had after that?

WP: After that I just worked with different officers on different squads around the town. That was generally about it. There was nothing really exciting like the TV shows display today. Nothing like that. It was just run-of-the-mill.

KC: What was the communication system in the squads then?

WP: It was kind of unusual because Sergeant Doenges,[7] who lived about two or three blocks from me – and I went to school with his boys at Central High School – and he would press a button and that would ring a bell that would come over your radio in the car, which was not two-way radio. You could hear it but you couldn't communicate with the sergeant in the building. So it was only guesswork that, yes, he got the call and, yes, he's on his way to answering the call.

KC: And this would come over the public radio station, wouldn't it?

WP: Yes, it would come over the public radio station.

KC: It was a gong and then everybody heard where an officer was supposed to go.

WP: Oh yes, yes. Sure was.

KC: [chuckles] So, very different today.

WP: Very primitive.

KC: You went into World War II.

WP: Yes.

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[7] Raymond H. Doenges (DOB: Feb 27, 1899) was appointed January 3, 1921; promoted to sergeant December 1, 1928; assigned as radio dispatcher September 2, 1930; lieutenant (provisional) August 1, 1931; lieutenant (permanent) May 1, 1932; inspector of police October 20, 1938; voluntary reduction to detective January 13, 1944; died September 2, 1944 (committed suicide).

KC: Can you just briefly speak of that?

WP: Well, all I can tell you is I never rode on a boat until I came home from overseas. I flew all the time and I was a radio operator on the airplane. We went out to the Hawaiian Islands, the first place, and that was a fourteen or fifteen hour trip flying from California out to Kahuku in the Hawaiian Islands. Then, from there, we would make trips down to Guam and to Saipan and Tinian. Those were the islands south off of Japan. We had troops there, so we would have to bring supplies in to them in our airplane. I flew in a C47, which another number for it is a DC3.[8] That's a twin-engine airplane and they were very, very safe, and they were nice to fly in.

KC: How many were in the crew?

WP: There was a pilot and a co-pilot and a navigator and a radio operator and a crew chief. So there was a total of five.

KC: And you were the radio operator.

WP: I was the radio operator. Right.

KC: Was your whole time in the Pacific?

WP: Yes. It was in the Pacific all the time.

KC: When did you come back to the Saint Paul Police Department?

WP: I came back in 1946. I think I was so pleased with being out of the service that I just used up the free time that we were allowed, and that was about forty-five days that we could stay at home. So I stayed at home with my wife and little boy. And then later on, I had two more boys.

[8] The Douglas **C-**47 Skytrain or Dakota (RAF designation) is a military transport aircraft that was developed from the Douglas DC-3 airliner. It was used extensively by the Allies during World War II and remained in front line service with various military operators through the 1950s.

KC: Do you remember what your assignment was with the Bureau of Police when you went back to active duty?

WP: I was a patrolman and sometimes I'd walk a beat and sometimes I'd ride in a squad car and sometimes I'd ride on the patrol wagon and go out and arrest up drunks. I did everything that they assigned me to.

KC: And in March of 1948, you were promoted to sergeant.

WP: Yes.

KC: What were your assignments there, sir?

WP: Then I was working as part-time dispatcher and part-time radio operator, and sometimes I was working out on the street checking the squad cars until my shift was over.

KC: Now, very quickly, in September, so it would be six months later, you were promoted to detective. And at that point, we had patrol division and the detective division. What made you decide to go into the detective division?

WP: Because I was appointed a sergeant. I went into the uniform division as a sergeant. I couldn't go into the detective division, because I hadn't taken the detective exam. So I had to wait until another promotional exam for detective presented itself, and then I could take it. And I had the good luck and fortune of being able to pass the exams and that there was an opening and that I could be appointed to it [the detective division].

KC: Do you know what your assignment was when you were promoted detective?

WP: No, I just worked with different detectives learning their procedure and so forth. I was more or less going to school all the time with a different detective, because they were all with a lot of years of experience.

KC: And then in December of 1949, you were promoted a lieutenant detective. So this is a very rapid ascension through the ranks.

WP: Yes, it was, but there was a peculiarity in it. The peculiarity was the fact that we were assigned at different times to work in plainclothes, and that time was counted as working as a detective. So then when the detective lieutenant's exam opened, why I had the eligibility, because I had been a plainclothesman. So I could qualify to take the exam and I was fortunate enough again to be able to pass the exam and that there was an opening as a detective lieutenant to become appointed. So that's how it all worked out to my benefit. And I enjoyed the advancement in both pay and with both different jobs to do.

KC: Frank Mondike is a notorious detective from that era. Do you remember him? We have a picture of him with Oliver Hardy.[9]

Oliver Hardy and
Detective Lieutenant Frank
Monkike c. 1940

Oliver Hardy jests with Dectective-Lieutenant Frank Mondike and other St. Paul Detectives, Circa 1940

WP: Frank Mondike? Yeah, he was a detective lieutenant, the same as I was. Then they made a special examination and he qualified for it and he made it and he was inspector of detectives, which was as high as you could go in the detective division outside of being the chief or the assistant chief. Yeah.

[9] Oliver "Ollie" Hardy (born Norvell Hardy) January 18, 1892 – August 7, 1957) was an American comic actor famous as one half of Laurel and Hardy, the classic double act that began in the era of silent films and lasted nearly thirty years, from 1927 to 1955.

KC: Where did you work with Frank Mondike?

WP: Frank was in the morals division and I was in the juvenile division and our cases would sometimes intertwine, because sometimes the kids were from bad families and you had to make a decision along those lines. And Frank was the kind of a guy, if he told you something, you could rest assured it was the truth. At least to me it was. And so I liked him. I liked him a lot. And he never got me in any trouble. And I never got him in any trouble. [laughs] Not that I could get anybody in trouble.

