

Transcription of Saint Paul Police oral history interview with

Commander
Thomas Walsh



Saint Paul Police Officer

May 22, 1972 to June 28, 2002

December 14, 2005

by
Kate Cavett

at
HAND in HAND Productions' office in Saint Paul, Minnesota

This project was financed by the Minnesota Historical Society's Grants-in-Aid program and Kateleen Cavett.

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

 **Saint Paul Police Department
and
HAND in HAND Productions
2006**

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 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 tenor 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 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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Thomas Michael Walsh was appointed to patrolman
for the Saint Paul Police Department
May 22, 1972

Promoted to:

Sergeant February 11, 1983
Acting Lieutenant April 15, 1984
Reinstated Sergeant May 19, 1984
Acting Commander February 3, 2001
Reinstated Sergeant May 19, 2001
Acting Commander January 19, 2002

Retired Commander: June 28, 2002

Commander Walsh scored number ONE on all test he took for the department
for police officer, sergeant, lieutenant and commander.

KC: Kate Cavett

TW: Tom Walsh

0.07

KC: Wednesday December 14, 2005, were at HAND in HAND's office in Saint
Paul.

Please introduce yourself with your name and age and the rank that you
retired at.

TW: My name is Tom Walsh,¹ I am fifty-eight years old. I retired three years at
age fifty-five after thirty years. I retired as a sergeant, although I was an
acting commander.

¹Thomas Michael Walsh (May 15, 1947) was appointed patrolman May 22, 1972, promoted to
sergeant February 11, 1983; acting lieutenant April 15, 1984; reinstated sergeant May 19, 1984;
acting commander February 3, 2001; reinstated sergeant May 19, 2001; acting commander
January 19, 2002; and retired commander June 28, 2002. Of note is Commander Walsh scored
number one on all test he took for the department for police officer, sergeant, lieutenant and
commander.

KC: All those money crunch situations where people get moved up and down.

TW: Ya

KC: Tom, before we turned the tape recorder on, you were talking about the value in working with juvenile. I'd like you to repeat that for me.

TW: Juvenile is a fantastic place for an investigator to learn the skills required of an investigator. I absolutely believe that you will never learn those skills faster or better than doing it with juveniles. You get to experiment, you get to develop interview skills, you get to develop interrogation skills. You learn the process of investigating all kinds of crimes, because you're not limited to one specific type of crime. You're not doing just burglaries or robberies and thefts and criminal damages to property and assaults and disorderly conducts. You're doing everything. You really do pick up those skills faster and I think you learn them better, deeper, just because you have to, the volume is so great. The number of cases that you get assigned to the juvenile investigator is just huge.

You handle more cases, you handle them, I think, as much in depth as most investigative units do. You handle them from beginning to end, you do the petitioning. When a young person is going to go to court, it's on your decision and you bring the petition to the attorney. It's just a fantastic place to learn and I think every investigator should spend some time there.

KC: Any specific stories that you can remember about an investigation that you did in juvenile?

TW: I met two of the most evil people I have ever known in my life. They were twin brothers, age thirteen. You walked into the interview room and sat down and the malevolence was palpable, you could just feel how mean these kids were. It turned out that they had been involved in the theft of a vehicle. Taken it to Iowa where a young man was killed in an accident. They rolled the car over, left him there to die, stole another car and came back to Minnesota. These were two mean young people.

I had them on a series of garage burglaries and an arson fire and a bunch of other things that happened in Saint Paul. But you walked in to talk to them, just icebreaking stuff, the usual little patter stuff, all you could sense was how mean these two kids were. It was really disheartening to find that kind of, not just toughness, but real malice in people that age. I walked out of there just depressed. It was awful.

KC: Now, to be able to feel that energy, I hear some intuition. How much did intuition play [a role in your police work]?

TW: I think every cop, every good cop has an intuitive level that's, maybe, above the average. I don't know if you've ever taken the Myers-Briggs test, of course, you have. Well, I am not only an extrovert, but I am an intuitive and I think that good investigators are always intuitive. You have to follow that instinct and most of the time it's going to lead you right where you want to go.

KC: Did you do anything to hone those skills in your thirty years?

TW: I don't know if you do it on purpose or not. I think you just get better at it with time. Good cops start out intuitive, they just get better. Kevin

Moore² is a prime example. I've never known a more intuitive person in my life, his instincts are always accurate it seems. Another guy who was intuitive was John Nord.³ In your interviews you have to have multiple John Nord stories. He was kind of a hero to a lot of us.

KC: Tell me a John Nord story.

TW: John was a lieutenant for this district, this very district, B5, back in the late 1970s, early 80s. He got promoted from lieutenant to captain and was

leaving us. When

he left we gave

him a t-shirt that

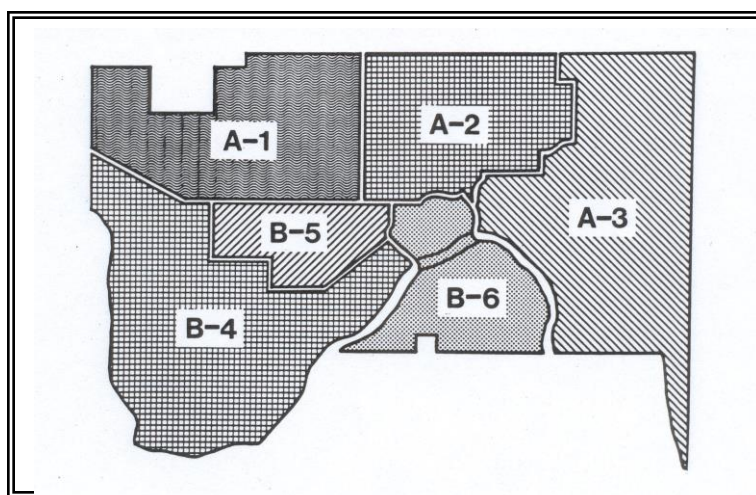
said *'400, I'm a*

block away.'

Because any major

incident that

happened, it



seemed like John was right in the middle, he was there. He was not only lucky, but intuitive and instinctive and he was always there. [Laughs] We used to follow him around because we knew we'd be in the middle of the action, because John was always there. There are a lot of those kinds of people. I think Kevin and John were two of the most intuitive people.

KC: Any Kevin Moore stories you remember?

² Kevin Joseph Moore was appointed police officer February 23, 1980; promoted to sergeant September 22, 2001.

³ John Clay Nord was appointed patrolman August 27, 1965; promoted sergeant December 21, 1968; lieutenant February 17, 1973; captain December 21, 1977; deputy chief February 9, 1984; and retired January 25, 1991.

TW: Not right now, they'll come.

6.22

KC: Let's go back to the beginning of your career. What brought you to the Saint Paul Police Department?

TW: I was a music major in college. Got drafted right out of college. Did two years in the field artillery, went to Vietnam. When I got out, my ears had been damaged, music wasn't an option. I was kind of hanging around in the neighborhood, I grew up in Frogtown and had a neighbor whose name was Frank Kniessel,⁴ who had been a police officer for thirty-five years and was retired. He told me that the department was giving a test. I said, "Frank, I don't know. I don't want to wear a uniform and I don't want to carry a gun." Soooo, he suggested that I take the test, he said if I didn't like it, I didn't have to stay. That's a rotten thing to do to a person, you hit them with something as reasonable and logical as that. So, I took the test and stayed for thirty years, so it seemed to fit.

KC: What made it FIT?

TW: I'm an extrovert and I love the contact with people. I like problem solving. I like the spectrum of people that you deal with. You deal with people on all educational levels, all income levels. You deal with some of those young people, the two thirteen year olds, who are two of the meanest people I know. You also find some of the sweetest and nicest

⁴ Frank J. Kniessel was appointed patrolman November 1, 1937; promoted sergeant March 1, 1949; lieutenant April 1, 1955; and retired June 13, 1973.