I liked Frank. Frank was a guy that was for the policemen. He was for the police officer. And he was in charge of morals division. He dealt with the street walkers. He dealt with the moonshiners. He dealt with everybody. If anything could twist the guy's appreciation for his fellow man, that kind of a job would do it. And he was the cleanest man I've ever seen. He always had a starched collar on his shirt. And cuff links on his cuffs. And he was smart as a fox. You couldn't get ahead of him. And if he was ahead of you in his thinking, you would never know it. He wouldn't embarrass you and I enjoyed his company. I knew his wife, Lena, and I knew his boy, Frank, Jr. In the last years, he was inspector of detectives. Yeah, he was a good man. I liked him.

KC: At what point did you go into the juvenile division?

WP: Well, I can't remember exactly. I went into the juvenile division right away after my appointment. I liked the work, and I was approached to teach boxing to the kids by some of the different ones that were involved there. So I says, "Yes, I'll teach a class." And I had been in Golden Gloves in Minneapolis and in boxing, so I had a pretty good background. Then the squad that I was on, Squad Thirteen, was around in the Lowertown, and their kids didn't have much for recreation or any programs or like that, so I'd have as many as fifty and sixty kids down in the police gym on an evening. Then we had it two nights a week on Tuesdays and, I

think, on Fridays. And we had some pretty good boxers there, and one of them I remembered was Jimmy Lynch. He was that good that he went to Minneapolis and he won the Golden Gloves over there, and he was on a trip — he went to Chicago to box in the Golden Gloves there. What we had to offer was good for the kids, and the kids took to it and became quite proficient.

KC: Was that one of the first things that you did around police community relations?

WP: Yes, that was one of them. And then I would go to different churches and the men's clubs, and it became known that we had a little boxing program going and they would call up, and sometimes we would be booked ahead for a month or two months, say, one night a week or two nights a week. And I could take the young kids, and then I had them from about eight, nine, ten years old up on up to twenty-five and thirty years old boxing for me down there. And so some of these young kids, they just took the house down, because they'd get in there and they didn't know enough to stop. They kept pounding each other and that went over like a bang. Yeah.

Twelve-year-old citizens Steinman, Levitan, Zierder
with Chief Proetz
presenting money for a slain Minneapolis officer,
September 1957.

KC: [chuckling] What are your memories about how the juvenile unit was organized at that particular time?

WP: It was quite successful in what it was doing, but it didn't have enough manpower. And the lieutenant was Lieutenant Carl Mayer[10] – was the lieutenant at that time. He had been in the army, so he stayed in the army. And Ernie Picard,[11] who was then my boss, and he organized it quite well. He had a pretty darn good way of teaching us. Then there was Wally Sandstrom[12] – he was another young fellow – and he had a college education. He contributed quite a bit to the whole program. So that's how we started with just a small nucleolus and then it gradually grew until – I forget now how many are in the juvenile division, but I should imagine it must be about maybe ten or fifteen. And that's not the ladies, either.

KC: You had women police officers in the juvenile division then.

WP: Yes, we had juvenile – we had Miss Fogerty[13] and her mother, Miss Smith,[14] who

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[10] Carl P. Mayer (DOB: November 18, 1894) was appointed patrolman June 11, 1917; drafted US Army June 15, 1918; re-instated patrolman September 5, 1919; appointed motorcycle patrolman April 16, 1920; promoted detective January 26, 1921; detective lieutenant September 1, 1936; military leave May 2, 1941; resigned September 1, 1951.

[11] Ernest D. Picard (DOB: February 11, 1899) was appointed patrolman January 18, 1927; promoted to detective April 9, 1936; superintendent of juvenile division (provisional); superintendent of juvenile division (permanent); resigned March 15, 1948.

[12] Walter H. Sandstrom (DOB: Oct 1, 1910) was appointed patrolman March 1, 1937; resigned February 9, 1942.

[13] Margaret J. (Fogerty) Byrne (DOB: April 24, 1888) was appointed matron October 1, 1930; title changed to policewoman May 16, 1932; resigned April 24, 1953.

[14] Mary A. Smith was appointed policewoman September 1, 1923; retired on disability pension April 1, 1943.

was, I guess, seventy or seventy-five years old. And then we had Miss Ryan.[15] She was a little bit younger than Miss Fogerty. Then they had the matrons, too. The matrons, they were up in the jail.

KC: And to be a woman police officer, you had to have a bachelor's degree. You were hired at a detective's salary. And you had to have experience in social work.

WP: That's right. That's what they – they finally graduated into all those little different facets of the department.

KC: Carolyn Bailey[16] joined Saint Paul in 1961.

WP: Yeah, she worked for me. Yeah, she was very good, too. And Miss Flores,[17] she was a Spanish lady.

KC: Micki Flores?

WP: Micki Flores, yep.

KC: And Dorothy Freischel[18] was also a

Micki Flores and Carolen Bailey
1963

[15] Katheryn Ryan (DOB: April 8, 1896) was appointed matron April 7, 1931; title changed to policewoman September 1, 1942; resigned May 11, 1951.

[16] Carolen Fay Bailey was appointed policewoman July 17, 1961; resigned December 3, 1963; returned to the department September 16, 1964; promoted to sergeant December 25, 1971; lieutenant May 25, 1985; and retired January 31, 1991. President, International Association of Women Police 1980-1982; Minnesota Association Women Officer of the Year, 1980, Minnesota Assistant Commissioner of Public Safety 1992-1997; IAWP's Dr. Lois Higgins-Grote Heritage Award, 2003.

[17] Graciela "Micki" Flores was appointed policewoman July 13, 1953; promoted to sergeant December 25, 1971; retired July 30, 1976.

[18] Dorothymae Freischel was appointed police woman October 1, 1954; promoted to sergeant December 25, 1971; and retired October 19, 1979.

policewoman.

WP: Yes, Dorothy Freischel. I remember her, too. Yep. And she married Bob Freischel,[19] who was on the department.

KC: Yes, he was a deputy chief.

WP: Yep. And then he, through some peculiarity, he took a demotion, and for some reason or other, they wouldn't give him his old title back of being deputy chief. So I don't know what ever happened on that, but he got his pension time in.

KC: What was it like for you working with the women police officers?

WP: Well, I had to be careful with how I handled them, because they were ladies. Ladies, you can't put them on every call. They can take care of some domestics, but some of the domestics get pretty rough, so you had to be careful on how you assigned them.

KC: Carolyn Bailey, she was a new type of a woman police officer.

WP: Yes, she was. She was a graduate from college. I don't remember which college she graduated from any more.

KC: University of Minnesota.

WP: She was a very intelligent gal.

KC: What other memories do you have about the juvenile unit?

WP: Well, we had a way of disposing of the cases when they'd come in. They had enough confidence in us as police officers to be able to decide whether they should be sent to court or not. And so as a result of it, we disposed of some of those cases, like kids shoplifting candy in the dime store and like that, that would be handled a way that we didn't harm the kid any more. Then we had places that we could send them to a social worker, to take the whole family under their

[19] Robert J. Freischel was appointed patrolman October 13, 1947; military leave March 15, 1951–September 21, 1953; promoted to detective October 1, 1954; military leave October 1, 1961–September 1, 1962; deputy chief April 17, 1964; and retired May 8, 1972.

wings, and like that. So that was how we disposed of some of the cases, the more simple ones. But then the more difficult cases, why we had to get some help from outside from the social workers and like that. And I became acquainted with quite a few of them. They helped me out quite a bit. Glad to have the help.

KC: Any memories about how they helped you out?

WP: Sometimes I figured that the family was almost beyond help, but then again, with their guidance and help on it, they would say, "Well, now, let's try this," or "Let's try that." I'd say, "Yes, but what if it don't work?" "Well, then we can always go the way you were thinking about right now." So I had to be agreeable to that, so that it did work out. I think as a result of that, with the help from outside people being trained that I could go to, I think we saved a lot of those kids from getting more involved and more deeply sucked into a kind of a bad situation that they had no control over. We could get them to more or less realize they're going down a blind alley and they're going to get in deeper trouble. So that helped out quite a bit.

I used to see as many as eight and ten kids from families on a particular Saturday morning, because all of those cases that came in Monday through Friday, we'd have them come back on a Saturday quite often. And then we'd see how they were doing.

KC: Tell me more about that.

WP: Well, if they listened to us, then we didn't see them again for a long time. Or until they got into some more mischief. And that's how it was disposed of.

KC: So they would just be told to come back in and then they'd report on how they were doing with their parents.

WP: Yeah. Then too we had contacts with some of the probation officers. We'd go with them in the car. We'd take them in our car, and we'd try to get them to see

the family from a different light of how they're living just by the skin of their teeth, so to speak. That helped out quite a bit.

KC: Where were you living at this time, sir?

WP: Where was I living? I was living on Carroll Avenue -- on 801 Carroll Avenue. Then we built a house out on Eleanor and Pascal. It's out by the golf course on Highland. We'd look out our kitchen window and see the golf course. Yeah. It was real nice. It was quite a difference of area, because Carroll Avenue where we lived, it was still pretty nice. Then I had acquaintanceships with all the people along Rondo Avenue, because I knew them all, because I carried newspapers to their homes and I'd have to collect their rent money, or their paper money.

KC: Subscriptions.

WP: Yeah.

KC: And Rondo Avenue, at that time in the Forties and the Fifties, was a traditional Black neighborhood.

WP: Yes, it was.

KC: Predominately. Very diverse, but predominately a Black neighborhood.

WP: Yeah. Even on Carroll and Saint Albans. That was strictly all colored folks there. And I used to know Elmer Harris and his brother. They were football players and I played with them. They played for Hallie Q Brown.[20] Braun and I played for the Selby-Dale Merchants. So I grew up with them and that's how I got

[20] Hallie Q. Brown Community Center was opened April 1, 1929, at Union Hall at 553 Aurora as a community center specifically to serve the Black community when the Black YWCA closed in 1928. Hallie Q, as it is affectionately known, served all ages through child care, youth and senior clubs, athletics, music and social events. The original location was in the Union Hall at Aurora and Kent Streets. In 1972, Hallie relocated in the Martin Luther King Building at 270 Kent Street at Iglehart in Saint Paul. The center's namesake was an educator who pioneered the movement of Black women's clubs in the late 1800's.

acquainted with most of those kids. And then, of course, McKinley School[21] was just two blocks further on Mackubin and Carroll, and there was another completely integrated school. Oh, it was kind of tough going if you got mixed up with the wrong crowd there.

KC: When Tierney[22] died, what are your memories around that?

WP: I thought it was terrible, because we all behind his back called him Charlie, called him Chief or Charlie. I always called him Charlie, but I never called him to his face. I called him the Chief. And he was a smart man. He was very, very smart. And he had eyes that were cold. They were absolutely cold. He could look at you and he'd make you shiver, because his eyes were a real pale gray and he had control of the situation right off the bat.