Class of 1972-1



Row 1: Off. W. Johnson, Off. D. Gross,
Off. B. Wynkoop, Off. F. Foster, Off. T.
Trooten, Off. D. Conroy, Off. M.
Grosyan, Off. G. Briggs, Off. G. Lind,
Off. K. Miller, Off. J. Charmoli. Row
2: Sgt. J. Gelao, Off. M. Duenow, Off.
G. Starfield, Off. W. Hudson, Off. V.
Ness, Off. D. Carlson, Off. J. Fehr, Off.
R. Hill, Off. C. Anderson, Off. J.
Culhane, Off. J. Steffen, Sgt. J. McCabe.
Row 3: Off. W. Trow, Off. M. Maynard,
Off. E. Phillippi, Off. S. Shimek, Off. J.
Nichols, Off. F. O'Brien, Off. R.
Fleming, Off. F. Zaruba, Off. J. Talbot,
Off. R. Lundstrom. Row 4: Off. S.
Ballard, Off. R. Tibesar, Off. J.
Wicklund, Off. E. Lundholm, Off. C.
Schwanbeck, Off. D. Mars, Off. W.
Langevin, Off. R. Fischer, Off. J.
Fischer, Off. D. Havel, Off. W. Gillespie.
Row 5: Off. M. Ganzel, Off. M. Towey,
Off. T. Walsh, Off. T. Gritznacher, Off.
J. Rutten, Off. M. Zasada, Off. J. Thury,
Off. G. Swanson, Off. J. Eastlee, Off.
E. Wolford, Off. D. Winger

people that you'll ever encounter. I like not knowing what you were going to find that day. You'd come to work and every day was different. So, that piece really did fit.

KC: What was your academy like when you started?

TW: There were fifty-three of us.

KC: And this would be what year?

TW: 1972. We started in May and finished at the end of September. We graduated from the academy on September 22nd.

I got married on September 30th and went on a honeymoon right afterwards.

KC: How did you wife feel about marrying a cop, when she must have fallen in love with a music major?



TW: I don't think it ever bothered her. I think she had a sense that I probably wasn't going to do anything too foolish. Not too many nights that she worried about whether or not I was going to make it home, she was really



confident that I'd figure it out. That worked very well too, she was a very supportive person. I think a spouse can make a big difference.

KC: And unusual for thirty-three years marriage in the police?

TW: Yes. We were talking about it the other day, a

number of police officers have managed to have multiple spouses over time, because relationships are very difficult. The hours are bad. And, I think, sometimes the people who are attracted to this job are not necessarily looking for stable relationships either. They're looking for fun or adventure. I think there's a mix of things going on there.

10:35:

KC: When you were in the academy, what were you taught about the culture of Saint Paul?

TW: I don't remember there being a lot of discussion about Saint Paul's culture or even its neighborhoods or the way it was broken up. Some of that you just learn as you go along. There were neighborhoods in Saint Paul that I'd never been in and that we'd never even talked about. There's Saint Anthony, everybody knows about what used to be called 'The Hill' the Selby Dale area, everybody knew the East Side and everybody knew downtown and everybody kind of had an idea about the West Side. I'd never been to Highland Park. I had never been to Saint Anthony. I'd never been to some of the neighborhoods on the East Side. I don't recall a lot of discussion about how the city was built. There wasn't a lot of discussion about its history, there wasn't a lot of discussion about individual neighborhoods.

There was some race relations classes and some discussion along those lines, but not much. You were expected to learn those things as you went.

In fact, my first regular partner had been on the job only six months longer than I. A guy by the name of Bob Weston⁵, who was one of my favorite people and one of the nicest cops you'll ever meet. We kind of found our way around by ourselves. You got a certain amount of physical orientation about where hospitals were, where individual buildings were. But not about potential problem places, just not much about the city in general, not much of its history. I thought that that should have been a focus, I really did.

KC: Anything about people, and working with people, and how to work with people, and the philosophy of working with people?

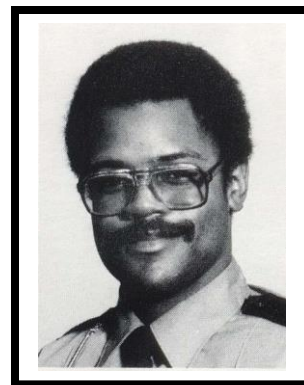
TW: We had a psychologist who did some discussion of those kinds of things. And, also, went through with us, in front of the rest of the class, what our strengths and weaknesses were in dealing with people. His name was Hobart. I thought that was an interesting approach and I see some value in it, because, okay, you're coming to know this person a little bit better as you go along through this class and Dr. Hobart will tell you that this is one of his strengths and this is one of his weaknesses. So, maybe this is something that you have to cover, something that you have to pickup or something that maybe he's going to develop as he goes along. There was some merit to that, it was also very embarrassing.

KC: Do you remember what they said about you?

TW: Yes. They said in some ways my personality profile matched that of Adolph Hitler. They told me that because I didn't care what other people

⁵ Robert John Weston was appointed patrolman October 26, 1971; promoted to sergeant August 25, 1989; and retired July 2, 1999.

thought of me. I was going to do it. Because I thought it was right or wrong, with very little thought or influence by other people. And, to some degree that's true. There is a small list of people whose opinions I value enough that I will reconsider my own. And John Harrington⁶ is one of those. Most people, you know, you're entitled to your opinion, but this is the way I see it and most people aren't going to influence that. He was right in that, but at the time I really took umbrage.



John Harrington
1984

KC: What did he say your strengths were? [Laughs]

TW: That I would be opinionated, that I would make my own decisions. [Chuckles] And he thought then that I probably would be a pretty good investigator. That wasn't one of my goals, at that time I didn't care, I wanted to get in the car and go and see what it was like.

KC: Where did you start, what was your first detail?

TW: The first regular assignment was 312. Back then we were the ambulance service for the City of Saint Paul and that was the stretcher car for the Selby, Dale area. I worked 3:00 in the afternoon until 1:00 in the morning, a ten hour day. Weston and I were partners. It was one of the two or

⁶ 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; and retired June 14, 2010. Elected to the Minnesota State Senate from Saint Paul 2010-2012. Appointed Chief of the Metro Transit Commission Police September 4, 2012.

three busiest cars in the city. That was one of the things that made it fun. You very seldom had to really look for work, there was plenty of work to do. We developed interesting relationships with people and I liked being the stretcher service. I liked being the ambulances, because people didn't then just see you as someone coming to tell them that they couldn't do something that they wanted to do, or to arrest them for something that they had already done. You were providing that positive service to the community, as well. Not to say that those other things aren't positive, also. But they saw them as, you know, when you put a little kid that's been hit by a car on a stretcher and you take him to the hospital, they look at you a little differently. So, I really enjoyed that part.

KC: What training did you have?

TW: It was pretty primitive. It's not like the medics get now, we didn't have the equipment or training that the Fire Department has. I'm delighted that the ambulance service was given to the Fire Department [in 1973], because they have the time to do it, and do it much better than we could. We were something beyond First Responders, but not that much. It was pretty basic training.

KC: Any stories that you particularly remember of situations?

TW: There was a night like tonight, snowy, nasty, cold and we were the only stretcher car in a long way. We got an OB call out on Wheeler in the Midway district, which was way out of our district. So, we got on our horse and got out there as quickly as we could and the woman was having labor pains every four minutes. I mean, this was imminent. We got to the house, it was up on a hill, the stairs were not shoveled, they were ice-

packed, late in the season, streets are just in awful condition. We managed to haul the stretcher up there and got her strapped to it as tightly as we could and we slid her down the hill because you couldn't go down the steps. We loaded her on the stretcher and Bob was driving and we were heading on I-94 and we got the red lights on and we're schlepping down the freeway and he's just gripping the wheel and he looks at me and he said, "I'm not nervous." And, he realized that he hadn't turned on the headlights. So that was one.

KC: Did you get her to the hospital or did you deliver?

TW: Just made it. By the time we'd wrapped up our blankets and put the stretcher back in the car, we could hear the baby cry. That was a close one.

KC: Did you deliver any babies?

TW: No, never did. And, I'm just as happy, I was there for my own. That's a whole different environment. I'm just as happy we never had to do that.

KC: What was it like when you arrived and they were DOA—[dead on arrival]?

TW: Oh, that was awful. And, I have that kind of face. It's kind of an open face and grieving people just seemed attracted to me. They just hang on me. Oftentimes, and I can be there with another guy, but I was the one that they would cry at and hang on and it was so sad sometimes. Some of them were just awful. Some of them were expected. There was an old woman just off of West Seventh Street and she said that her husband was in his early nineties and she said, "I've lost my friend." [Emotional pause]

KC: Yes.

Do you remember any times when it was children?

TW: Oh, yes. SIDs were awful. We had one that was thirteen that was heartbreaking.