KC: Do you know how he died?

WP: I think he had a heart attack or something to do with his heart. I never did find out for sure.

KC: You became Saint Paul police chief March 11, 1955.

WP: Okay.

KC: Did you have to do any politicking? How did you happen to be chosen as the next police chief? Because Tierney died in office in 1952, McMahon[23] was chief

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[21] McKinley School was located at 481 Carroll Avenue, between Mackubin, Arundel and Rondo from 1903–1966. Fire destroyed the building in 1977.

[22] Charles J Tierney was appointed police operator March 21, 1921; promoted to detective July 1, 1926; detective lieutenant May 6, 1931; permanent detective lieutenant February 6, 1932; provisional assistant inspector of detectives June 16, 1932; provisional inspector of detectives March 1, 1933; inspector of detectives May 12, 1933; voluntary reduction to assistant inspector of detectives July 25, 1935; inspector of detectives June 4, 1936; assistant chief November 7, 1936; chief October 1, 1943; died in office May 30, 1952.

[23] Neal C. McMahon was appointed patrolman June 11, 1917; promoted to detective April 16, 1921; provisional detective lieutenant August 1, 1931; detective lieutenant February 6, 1932; license inspector June 2, 1936; assistant chief of detective division February 9, 1945; chief of police August 29, 1952; deceased November 10, 1954.

1952 to 1954 when he died, and Albert Anderson[24] was an interim for about a year. So I have the illusion there was a bit of a search process. How did you get to be chosen?

WP: Well, I didn't have anything to do with it myself. But, apparently, with the different contacts that I had made with City Hall and the social workers and like that, that all helped out. It helped kind of pave the way. That's all I can figure out on it.

KC: How did you find out you were going to be the next chief?

WP: Oh! I found out by just keeping quiet and having a – what was his name? Anderson's? What was his first name?

KC: Albert.

WP: Albert, yeah. He took me for a ride in the car and he said, "It's possible that you could be chosen the next chief," because he was the commissioner's[25] right hand man. He helped in his budget and everything else. And so that's how I happened to hear about it. He took me for a ride and we rode along the Mississippi River and we came back into town and, I think it was about a week or two weeks later that I was called into the office of the commissioner. His commissioner was John Feldman. That was his uncle, by the way. He was his deputy commissioner. And

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[24] Albert Anderson was appointed junior clerk May 7, 1923; finance general bookkeeper March 16, 1931; promoted to junior accountant March 7, 1933; transferred to public safety May 1, 1941; appointed license inspector February 9, 1945; acting police chief November 15, 1954; back to license inspector March 11, 1955; transferred to Bureau of General Administration June 2, 1958; resigned June 7, 1960.

[25] Initially, the structure in Saint Paul had the Department of Public Safety with Bureaus of Police, Health and Fire under a commission form of government. On June 6, 1972, a new city charter established a new strong executive form of government, eliminating commissioners and forming the Saint Paul Police Department.

so, John Feldman told me, "Well, it looks real good. Just take it easy and it'll work itself out." And sure enough it did. There it was.

KC: Was there some type of pinning ceremony or anything in front of the troops when you were made chief? How did that happen?

WP: In front of the troops? No, there was nothing. They wouldn't have even known about it, except that I started to work on the night shift a little bit. I'd been a lieutenant before that, so that all helped. One hand washed another and pretty soon, there it was.

KC: So one day Anderson just left and you just took over.

WP: No, he went up to the licensing division. He was in the licensing division.

KC: Now Anderson was not trained as a police officer –

WP: No, he wasn't.

KC: Anderson was there for four months. Did you have some cleanup work to do? A non-police officer being chief, was there a difficult transition back?

WP: No. He was a kind of a guy that he could take you into his confidence. He'd believe you what you'd say. "It'll die with me," if it was something confidential if it wasn't supposed to get out. I liked Al Anderson. I liked him a lot. He was an accountant. He was a bookkeeper and he wrote out the mileage for the cars. What this car, that car, that car all had and what they were capable of still doing. Oh, that guy was a brilliant man. He was a brilliant man.

How I learned about police work was actually going up through the ranks and going and trying it out.

KC: You're chief in March of 1955. What are some of the things that you start doing as chief?

WP: I can remember one thing that I said to John Feldman and Commissioner Peterson. They say, "What kind of plans do you have for department if you are chosen chief?" And I says, "Well, one thing that I want and would insist on

would be that we have better training and a lot of training, because the department is getting by on what it's doing now with men that actually never had any solid training." They both looked at each other and they said, "Yeah, that makes sense." So that was how it came about.

Chief Proetz,
Officer Donald Huisenga, Officer William Bloom,
Commissioner R. Peterson
March 1957

KC: Who did you appoint to do that training?

WP: Well, I had Don Wallace[26] for one thing. He was a book-learning type of a guy. I inherited him from Chief Tierney and they had him, because he was given a chance to do the training. He depended on – oh, the guy's name, I can't think what it is. He was a training officer for the FBI. Dogonnit, I can't think of his

[26] Donald T. Wallace was appointed patrolman April 1, 1937; promoted to sergeant September 21, 1948; lieutenant April 1, 1955; and retired October 16, 1963.

name. But, anyway, he got him interested in it, and that's what kind of made the wheels turn and that helped us out.

1955 Academy Class
Chief Proetz in middle back

KC: And I believe Larry McDonald[27] was involved.

WP: Oh, Larry McDonald was, yeah! He had one of the dogs, because I introduced the idea to the fellows about having police dogs. So then we got four dogs. Three? Three dogs? I was going to go for four.

KC & WP: [laughing]

[27] 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.