KC: What happened?

TW: They still don't know. They never found out, the cause was a natural. Boy. Parents, they look at each other and they look at you, they're trying to find answers and you don't have them. Those are awful.

KC: It sounds like there was excitement, but it was painful.

20:08

TW: Oh, sometimes. Sometimes it was funny. We got a call to a shooting just a few blocks from here [313 Selby Avenue] and we arrive and a guy comes driving around the corner, he was the victim and he's been shot in the back of the head and he's still driving his car. [laughs] There were days that you just walk away shaking your head thinking, *how can this be?*

KC: Did he get out of his car and let you take him in?

TW: Oh, sure. We said, "It's not a good idea for you to be driving, why don't you come with us."

KC: Speaking of shootings, what was it like when you started carrying a gun? Some people are thrilled and can hardly wait to have that opportunity.

TW: I had spent two years in the army and a year of that was in Vietnam. I carried a gun every day there. It was just another tool that you carried, but it was a heavy one. It was always in the way. I never liked carrying a gun. It was never one of my favorite things. I recognized that it was necessary. I didn't go out and buy the most expensive gun I could buy. I

bought a very serviceable, reliable Smith & Wesson. I'm still carrying a gun, but I don't like it.

KC: Do you carry a gun 24/7, anytime your out.

TW: No. No.

KC: Did you when you were a young officer on duty?

TW: No. There were times that you were going someplace that you thought, *well, maybe it wouldn't be a bad idea*. So I put on something, but for the most part, no. It was always in the way. You can't go certain places and I just don't like it.

KC: Did you have to draw your gun ever?

TW: Sure, never used it. I was fortunate, but I pointed it at a lot of people.

KC: Any particular stories that you remember about when you had to draw it?

TW: There was a guy whose name was Willie Spahn. Over just a couple blocks from here, a 400 block of Dayton, he had robbed a guy, taken his car and shot at him, tried to kill him, tried to shoot him in the head, but missed. My partner and I were not quite where we were supposed to be, we were down on West Seventh Street having supper, we left the neighborhood and had gone out for dinner. The call came in and we looked at each other and thought, *ah, nuts*. So, we came back up into the district and we thought, *well, we'll find the car dumped somewhere. Maybe we'll get enough evidence to find out who this is and what's going on*.

We were at Saint Albans and Grand and looked over to the east one block and could see another squad, and it was kind of doing the same thing we were, they were cruising along figuring we were going to find this car

dumped somewhere. We got to Summit, we looked over, we can still the squad and we got to Portland, we look over and we can still the squad. We figured we'll just march this way, it's a more efficient way to sweep the neighborhood anyway.

We got to the alley between Portland and Holly and the car came out right in front of us and the driver's face is framed in the window. And he's got an expression like "damn." So, the chase was on. We were going about sixty-five miles an hour down Holly. And, at Holly and Victoria there is a church. Well, we figured *he ain't going to make that turn, he's going way to fast*. And we were ready. He piled into the steps and into one of the pillars in front of the church, and both kids, there were two suspects, one of them got out and ran north on Victoria and the other one ran across the yard, what is now the lawn at Billy Mitchell Law School, it was still OLP High School, I think, Our Lady of Peace High School. He was on my side and I got out and figured he might still be armed, I pulled my gun and I yelled, "Stop or I'll shoot." And, I'm running as fast as my fat little body would go. He was seventeen and I thought *well, he's going to be faster than I am*. But as I was running along, I thought, *yea know, I'm gaining on him*. So, I'm running along and I said, "Stop." He just dug deeper, but I was still gaining on him, so finally I reached out with my gun and touched the back of his head and he stopped, he just fell. He was pretty confident I was going to shoot him. I never had to and I'm glad. That was a close one, because he was a dangerous kid.

KC: And, you knew who he was?

TW: No, not until afterwards.

KC: How did you prepare yourself to discharge your weapon if you would have had to?

TW: You don't think about it. You know what the law is. You know what your own moral standards are. You know what circumstances are going to cause you to draw the weapon and, hopefully, you'll know in advance what circumstances are going to cause you to fire it. Otherwise you shouldn't be carrying it. You don't at the beginning of everyday say, *Okay, this is what I'm going to do under these circumstances*. You kind of know that going in. I don't think you do a lot of preparation for that.

KC: Do they train you? Do they prepare you?

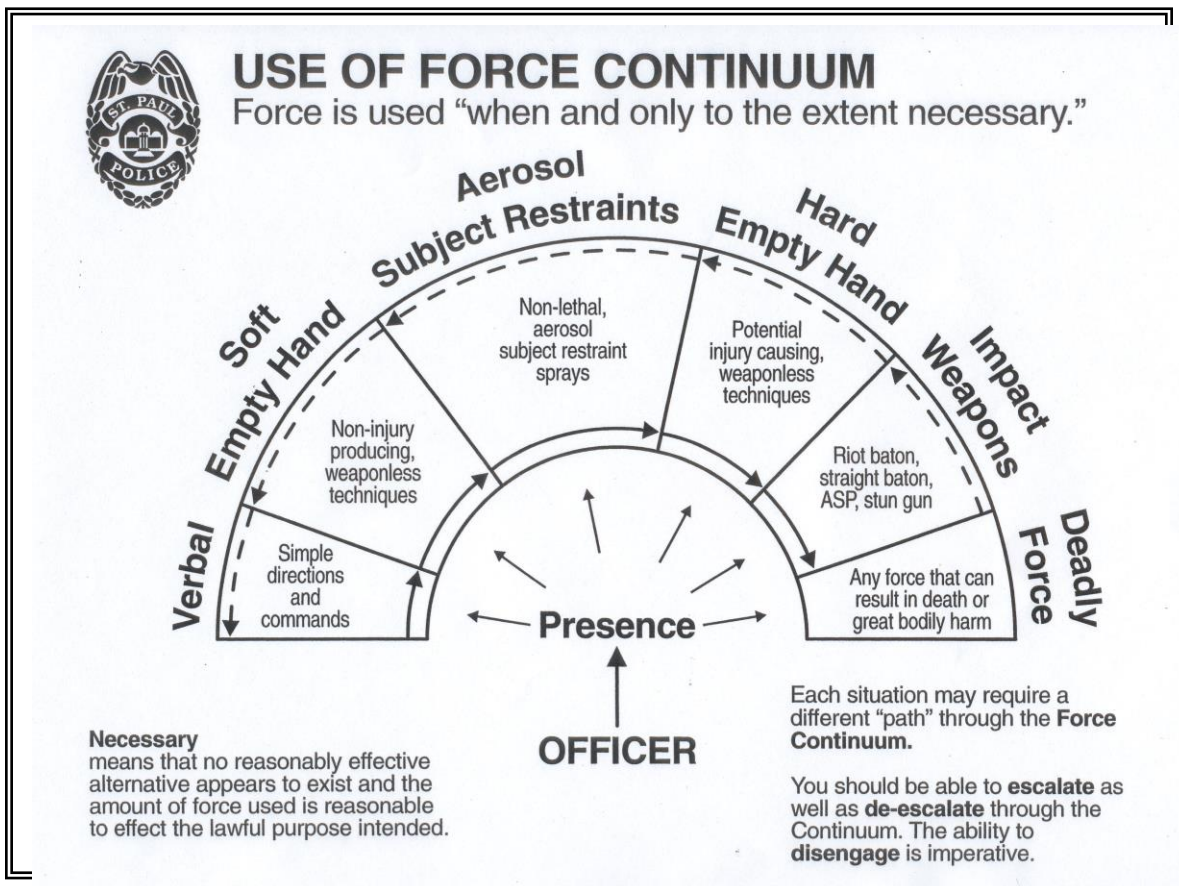
TW: I think that that was one of the big focuses of, not only the academy, but all year long, every month you had to qualify [in firearms]. Every time you pull that weapon out and you fire at a bulls eye target, you know what that represents, you know that you're honing a skill that you, hopefully, will never have to use, but I think that the training was really very good for that purpose. I think they prepared you pretty well and in thirty years of being a cop, I don't know that anybody made any big mistakes, I really don't.

KC: And you had been prepared in Vietnam, as well?

TW: Yeah. That's a whole different thing. If you saw something move there, you shot at it, because you shoot them before they shoot you. Maybe it was preparation. I don't know how I would qualify that, I really don't, because it was a much different environment.

KC: At what point did the continuum of force, as we know it now, come in and how were you trained on that?

TW: Again, that's something that good cops have probably been doing their whole careers. The little diagram that you see everywhere now, I think that's late 1990s, maybe mid-'90s or so. We had people, like Fred Leske⁷, who would train you on those very kinds of things. Fred was our self-defense training person in our academy. Every cop in our academy walked the beat in downtown Saint Paul with Fred. They didn't call it that, but that's essentially what we were doing.



⁷ Fred M. Leske was appointed patrolman March 4, 1957; and retired December 15, 1983.

Fred would take you and he would escalate a call, you know, he'd bring it up just to see what was going to happen. He was very good at what he did. Very soft-spoken man, very religious man, deeply, intensely religious man, but physically one of the most adroit people I've ever known. He was tough and he was not at all afraid to use physical force. He could talk his way through a call so easily and then sometimes he'd just see how you were going to respond and see how the other person would respond, and let you see how much could be accomplished with your voice by saying the right things. And, then sometimes those things don't work, so this is what's going to happen next. Fred was an invaluable part of training a lot of police officers over a long period of time. He was a good influence on a lot of cops.

30:09

KC: Your stature is not tall.

TW: They used to call me a munchkin.

KC: How tall are you?

TW: About five, ten.

KC: So, you're five, ten. You are not a William Finney,⁸ who walks into a situation and just commands attention because he's six, four.

TW: Yup.

⁸ 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.

KC: What were the techniques that you found successful, besides wearing a uniform?

TW: My wife sometimes even now gives me a bad time, she says, "You're using the voice again." The way you use your voice, not only what you say, but the way in which you say it, has an influence on how things are going to go. You can get people's attention and I do have a resonant voice, and I can be loud. So, talking my way out of trouble was always my principal goal. I never worked with a big guy. Bob Weston, Terry Gritzmacher⁹, Dale Kangas,¹⁰ none of us was big. I never had a big partner. We always talked our way out of trouble whenever we could. Like I said, what you say and the manner in which you say it, most of the time, serves you pretty well.

KC: Someone told me that when you put on that uniform and when you buckle the belt with the gun on it, that you take on another persona. Did you ever experience that?

TW: Ya know, I don't think so. Maybe, I'd have to give that some serious thought because I'm always kind of me. I always tried not to be a disgrace to the uniform, but I don't know that I ever took the idea of just the uniform and the badge and the gun. This is going to sound bad – the idea of not taking it seriously, but I never let it change my perspective, what I was without the uniform is what I was with it on as well. So, I don't think it changed my view or my approach. But it was a tool, the badge and the

⁹ Terrance Lee Gritzmacher was appointed patrolman May 22, 1972; retired November 30, 1999.

¹⁰ Dale Rudolph Kangas was appointed patrolman May 22, 1972; promoted to sergeant November 8, 1997; and retired June 29, 2001.

uniform. You walk in a room and people look at you, and they look at you differently than they do other people. The fact that you're carrying a gun, hopefully, the rest of the people in the room don't have guns, so it is different. I tried not to let it make me different.

KC: After you were with 312, what was your next assignment?

TW: I worked 312 and then we went into team policing. Then I was 405, same district, but the emergency car for the whole district. The difference there was we were no longer the ambulance service, but the emergency car went to every major call. We would take photographs, fingerprints, diagrams of major crime scenes, major accidents, those kinds of things. That was interesting, also. More detail-oriented. It made you write your reports better, it made you do some things, maybe, just a little bit better than you did just being a regular car responding to a call. Essentially the same area, similar responsibilities and I did that and stayed in this area for the first ten years. I didn't take the test for promotion, I was having way too much fun and it worked out well for childcare. My wife worked days, I worked afternoons, she'd come home I'd have the kids tired. Pawned them off on her and then I'd go to work. I liked that, I like being a dad, it was one of my favorite things and I loved getting to know my children, it was really, really fun.

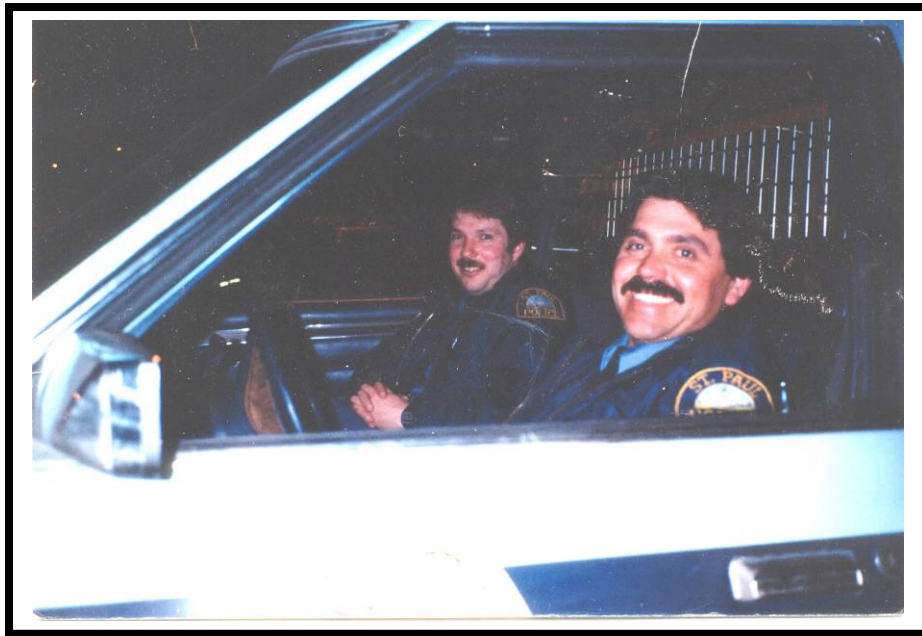
KC: How many children do you have?

TW: Two. Boy and a girl. They're fun, even now, they're coming home next week and I'm looking forward to it.

KC: When you were with 405, any particular calls that stand out? Any stories that you have about that time?

TW: I worked with Terry Gritzmacher. We went on thousands of calls.

I don't know if any really stand out. Oh, I have one I can tell you really quick. We went to a DOA, not far from here. An older woman had lost her husband, he had died in bed and we were thinking, *if we could get Fire here to take the body, it would just make her grieving process so much easier*, but Fire wouldn't do it. Had we still been the stretcher service, we would have done that, 'cause it would have been better for her in my view. So



Partners Tom Walsh and Terry Gritzmacher

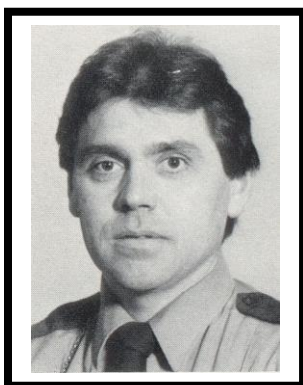
we stood around and we helped her make arrangements, we helped her get a funeral home and make arrangements for her husband to be taken. Terry said something trying to ease her pain and she looked at him and said, "Yeah, you got a Sunday school face, but you've got Saturday night

eyes." I will never forget that, that was one of the funniest things I ever heard. [Laughter]

KC: You guys stayed around?

TW: Yes.

KC: You hung around.



Terry Gritzmacher
c. 1984

TW: Yes.

KC: Would all departments have had you do that?

Where did you learn to do that?

TW: That was kind of what was expected. I don't know that it was required, but it was certainly expected. That's such a horrible time for people, you can't leave them alone.

You just can't walk out of their house and leave them to deal with it. So we stayed.

KC: But people have said there are other departments in this State who have a band-aid approach and that they would leave them.

37.26

TW: Yes. I'm sure that's true, but, again, that wasn't what was expected of us, and it wasn't what we expected from ourselves. None of us felt comfortable doing that, it was a horrible, awkward position to be in. But anyone with any empathy couldn't walk away and just let somebody deal with that on their own. You're going to find someone who can help them. If you can't do it yourself you're going to find someone who can.

KC: Did you ever have to do any notifications, death notifications?

TW: Oh, lots, yes. There was about a three year stretch where it seemed like you should have been calling me rabbi or minister or something, because I got them all. I hated that, just hated it.

KC: How were you taught on how to do that?