WP: And we had Larry McDonald and we had Ed Buehlman[28] and we had –

KC: Bill Swiger.[29]

WP: Bill Swiger, yeah. Yeah. Bill Swiger, that's right. He was a blond kid. Blond, kind of big boned. Then we got the dogs. We got some of them donated. Then we got the dogs trained. And then we got a hold of a fellow who was training dogs for the United States Army. And he worked in Germany training dogs and he came back over here and he was out of the army. I don't know who knew him, but anyway, I got acquainted with him. Yeah, sure. He'd come and help us train the dogs. I didn't have any budget for him, so as a result of it, the commissioner says – he didn't say this out loud to me but I could see what he was thinking – he says, "How're we going to pay this guy, because here he's taking time away from his family and everything." So, he got some money someplace, and I think they gave him about four or five hundred dollars for training our police dogs. That's how the police dogs came to be. I don't know if

First Saint Paul K-9 Unit
Ed Buehlman and Baron
Larry McDonald and pal
Will Swiger and Champ
1957

[28] Edward J. Buehlman was appointed patrolman March 4, 1957; retired April 16, 1977.

[29] William R. Swiger was appointed patrolman November 1, 1949; and retired June 30, 1976.

they've still got them.

KC: They have them. You started it.

WP: Yes.

KC: As far as we can tell, this was the second canine unit in the nation.

WP: Oh, was it?

KC: And so you were very innovative in starting that.

WP: Yeah, well I could see the value of it, because if it was good enough for the army, it was good enough for us.

KC: Unfortunately, your successor [Chief Lester McAuliffe[30]] didn't see the value and they were discontinued for a number of years, but now we have one of the best canine units in the nation.

WP: Oh. I'm glad to hear that. Yeah. Because to me they were an important part of it. Sometimes you could catch a prisoner without even saying, "Get 'em, Fido." [laughs]

KC: Talk about the Police-a-Rama.[31]

WP: That was something that just was so much fun to do, because we had old stills that the moonshiners had and they were donated to the Police-a-Rama. Then we had all the old time badges from Saint Paul from way back in the – I guess in the Eighties. They were on display. Oh, just oodles and oodles of different stuff that was just fun to see and some of these old pith helmets, you know. They became available to us for some unknown reason. The same people wanted to be part of

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[30] Lester E. McAuliffe was appointed patrolman March 24, 1936; promoted to sergeant December 16, 1947; detective March 16, 1948; detective lieutenant December 1, 1949; assistant chief November 15, 1955; and chief May 23, 1961; and retired March 31, 1970.

[31] In 1959, the Police-a-rama celebrated more than 100 years of law enforcement in Saint Paul. Over 33,000 children and adults attended the week-long open house, touring the facilities and attending demonstrations. The highly successful event was featured in an article which appeared in the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* in February, 1960.

it and they all just jumped in. Like we had – I think we had an old motorcycle there. It was from back before the turn of the century, or some darn thing.

KC: I think the first motorcycle was about 1909.

WP: 1909? Well, I don't know whether we had one or we were promised one. But anyway, I remember that was scheduled, too. And then we had like the old time still. We could make moonshine on it. It just seemed to be one thing after another come in. My gosh, we couldn't show everything that we got. People just volunteered to --

KC: Where was it held?

WP: It was held upstairs on the third floor in the – I think there's three floors there –

KC: In the public safety building?

WP: Yeah. And down in the auditorium in the Minnesota side. And that went for the majority of the exhibits. And then I remember, Jack McCullough[32] was one of them. We had around ten or eleven different fellows that we trained on how to conduct a tour and we had them tour and had them learn everything they could about whatever this little object was or the badges or like that. I tell you, some of the school kids – they were just so fascinated, they couldn't get out of there. They had to stay in there and they had to look for this and look for that. Oh, it was really a fun, fun project.

KC: How long did this – this went on for a whole week?

WP: It was for about ten days. Yeah.

KC: And the purpose of this?

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[32] John E. "Jack" McCullough (DOB: December 5, 1924) was appointed patrolman October 13, 1947; promoted to sergeant July 16, 1962; and retired November 10, 1989.

WP: Well, I think there was something to do with the timing of the police department and its origination and like that. It was something with the dates. My thinker isn't too clear on that anymore.

KC: Well, we say that the police department was formed in 1854. So you became chief in 1955, so it could have been right have been right after the one hundredth year anniversary.

WP: That could have been it. Yeah! Police-a-Rama! Yeah, that's right. I'm sure it was connected with that. It was something to do with the year, the timing of it. I think you got it right on the head.

KC: It sounds like it was about building community-police relationships.

WP: Yes

KC: While you were chief you brought in the stretcher cars, or trucks. They were station wagons that –

WP: Oh, yeah. For the emergency cars. Yeah.

KC: Mmm-hmm. Any thoughts around that?

WP: No, except that the guys had to have better training. They had to have a lot of first aid work. They responded to that quite well because the officers were – oh, I'll tell you. You couldn't find a better group of officers in the world. They were just remarkable – every one of them. It was nice to give them an assignment, or give them a thought, and let them work it up from there.

I was trying to think of a couple of the officers that were exceptionally good at that. Tony Tighe[33] was one of them. And there was Will Dugas.[34] The two of them. Will Dugas patterned himself after Tony Tighe. Tony Tighe was quiet, silent, just went about his business. Will Dugas saw that and he copied himself right after him. [laughs] Yeah, yeah. They were two of a kind. They were really good. I was just thinking of another one. Paul Gillen[35] was another one that was a very good one at it. He had some real innovative ideas. I just valued his opinion on a lot of stuff.