TW: I don't know that we were ever taught. You kind of felt your way through it. When somebody sees you knock at their front door, they know it's not good news. I mean, you're not coming to tell them they won the lottery, so they're kind of expecting something and you try to make it just as painless as you can. There's no good way to do it.

KC: What was the hardest one you had to do?

TW: I had a woman right off of Saint Clair and Victoria. Her nineteen year old son had killed himself in an accident, a motorcycle accident on West Seventh Street. He had been riding a motorcycle that he bought shortly after the death of his father, with the money that was left him from his father's estate. So, shortly after her husband died, we had to go tell her that her son was dead, had been killed in an accident. That one was awful, that one was really bad.

KC: Did you know her and that her husband had died?

TW: No, but it didn't take long to find it out.
That one was hard.

39:32

KC: What was the assignment after 405?

TW: I went inside.



John O'Brien

Oh, you wanted to know about a call that Terry and I handled, another one. We processed the scene when John O'Brien¹¹ was killed over on the East Side, over on Forest in a car accident. We had to take the videotape of the accident scene, the crime scene. Terry is one of the most fastidious people you'll ever know. I was the Oscar Madison to his Felix, I mean, he was just one of the neatest people I know. When we processed a crime scene, it was methodical and it was thorough, it was very well done. And, part of that was because Terry insisted on it. We processed the scene when John's squad was just destroyed. That was one of the harder things that I ever did, too. That was an awful night. John and I were friends. John's brother Frank¹² and I came on together and we were close friends and losing him that way was, that was hard.

KC: Was his body still there when you got there?

TW: No, but it was pretty evident what had happened.

KC: You were called over to the East Side?

TW: Because we had a video camera. That was the first major accident scene in which videotape was used to reconstruct the accident and used in the prosecution in the State. It was unusual, it was different and it was hard.

KC: Was it a successful prosecution?

TW: Oh, yes, it was pretty clear-cut.

KC: How do you debrief from something like that?

¹¹John J. "Dude" O'Brien was appointed patrolman October 26, 1971, and fatally injured when his patrol car was struck by a vehicle that had fled another patrol car April 16, 1981.

¹²Francis Stephen O'Brien was appointed patrolman May 22, 1972; promoted to sergeant October 19, 1981; and retired October 9, 1996.

TW: We used to drink a lot. Even now, when I don't drink a lot, sometimes my wife and I will be with another cop or somebody that I used to work with or a story will come up and she'll say, "You never told me that." Well, "Yeah, I know, you didn't need to know that." Or, at least I didn't think she did. It was my way of kind of protecting her and not letting her worry more than was necessary. But the end result was you did it with other cops because they understood and you did it usually with alcohol. That's not exactly a healthy way to do business, but it was, for the most part, how it was done.

KC: And you had two-man squads for a long time?

TW: Most of that time, yes.

KC: Where you could talk?

TW: Yes.

KC: When they went to one-man squads, when the alcohol laws have tightened up and when just because you have a badge doesn't mean you're not going to be prosecuted, you were still on when all this happened, how do cops process now?

TW: Still in the same way, well, that's not exactly true. There is a lot more thought given now to the idea of the stresses that come with the job and ways to vent it. Physical fitness programs, I mean, nothing like it existed when I started. Being physically fit and having the opportunity to hit a bag and vent some of the frustration and just feel better in general. I think that helps a lot.

When I started there was no Employee Assistance Program. Then for a long time the Employee Assistance Program had kind of a stigma. I don't think that that is true any longer, I think that people have recognized that you do need, at least sometimes, some assistance in dealing with some of the things that are happening in your life. I think that things have changed a lot in a very positive vein. There are people who still won't take advantage of the things that are there for you. They expect to be able to handle them by themselves and most of the time they don't, at least not very well. Those kinds of frustrations are going to come out somewhere. Those kinds of fears are going to come out somewhere. It's going to show itself in some kind of behavior. The other thing I think that has happened since then is supervisors are much better trained than they used to be. They're more aware and they're shown what kind of signs to look for and told that these are things that can bring that can change that kind of behavior. I think things have improved a lot.

KC: When was a time you were afraid?

TW: There was a time that Terry and I got shot at. We were sitting right off of Concordia, right between Iglehart and Concordia on Milton, waiting for a guy who had just fired four shots into the front of a house because he was trying to collect a debt. We were sitting there, we had towed the guy's car, had the lights down low, kind of trying to write a report and we figured he's going to come right down the street because we figured he was dumb. [He'd been at] one bar or another and he was going to come our way. He didn't, he came behind us and he fired two shots at us. One went over Terry's head and one went over mine. We could never find

either bullet, they both went careening across the freeway. We could never find the gun, we could never prove. So that was FRUSTRATING. It was also frightening. In your own city you don't think about being ambushed like that. Well, maybe you do, but you try not to.

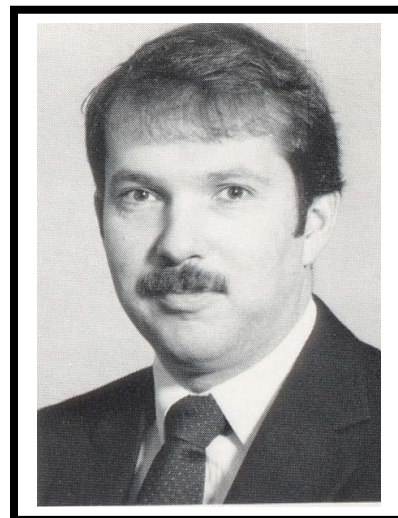
KC: You don't want to. What detail did you move onto after that?

TW: It was shortly after that, in fact, I went inside. I had been on the job for ten years and I realized that this was now going to be a career. I wasn't going to be going someplace else.

KC: You went back to the neighbor and said, "I think I'll stay."

TW: This wasn't a transitional thing any longer. I was halfway to a pension then. I figured, okay, I've got to take this a little more seriously, so I took an administrative post and went inside. And besides, John O'Brien's death was a hard one to take. I thought, *I've got two kids, what the hell, what are you doing? You should go inside and do something else.* So, I did. I took a job as the Administrator of Volunteer Services. I ran the Police Reserve and the Neighborhood Assistance Programs.

c. 1984



I took the test for promotion. Then I got promoted and I spent just about a year inside. I got promoted and the chief, then Bill McCutcheon,¹³ was looking for someone that he called a Community Liaison. He wanted an extrovert, he wanted someone who was not afraid to talk to people and someone who was willing to go into situations where people weren't going to be happy and you had to tell them things they didn't want to hear and you had to be straightforward with them. So, he called me a Community Liaison and I worked in civilian clothes for about two years, two or three years. That was an interesting eye-opening job, because you saw grass roots politics in the City of Saint Paul working about as well as it can work.

I worked with the seventeen district planning councils and I attended all their crime prevention meetings and when things went bad in a given neighborhood, I was expected to make it better. He also had me write a grant for what he wanted to call an Ombuds [ombudsman] Cop. He wanted a police officer to be nothing but a problem-solver, not related necessarily to police work. If there was a woman who was having physical problems, health problems, and because of that might be a victim, I was suppose to get—the Ombuds Cop was supposed to get the public health nurse there. Clean up all the abandoned cars and just improve the neighborhoods in general. The idea being that maybe we can

¹³William Wallace McCutcheon was 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.

get out in front of some of these things. The grant was successful, but the City wouldn't support it, so the granting foundations withdrew their money. So, it was never implemented.

I learned a great deal, had a great time. Met some of the nicest people. I met with Tom Berg from the McKnight Foundation and the Hill Family Foundation and the Northwest Areas Foundation. I learned so much, and I learned so much about writing. I had the best time and I thought the idea really had merit. I thought that we could maybe make a difference doing that kind of thing and I still do. Some good cops are out there still doing those things, it's just harder.

KC: Why didn't the city support it?

TW: The City Council just looked at it and said, no, it's money, can't spend money.

KC: It wasn't their money.

TW: Well, they were going to have to match what the foundations contributed and they were afraid that down the road the foundations weren't going to be there and the city was going to be stuck then with the program and have to support it. That was accurate, but shortsighted, nevertheless.

51:05

KC: This is after ten, thirteen years? Has the culture of the Department changed? Have the attitudes changed?

TW: I think the Department changed a lot. There were women on the job then. I think that was a dramatic change. I think women made the Department maybe a little bit more human, a little more humane. Brought a different

- perspective, I thought that that really did change the Department. It certainly wasn't the only change, but I thought it was a big one.
- KC: Who were some of these women that brought this different style in?
- TW: Your buddy Debbie was the first woman to come through the process.
- KC: Debbie Montgomery¹⁴ came on in 1975.
- TW: I don't know that she changed it much, just because she was so much like one of the guys. People like Nancy DiPerna,¹⁵ Colleen Luna,¹⁶ Mabel Scheremet,¹⁷ who was one of the earliest of those people, a few others.
- KC: Any stories that you can remember where you saw it was different because they were there? I mean, certainly they couldn't just come in and bring in a different energy and things changed. They had to be handling things differently and somehow gaining respect.
- TW: I don't know that they necessarily handled things differently. I think it was more of an attitude. I think it was more you don't have to be superman or super cop. There are other elements that need to be done

¹⁴Deborah Louise Montgomery was the first female to complete the same academy as male recruits and appointed police officer September 8, 1975; the first Black woman promoted to sergeant November 8, 1987; lieutenant May 29, 1998; commander January 1, 2000; senior commander February 8, 2003; retired July 31, 2003; assistant commissioner the Minnesota Department of Public Safety 1991-1998; the first Black woman elected to the Saint Paul City Council in 2004.

¹⁵ Nancy Elizabeth DiPerna was appointed police officer October 31, 1980; promoted to sergeant March 9, 1986; lieutenant May 1, 1990; commander October 4, 1997; senior commander January 1, 2000; assistant chief June 26, 2004.

¹⁶ Colleen Marie Luna was appointed to police officer May 20, 1984; leave of absence February 16, 1989 to April 3, 1989; leave of absence July 12, 1991 to September 3, 1991; promoted to sergeant June 26, 1994; acting lieutenant October 31, 1998; lieutenant March 27, 1999; commander January 1, 2000; senior commander February 3, 2001; acting assistant chief February 1, 2003; reinstated as senior commander June 21, 2003; reinstated commander October 29, 2005.

¹⁷ Mabel J. Scheremet Jesinoski was appointed police officer July 11, 1977; and retired April 14, 2005.

every day and everybody is going to find a role. I think that that helped us get there. Kind of turned a corner, if not a sharp one, at least an oblique one. Not everyone was trying to be Jerry Bahrke,¹⁸ he was one of my heroes. Not everybody was trying to be Kevin Daniels¹⁹, who was this flamboyant cop. Everybody could be a little different. I really think that that, as much as anything, there wasn't a mold that you had to fit. Everybody could be themselves and still perform and contribute.

KC: Now you were on when Debbie came on?

TW: Yes.

KC: What was the scuttlebutt behind the scenes? She was on Rice Street.

TW: That's Central [District]. I was in the Western District for most of that time. She was on Rice Street and I don't know that I heard much about her. By then I think I was inside.

KC: She would have been in the academy of 1975.

TW: Oh, okay, no, I was on the street. I don't remember hearing a lot about Debbie. Nope.

KC: Were there any women, when they started to be more then after that, by '80 there were a number of women. Was there talk about it?

TW: There were people who resented it. There were people who didn't think that women belonged in police work. There were some guys who thought it was great because there were women around. I think that most people recognized that this is the way it's going to be. Just train them as well as

¹⁸ Gerald Charles Bahrke was appointed patrolman November 13, 1967; promoted to Sergeant June 30, 1973; and resigned December 22, 1995.

¹⁹ Kevin Thomas Daniels was appointed patrolman April 1, 1968; and retired August 6, 1993.

we can and make sure they're as proficient as we can, and keep doing our jobs. I think that was MOST people. I guess you'd have to talk to the individual women involved to see what their perspective is. But I don't think that there was a general feeling about whether they should be here or not.

KC: Did the Department do anything to help create an accepting environment?

56.28

TW: Bill McCutcheon was the chief and I think his expectation was that this is a police officer. You're going to accept them as a police officer, you're going to train them, you're going to give them the skills they need and we're going to do our jobs. I think, maybe, that's why most of us felt that way. This is the expectation. This is the way it is. This is what you're going to do. So, I think, again, you'd have to talk to some of the individual people involved, because their perception is considerably different than mine, but that was mine.

KC: In '75, too, so you're barely out from being a rookie cop. There was the court order from Judge Miles Lord.

TW: That was '72.

KC: They didn't have a recruit class for a number of years, so finally the recruit class of '75 required that there be minorities hired.

TW: It took them three years to develop a plan and a test that was acceptable. I was the last of the old test.

57.51

KC: So, bringing in a lot more Black officers, was there any feelings about that?

TW: There was a certain amount of resentment that the testing process was being watered down and that people were not going to be held to the same standard. I think that became pretty evident right away that that wasn't true for the most part. There were people who may have come through who didn't have the skills, but they weren't necessarily Black officers. That had always been true. I think if people took an honest look back, before the Miles Lord decision, there were people that you didn't want writing reports, there were people that you didn't want being at your calls. I think that for most people it wasn't a dramatic change, it was just that for three years we didn't hire anybody and we were short. Those summers, sometimes you'd go to roll call and there would be three squads for an entire district. You'd go *whoa, this is lonesome*. And that was scary.

KC: After your liaison position, community liaison position.

TW: I went back to volunteer services for a year and a-half, because the program was in kind of a state of disarray. They had put an administrator in there that wasn't particularly good and the numbers for recruitment were down. They put me back there with another officer and told me to get the numbers back up because we had some big things coming, including the building of the first ice palace out at Phalen. So, I did that for awhile.

59:41

Then I went to patrol as a supervisor. That was my favorite job. I loved being a patrol boss. If you were going to have an influence on how police services are delivered, it's going to be as a patrol boss, that's the best job there is.

KC: FTO or sergeant over the squads in the field?

TW: Yes.

KC: Are you still working afternoons?

TW: No, I went to days then, which was better because my wife was working full-time and the kids, my oldest was in school and the youngest we made arrangements for daycare, so being home evenings was just a much better deal. I worked mostly days for a couple of years and then I actually did a hitch on midnights, which is where I worked with John [Harrington].

KC: Harrington, the current Chief of Police?

TW: Yup. And, on long cold winter nights, he and I would solve all the world's problems. Then I worked afternoons for about a year and a-half, and then went back to days. Then I did a hitch as an investigator in juvenile and then I went back to patrol and then I went back to juvenile, and that's where I retired.

KC: When you're a street boss, what were some of the experiences that you had that might have been unique to Saint Paul?

TW: I can tell you about one of my favorite episodes. I worked for Larry McDonald,²⁰ he was the captain in charge of the Southwest District. Larry was a fastidious person.

KC: About what year was this?

TW: Must have been about 1992, somewhere right in there.

²⁰Laurence 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.

KC: About the time of change of police chiefs [McCutcheon to Finney]?

TW: Would have been pretty close, it would have been right in there somewhere.

Larry is one of those guys who is very proprietary, if there is something going on in his district, he wants to know what it is and if there's a problem, he wants it solved. We had begun having a series of sexual assaults on Grand Avenue and in the newspaper the guy was called the 'Grand Avenue rapist'. Larry looked back at every case and he noticed *maybe there's something going on here, maybe this guy sets up his victims, scouts them in advance*. He told me it was my problem and it was mine to solve. And, he thought that THIS house on Grand, Grand near Prior, an apartment building, that there might be a potential victim there. He told me that it was mine to solve. OK.

So, it was October, late October, and as I looked through all of the assault cases, it looked like, *okay, this guy does peep in the windows and knows the history of his victims in advance*. So, I set up a detail. I took two guys off the street, we were short anyway, but two guys off the street every night, just before dark. I would put one of them in the garage behind this apartment building and one of them in an unmarked car out in front. We went like that for thirty-four nights. Which was a huge expenditure of manpower. We didn't have it to give, but it was a big issue.