Department Photo April 9, 1957
Chief Proetz in middle

[33] Anthony "Tony" J. Tighe was appointed reserve patrolman March 10, 1941; patrolman full-time August 3, 1941; promoted to detective February 18, 1949; and retired July 30, 1979.

[34] Wilfred E. Dugas (DOB: December 1, 1923) was appointed patrolman to the Saint Paul Bureau of Police July 25, 1949; promoted to detective July 8, 1957; lieutenant December 18, 1965; captain November 29, 1971; and retired May 11, 1979.

[35] Paul J. Gillen (September 26, 1909 - July 1, 2004) was patrolman November 21, 1938 (Badge No. 493); promoted to detective October 1, 1949 (Badge No. 255); resigned January 16, 1964.

KC: Who were your deputy chiefs?

WP: There was Frank Schmidt.[36] He was just a peach of a guy. He was in the uniform division – in charge of it. And he had Eddie Michel[37] who was quiet with fingers on everything that was going on, but he never said a word and he was Frank Schmidt's assistant. He was a lieutenant. And then Lester McAuliffe was a deputy chief in charge of the detective division while I was the chief.

KC: You were only appointed for one term.

WP: Yes, uh-huh.

KC: Do you care to talk about why you were not appointed a second term?

WP: I couldn't tell you. It doesn't ring a bell anymore. If I knew at one time, I would tell you.

KC: How were your relationships with the officers? Do you have any memories?

WP: Well, I used to play handball with them. And I could beat quite a few of them, because I was a pretty good handball player. But some of them I couldn't even touch. Ray Beck[38] was one of them. Ruddy Shuster[39] was another one. And then in the fire department, there was one guy that – oh, he was – he was going to be a United States champ, but he got killed in a fire in the athletic club.

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[36] Frank A. Schmidt was appointed patrolman April 30, 1919; promoted to sergeant August 1, 1927; lieutenant August 1, 1931; inspector April 23, 1936; lieutenant June 2, 1936; captain March 16, 1937; assistant chief—Uniform Division February 9, 1945; and retired September 17, 1963.

[37] Edward M. Michel (DOB: July 30, 1911) was appointed junior clerk-typist December 4, 1931; appointed patrolman March 1, 1937 (Badge No. 111); promoted to sergeant September 21, 1948 (Badge No. 315); lieutenant April 1, 1955 (Badge No. 22); retired June 30, 1966.

[38] Raymond W. Beck (August 12, 1904 - June 17, 1991) was appointed patrolman (temporary) December 16, 1931; appointed patrolman January 26, 1932; assigned to traffic duty June 3, 1932; resigned February 27, 1963.

[39] Rudolph G. Schuster (May 4, 1907- January 2, 1966) was appointed patrolman March 5, 1936.

KC: What were some of the challenges that you found to be frustrating as being a chief?

WP: I never found them really frustrating, but I found them kind of hard to overcome sometimes. But they all seemed to work themselves out eventually. So it was a case of not being too smart, but taking a little time with the whole situation and letting it kind of work itself out.

KC: How was your relationship with the union?

WP: It was very good, because I was one of the charter members of the union. I got along real well with them. Pete Kramer[40] was as good a friend as I had down there. He'd come in and he'd say, "Who'd you suspend today?" [laughs] Something cheerful like that, you know.

KC: Did you have to suspend a lot of –

WP: I didn't have to suspend anybody, but I did suspend a few of them. One or two of them were quite problem children. They benefitted from the suspension.

KC: Can you remember any of your problem children?

WP: Not offhand. No.

KC: When you were not reappointed as chief, then you went back to being a lieutenant detective. Do you remember what your assignment was then?

WP: Well, I was assigned to the warrant division that warrants and bail and bonds. I had Lud Vannelli.[41] I remember that now. Lud Vannelli and Dave O'Keefe.[42] His

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[40] Peter C. Kramer was appointed patrolman October 31, 1928; promoted to detective April 17, 1936; deceased June 27, 1959.

[41] Ludvig Vannelli (DOB: April 4, 1906) was appointed patrolman March 5, 1936 (Badge No. 355); retired April 2, 1971.

[42] Eugene D. O'Keefe (DOB: June 9, 1925) was appointed junior clerk-stenographer (provisional); separated for military service September 30, 1943.

dad was a sergeant on the department. He was a great big man. He'd have to bend over in this room here.

I had a colored gentleman and he and I used to – what the heck did we do together? Oh, yeah! Radio! Amateur radio. Yeah, he got started in radio and he could repair radios, so I took a couple of radios down to – I was going to give you his name, because he was a real classy guy.

KC: Turpin?[43]

WP: Turpin! Oh, yeah. He was a close friend of mine. I liked him. And he lived down the second house around the corner from me. He lived on Saint Anthony in a brand new house there.

KC: Around the corner from you on Carroll?

WP: On Carroll. That's right. I lived on Carroll and Fisk between Fisk and Avon. And he lived down on – there was Rondo and then there was Saint Anthony – and he lived in the second house. Yeah, it was a brand new house. And I just thought, "Oh, man. If I could get a house like that."

When we had trouble in the Rondo area[44] and we were looking at some of the houses there that were after hours where they were selling bootleg. Yeah. I had to step down on them. Not because the particular kind of business they were in, but just because it was against the law. Some of them resented and some of them didn't. And I can tell you this. I had something like twenty or twenty-five ministers from the colored folks come into [city council] chambers and wanted a

[43] Robert Turpin (DOB: January 9, 1915) was appointed patrol officer April 1, 1937 (Badge No. 257); retired December 3, 1965.