It was frustrating because during that period, about four blocks down Grand, there was another sexual assault. I'm thinking, *I don't know, can we keep doing this?* I thought, *okay, it's getting late in the season, it's now mid-November, it's getting cold, there's snow on the ground, if we don't get this guy pretty quick, we're going to have to call it off until spring.* One night it was really cold and we were really short and I thought, *okay, this is gonna be the last night. I'll sit in the garage, I'll have somebody else sit out front.* And, it's now about 10:30, 11:00 and I'm freezing, I'm sitting in the garage just chattering. I thought, *okay, this has got to be it, lights are going to go off pretty quick anyway, so we're going to call it here pretty quick.* Then I heard a bicycle in the alley and the bike stopped right behind the garage. *Maybe this is it.* Suspect wearing a bomber jacket, matching the description, walked along the side of the house, came back. He had been armed, he had actually taken a shot at one of our police officers during the commission of a burglary, separate event, not a sexual assault, just a property burglary. So, the guy came back along the side of the house and I arrested him. I took him into custody, but all I had was trespass. I couldn't demonstrate that he looked in the window, I couldn't tie him to anything, I had nothing, but I looked at his bike. His bike had the serial number filed off. Possession of stolen property, so we booked him for possession of stolen property, it was a felony.

Took his palm prints which matched the one up on Grand, four blocks down, the previous one where he had a great palm print from a window.

Did a search warrant on his house and found that he had been responsible for thirty-four similar assaults. Richfield, South Minneapolis.

KC: Sexual assaults?

TW: Yes.

KC: How did you find that from the house?

TW: He would take either a cash card or a credit card from the victim and a pair of panties, and he had all of those in his house. So, that one was really gratifying, really satisfying. We invested a huge amount of energy, but it was worth it.

KC: Now, figuring out that there probably was going to be an assault at a particular house, is that intuition, as well as some logic?

106.57

TW: There was a good deal of logic involved. When you look back and you looked at every case and you took every one of them apart. You took all the elements, because you didn't just take the case, you took the history of each of those houses, each of those locations. And, you found there had been prowler calls, there had been other property missing kind of things. It was reasonable to assume that there was going to be some preparation before another assault. There was kind of a rhythm to it as well, it was about every six to eight weeks that there would be an assault. Some of it was intuitive, some of it was just grunt work, police work.

KC: What does it feel like when you're in the middle of that basic grunt work, police work not knowing where you're going?

TW: It's like putting together a puzzle. There are a lot of people who don't take satisfaction in putting together that puzzle, but for those of us who

do, you find an element and you figure, *ah, this fits*. There's a logical progression and you take a lot of satisfaction just from building it.

KC: When you're a street boss, how do you develop your officers?

TW: Every copper²¹ is different and everybody brings different skills. Particularly with the FTO program that we have now, you're able to match people to develop skills that they might not have, but you think they need. And, to emphasize the skills that they do have. For the most part that's an intuitive thing. You go on a call with a person and you see they do this really well, they don't do this as well as you'd like. So, you try to match them up with somebody who can give them those particular skills.

One of the things that supervisors just hate, is the annual performance evaluation. But it is an opportunity to sit down and talk with coppers about the things that they do well, and the things that they don't do well. One of the things that I learned from John [Harrington], because I'm such an instinctive person, you know. John would take the mechanics and say, "We've got numbers that support this." And, I'd say, "Yeah, that's cool, okay." And then you see this part as well, so if we meld these together we can get a really good picture of what this copper is doing and tell him, "Thanks, you're doing this well." And, "You're not doing this so well, so let's work on it." I came to like doing those, I really did.

²¹ "Copper" or "cop" comes from the copper buttons worn on law enforcement uniforms. The copper buttons remain a consistent part of the Saint Paul Police uniform.

KC: You would work with officers for a number of years, were you able to keep them in your district?

TW: You tried to. Some of them you didn't want to keep so much, but most of them, because you got used to the way that this person does their job and you could give a person an assignment and know that it was going to be done, sometimes you check on them, sometimes you didn't, because you knew it was going to be done, it really didn't matter.

110:47

KC: Any stories that you remember about an officer that you were able to redevelop in a way that was gratifying.

TW: Reinvigorate?

KC: Yes.

TW: Yeah. Ron Whitman²². Whitman is just an interesting guy, very smart and very nice man. He's got some health problems now and he's inside. You could tell he wasn't having fun. The job wasn't fun anymore and I gave him maybe a little more responsibility and a little more opportunity to see what he could do. And, boy, he responded, he really did. In fact, he was with me the night we caught that guy on Grand Avenue. He was somebody whose judgment I really trusted and I told him, "I trust that you're going to make good decisions and if I'm going to be there, having you there will be good, too." I think that I made the job a lot more fun for him and rewarding and I think he was better as a police officer.

²² Ronald Robert Whitman was appointed provision police officer November 1, 1982; certified police officer March 27, 1983; transferred to crime lab November 9, 1996.

KC: You've mentioned a number of your partners. What makes a good partner relationship?

TW: Somebody you trust. Somebody you know isn't going to start something the two of you can't finish. Somebody who is never going to embarrass you. Somebody you can share more than just the job with, you have to have interests beyond police work that you share, and I'm not talking about even outside the job, but you've got to be able to talk about things besides *we're going to go find this guy* or *we're going to go do . . .* you spend a lot of time in the squad car together, you've got to have a relationship that's a lot broader than just about being cops. Although, trust is an integral item on a list and confidence that he's going to not start something that you can't finish and never going to embarrass you.

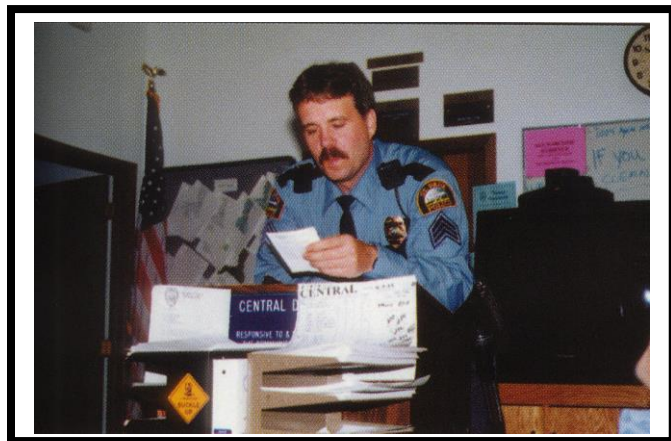
KC: Any stories that you remember where you made a decision to ask for a change of partners?

TW: I never did. Weston, after we'd been together for about three years, he decided it was time to go do something different. When we first experimented with team policing, it was something new and something different, and he wanted to go try that. He was tired of working the hill and thought that this might be an adventure, so he went over there. Dale Kangas and I worked together for about a year and then we went into team policing citywide. So, people were scattered, the whole landscape changed. Then I worked with Terry for just about five years. I really only had about three partners in that whole time.

KC: When you were a boss, you didn't have a partner, you were in a squad alone.

TW: Not for the most part, yes, you work alone. Harrington and I were the two midnight shift supervisors for a long time in Southwest. And then I worked with Mike Lofgren²³ a lot. When I was a Central day boss, I worked with Jerry Vick.²⁴ That was a great experience, because he was a wonderfully funny man. I miss him even now. He and I were the two FTO coordinators for the district. Jerry was just diligent about making sure that people had skills. He wanted to make sure that, “okay, this is something that we can’t document, that this person is going to be able to do, so let’s go do it.”

We’d go do training exercises, we’d do mock robbery calls and felony car stops and make sure that everybody had everything that they needed.



Vick in Central roll call room

KC: So formalized training exercises where everybody knew that it was a training exercise or you just kind of set things up?

²³ Michael Joseph Lofgren was appointed patrolman March 23, 1970; promoted to sergeant January 17, 1981; and retired July 6, 1999.

²⁴ 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.

TW: No, we just set things up. Go off in a parking lot someplace and go do it.

KC: Tell me the story of it.

TW: We had a young officer who had never made a felony car stop and it was getting toward the end of his training period, so Jerry, who always had a wig, he had this little baseball cap with a wig attached. He could transform—he could be the 3M executive in a three button suit or he could be a meth head. He had the whole spectrum. He could be anybody you need. Anyway, he had this little wig and baseball cap on and he had a grungy old car and he's speeding down Rice Street. We had the squad follow him into a parking lot and make a felony car stop and the kid did okay. Jerry could be so contrary, he could just be as difficult as anybody, as noncompliant. [Emotional pause] but he was very careful to make sure that everybody had, at least, an opportunity to find out if they had the skill that was going to be needed.

KC: Tell me more Jerry Vick stories.

TW: There are dozens. We had an arsonist over on the West Side and it was our job to go find him. Jerry took one group and I took another group and we'd break it up and we'd put them on bikes. It's late at night and you can get places quietly, quickly on bikes. Jerry would get very tired, he's a big guy, it's all hills over there. He thought I was nuts because of this project, but eventually we found the guy. Jerry would do anything, he was an adventurous kid.