[44] Between 1850s and 1950, the Rondo neighborhood was a dynamic, diverse Saint Paul neighborhood whose borders were Lexington and Rice, and University and Marshall. Rondo was home to most the Saint Paul's Black community. It was cut in half when highway I-94 was built through Rondo Street, the neighborhood's major business street, home to the majority of Black owned businesses.

chance to speak in my behalf, because they felt that the department was being run okay. That was it.

And Harold Mordh, do you remember Harold Mordh?

KC: I've heard stories about Harold Mordh.

WP: Yeah. Harold – well, yeah, you'd hear stories about everybody, too. Harold was a good decent person if you got to know him real well. Peter MacFarlane was the same way. I don't know, maybe he's dead now. But I used to go down there and I used to cultivate them, because they have a chance to do something for me and for the department and they had contacts with the right people.

Wednesday, Feb. 2, 1983

Mordh found guilty of 3 theft counts

By Jim George
Staff Writer

A Ramsey District Court jury today found Harold Mordh, former Bethel Care Center owner, guilty on three counts of theft in what the state said involved a fencing operation.

The jury found the 62-year-old Mordh guilty on counts of conspiracy to commit theft, theft and dealing in precious metals without a license.

Mordh was accused of buying stolen goods last April 13 from a police informant who had gone to Mordh's office at 485 Selby Ave. with a concealed body microphone and transmitter.

The state claimed Mordh knew the items he bought from Richard Dahle were stolen because Dahle told him he got the articles in a Summit Avenue home burglary.

The state also claimed that a ring and statue found during execution of a search warrant were stolen property.

Paul Lindholm, assistant Ramsey County attorney, told the jury in his summation that Mordh was nothing less than a "fence" dealing in stolen property and making it profitable for others to violate the law.

George May, Mordh's attorney, told the jury in his closing statement that there was absolutely no proof that Mordh knew any of the items involved were stolen.

Sentencing is still pending. Mordh faces revocation of his probation and a possible five-year prison term. He is on probation in connection with his 1981 convictions for possession of drugs and a sawed-off shotgun.

He served six months in the Ramsey County Workhouse for the convictions, and met Dahle during that time.

Mordh, a high-profile figure in the community for years, was director of the Union Gospel Mission here for 20 years. He was forced out of the nursing home business after investigators found that large amounts of drugs were missing from the Bethel Care Center.

KC: Jim Griffin[45] [another Black officer] lived in the Rondo neighborhood.

WP: Jim lived down on the other side of Dale. Then Jim got a house out north of town, on the north end of town. Yeah, I can't remember where it was, but I remember the house and it was out by the cemetery. Out by the Elmhurst Cemetery.

Chief Proetz, a citizen, Sergeant Jim Griffin

KC: Right.

WP: Yeah.

KC: Now, you're a new chief, and Jim Griffin's name comes up on the promotion list. Did you have any thoughts about promoting him?

WP: Never had a thought. I was just blanking them all, and there were fifteen or twenty men there for promotions. They all came into the office, and I says, "You're all promoted." Some of them made sergeant and some made lieutenant.

KC: What's your evaluation of the Saint Paul Bureau of Police?

WP: Well, I thought that for the majority of them that they're all fine dedicated people. But there might be one who's a lemon here or a lemon there or might have different thoughts at different times. But none of them ever got out of line

[45] James Stafford Griffin (July 6, 1917 – November 23, 2002) was appointed reserve patrolman August 6, 1941; full patrolman August 1942; the first Black male to be promoted to sergeant September 16, 1955; captain March 2, 1970; and deputy chief October 6, 1972; and retired August 31, 1983. The Headquarters Building at 367 Grove Street was named for Griffin in 2004.

when I was there. It never could be proved to my satisfaction that this guy was doing this or that guy was doing that. I was satisfied with every one of them.

KC: Did you feel it was an ethical department?

WP: Yes, I did. I felt it was. I thought that in some cases, there might be a little favoritism shown to this one or that one.

KC: What did it mean for you to be a Saint Paul police officer?

WP: It meant getting a decent salary and having a job. And it meant that I was in a kind of a work that was very interesting. That's exactly what I did. I enjoyed the work. And when I had the kids boxing – oh, I used to enjoy that. Gee whiz. I used to be down there two nights a week. That was great. I enjoyed the whole time and some of it was rather sad and some of it was happy and some of it was – wished I could go back and do it over again.

KC: Anything that you would do differently?

WP: Not just off the top of my head I couldn't say. But I enjoyed the whole ball of wax. Yep.

KC: You finished your career in Hopkins.

WP: Yes.

KC: Smaller community. Suburban community. What was that like for you?

WP: Well, it was quite a transformation, to be very frank with you, going from 315,000 people to just about something like 3000. And then you had fewer men, too. You worked under a city manager and I, luckily, was fortunate to have a very, very honest, good, straightforward city manager. His name was Dick Brubacher.

KC: What were the challenges of being in a very small community and in a small department?

WP: Well, if you let it hit you with a sock like a punch in the nose, then it would be something, but I just took it in stride, because I was from Hazel Park in Saint

Paul. That was a small community all by itself with a commercial club, gas station on the corner, grocery store and like that. And it was small. And I got along real good out there, so when I went to Hopkins, I didn't have any problems at all. No.

KC: Any reflections having spent your life as a police officer?

WP: I'm glad I did, because I think I benefitted from it and I think it was an experience that a lot of people will never have. You have to be kind of willing to ride with a punch once in awhile, because you're going to get one once in awhile. So from that standpoint, I think I had the temperament to handle it. That was important. Not to carry a grudge. Not to get all steamed up about this guy or that guy. Or this group or that group. Republicans are Republicans. Democrats are Democrats. Let them work it out themselves. They're smart. That's why you could get by on a lot of things by letting the other guy do the job that he's trained to do. Yeah.

KC: Thank you, sir. This has been an honor.

WP: Well, it's been my pleasure!

American Legion Flag
Vernon Iverson, Chief Proetz, Mrs. B Randolph
Christie DeBarcq, Ken Carlson
April 1955

Appearing on Romper Room
Ed Yen, Miss June
and Chief Proetz
July 5, 1956

2 Chiefs from Indonesia with Chief Proetz
December 2, 1957

APPENDIX A

PAUL MACCABEE
Crime Historian & author of *John Dillinger Slept Here*
Interview 3/18/03 by Brian Bull

First off, some background on a related topic. What was the O'Connor system of Saint Paul, Minnesota, and how did it work to gangsters' benefit?

At the turn of century, the chief of the Saint Paul Police department literally sent the word out to gangsters all over America that they were welcome to Saint Paul. That it was a safe haven, a safe city. However, criminals when they came to Saint Paul had to follow a certain set of rules. When bank robbers and kidnappers arrived at the train station, at the depot, in downtown Saint Paul, they had to identify themselves to police. You know, "Hi, I'm a bank robber. I'm in from Chicago. How are you doing, Officer?" Usually they would pay a little tribute, so often robbers would arrive in Saint Paul with stolen jewelry, which they would hand over as a little gift to the local constabulary. They'd have to identify where they were staying, where they were living while in Saint Paul. If they didn't have girlfriend, very often they'd be directed to whatever personal vices they needed fulfilled by the police.

And the most important part of deal which was the O'Connor system named after the police chief, John J. O'Connor was that while the gangsters were in the city limits of Saint Paul, they could not kill, maim, kidnap or rob anyone in Saint Paul. They could go to Minneapolis and kill whoever they wanted to. They could go to Des Moines, Milwaukee, Madison, any of the upper Midwest cities rob, loot, kill. But when they came back to Saint Paul, the gangsters had to be on their best behavior. Well, needless to say, with that kind of a deal between the police and the crooks, virtually every major hoodlum in the United States came to Saint Paul. In fact, there's only *one* gangster I could identify from the 1930s who *didn't* come to Saint Paul. That was Pretty Boy Floyd. Apart from Pretty Boy Floyd, Machine Gun Kelly, the Barker- Karpis gang, Alvin "Creepy" Karpis, John Dillinger, Baby Face Nelson, Verne Miller, they all came to Saint Paul, Minnesota for safe haven.

And how long did the O'Connor system last?

The O'Connor started in the turn of century, before O'Connor actually was chief. It was called the "layover" agreement. Because gangsters could "layover" in Saint Paul. And it lasted pretty much to the mid-1930s when two of the most prominent millionaires in Saint Paul – Edward Bremer of the Bremer Bank and the Bremer Foundation today – and William Hamm of the Hamm Brewery. Of course, those two millionaires were kidnapped by the Barker-Karpis gang. And that violation of the O'Connor system, of the safe haven, so stunned the rich folk of Saint Paul that those two wild acts of kidnapping lead to the total collapse of the agreement between the cooks and the police. The FBI came in, they hunted down the Barker-Karpis gang, killed or arrested many members of the Dillinger gang and that was the end of the--pretty much 36 years' agreement in Saint Paul. The crooks were welcome as long as they behaved themselves.

That's almost a four-decade long dynasty there.

(laughs) It's true. And although other cities across America had "safe haven" agreements -- Hot Springs, Arkansas, Toledo, Ohio, and of course, Cicero just outside of Chicago in Illinois where Capone, Al Capone, reigned supreme. Saint Paul was really unique. Saint Paul was like a department store for gangsters. Whatever you as a bank robber or kidnapper needed, you could find in Saint Paul. If you wanted a machine gun, there were machine guns being sold to bank robbers on Wabasha Street, the big street in downtown Saint Paul. If you needed a girlfriend, Alvin "Creepy" Karpis found the love of his life in Saint Paul, Delores Delaney. If you needed a getaway car, there were auto dealerships on the big avenue called University Avenue in Saint Paul – it's right next to the state capitol in Minnesota – where you could get a heavily-armored getaway car. The license plates were attached with quick-release lug-nuts. So if you heard on the police radio -- which was conveniently installed in the getaway car – that after your bank robbery, the police had identified your car, you could pop—Mr. Bank Robber—the license plates off your car, and put clean plates on. All of that was available in Saint Paul.

So Saint Paul was a gangster's embassy.

It truly was, it was great for the night life. Some of the best jazz musicians from across America came to the speakeasies and blind pigs across Saint Paul. Today Saint Paul, of course, shall we say is a stable, family-oriented, solid city. In those days, it was wild, It was roaring 20s in Saint Paul. And because so many gangsters were here, there was an awful lot of illegal liquor during the Prohibition period, lots of casinos, underworld gambling joints. It was a lively city for gangsters and for those good people who liked rubbing elbows with gangsters. I would hear from folks that you would go to dinner in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and to your left see John Dillinger dining with his girlfriend, Billie Frechette, and to your right, you might see Baby Face Nelson dining with his fiancée, Helen Gillis, and it felt safe. You knew that the gangsters were on good behavior. And it was even a little bit of celebrity. "Whoa, honey, do you know who we're dining with tonight? It's John Dillinger." It was as exciting as dining with Babe Ruth during that period.

<u>Dillinger Slept Here, A Crooks Tour of Crime and Corruption in St. Paul 1920-1936</u>
By Paul Maccabee, MHS Press, Saint Paul, ISBN 0-87351-316-9