KC: He was younger than you were?

TW: Oh, yeah, yeah, much. Like twenty years, very close anyway.

KC: How did you build the rapport with him?

TW: You didn't, it just happened. You'd have to meet him just once, he was one of the most affable, likeable, just fun people to be around that you'll ever encounter. At the same time, he was very diligent and he was very meticulous about making sure that things were done.

KC: So he was a manager that you trusted?

TW: Oh, yes. Jerry was good at every aspect of being a police officer. He worked in the street crimes [unit] for quite awhile and stories that came out of there about his work and his ability to cause dopers to trust him. He had that kind of face, people responded to him, they trusted him, they believed him.

KC: That he was a good guy, so he would stand out?

TW: Oh, yes. And, once you knew who he was, he's hard to forget.

KC: What was another one of his creative things?

TW: We had a series of robberies, purse snatchers and muggings in bus stops in downtown Saint Paul. And Jerry took out his trusty baseball cap and wig and he'd sit in bus stops pretending to be drunk. Hoping somebody would try to assault him and we'd have a couple guys close by. And they did. Cleaned up the problem, he was very creative, he was not afraid of trying something different.

KC: What was it like when you heard [he had been killed]?

TW: It broke my heart.

KC: How did you hear?

TW: I got a call the next morning from one of the guys still working. I was on this other job for the [Federal] Marshall [at the Federal Court House in

Saint Paul], and before I left for work, one of the kids who used to work for me called me, he says “I don’t want you to hear it on the news.” So that’s how I learned.

KC: How do they handle that with retired officers for the funeral? Was there a detail where you all could be [together]?

TW: Yes. There was a spot for people in civilian clothes and there must have been, I don’t know, had to be close to a hundred of us.

120:57

KC: You came on right after Sackett?

TW: Yes, 1972, so about a year and a-half, almost two years.

KC: You’ve seen a number of Saint Paul’s finest lose their lives in the line of duty? What’s that like?

TW: [Long Emotional pause] That’s really hard to describe. There’s an emptiness, it’s not just a sadness. A reminder that you’re vulnerable, also. I think, emptiness is the best way to describe it. When Ryan²⁵ and Jones²⁶ died, after Ronnie was killed we set up a perimeter on the East Side around the area where we thought Baker might be.

KC: You were over there?

TW: Yes. I was in juvenile at the time, so I was in plain clothes and I had a shotgun that I had taken out of somebody’s squad car. One of Tim’s favorite people on the job, Kevin Moore, came by and we talked for a

²⁵ Ronald Michael Ryan, Jr. was appointed police officer January 23, 1993; fatally injured by gunfire while responding to a “slumper” call August 26, 1994.

²⁶ 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.

couple minutes and he said, "Nipper's dead." [Emotional pause] That was really ugly.

KC: You have a gun, you're on duty, do you get to stop and cry?

TW: No, not then. The first thing you do is you think about, *okay, we're on this perimeter hopefully he's still inside, but if he isn't, where is he? What's our next action going to be, what can we do that's going to put this to rest?* You don't think about the rest of it until later.

KC: Tim Jones was a friend, too?

TW: Yup. I didn't know Ron Ryan real well. I knew his old man [Ron Ryan Sr.²⁷] real well, but I didn't know him as well, I knew him, we'd met, but I didn't know him as well. But his dad was a good friend, still is. Tim 'Nipper' he was one of my favorites, he was a good guy.

KC: I've seen two of the funerals. I was at Tim Jones and I was at Sergeant Vick's. What is it like standing in parade formation with all of the other five hundred and some finest from Saint Paul?

TW: I think it reminds you, again, that you're vulnerable, but at the same time that there's a closeness. That it is in many ways a family, dysfunctional in many ways, but nonetheless a family. And you do draw support from those other people.

KC: What specific support was given? I mean, were you able to reach out and talk about it?

TW: Oh, we all talked about it, absolutely. And, you also question, you know, what motivates someone to do what Guy Harvey Baker did [in killing

²⁷ Ronald Michael Ryan, Sr. was appointed patrolman June 26, 1968; promoted to sergeant May 8, 1972; lieutenant March 30, 1990; commander January 1, 2000; and retired April 29, 2005.

Ryan and Jones]. You analyze it yourself, trying to figure out if had you been in that position, would it have been different. You can't help but think about it, and, of course, in thirty years of being a police officer you probably would have walked up to three- or four hundred of those cars, you'd probably done the same thing, at least that many times. It reminds you that you were vulnerable every time you did it.

KC: When we met before this interview, you talked about religious practices. How does your religious or spiritual faith make a difference in being a police officer?

TW: I don't know that it does. I'm not a particularly religious person. I like to think of myself as a very spiritual person. I don't know that religion as such, it wasn't an aid to me. I was born Catholic, I'm still Catholic, but I think religion, I think churches, I think the structures that built up around all these wonderful teachings oftentimes are as much the problem as they are the solution. I think that fundamentalism, whether it's Islam or Judaism or Christianity, is dangerous because so many things are defined in such absolutes. I don't think absolutes and police work are necessarily compatible. There's just too much gray in the world.

There are absolutes right and wrong, don't misunderstand, but at the same time you can put too much authority in someone's hands. I think that sometimes religion does that. As an example, there's a chaplain, not with Saint Paul, I believe he's in Minneapolis and a fundamentalist. He used to tell us that if we killed someone in the line of duty that we were the arm of God, the hand of God, striking this person down. This isn't

about that kind of justice. This is a secular society in which there are rules that we have to live by. And, there are the consequences of those actions and you have to live with your own decisions and to be so cavalier about the idea of taking someone's life, I think is, *ah, we don't need this person around here*. This is much less basic, this is a little more sophisticated than those black and white lines.

KC: I always thought that this was the law and, you know, if there was a law which is black or white, it would be enforced and police every day are making decisions about when they're going to enforce the law or not. Is that something that you trained by your FTO or is it just something that you learn to innately understand.

TW: It's not just training, I mean, it's fundamental to the idea of police work. You're never going to be able to catch every criminal and you're never going to be able to, even if you could catch them all, you couldn't punish them all. There are times when you simply make a decision that says, *this is better for society, this is better for the agency, this is better for all of us, if we kind of tuck this one away, we'll use it later*. Obviously, you don't do that with major incidents, but you can do it with the minor stuff. and maybe you can develop a rapport, maybe you can do something constructive instead of just that black and white issue. Maybe you can actually change something. Maybe you can learn something that's going to be much more valuable down the road, and I think every good cop has done that.

129:54

KC: How does home life change when another officer is killed in the line of duty? Does it make a difference to kids, to wives?

TW: I think in some houses it really, really does. In mine, I'm not so certain that it did, because I tried to keep that insulation between what I did for a living and my life, which was, my family and my friends. I think that it certainly had an impact, but I think it was less than in some other households. That's just an instinct that I have, I don't know that I can demonstrate that in any way, but I think that that's the case.

KC: I think what I'm hearing you say is a lot of the day to day of what goes on in your police work, you didn't go home and tell your wife?

TW: Yes, or my kids.

KC: So, they knew dad went out and did a job, knew what the title was, but no idea of what was done.

TW: Yes. My daughter is particularly funny, she went to Central High School and periodically there would be some event and she needed a ride. If I was working, I'd pick her up in a squad car and take her home. She loved that, she said, "Yeah, I love it dad, because it keeps all the dirt bags away from me."

For the most part, it was a job, they were quite confident that at the end of the day, I was going to be coming home. I don't think that those things had the impact on them that it had on some other families. And maybe, maybe I should have been more open. Maybe more of that stuff should have been shared, it might have been less wear and tear.

KC: Less wear and tear on your or less wear and tear on your wife?

TW: On me. I'm not going to say she never worried about it, but I don't think it was a focus. For example, she didn't find out that we were shot at until

just a couple years ago. It's one of those things, I figured it was just better not to share.

KC: I've had officers tell me that a lot of their relationships are within the police family because you're working odd hours and when somebody finds out what you do, some people distance themselves. Did you do that or do you have a lot of relationships outside of the police family?

TW: I had a lot of relationships outside of the police department. Part of that, I think is that music has always been a part of my life, I still sing. We sing with other groups of people and that's how my wife and I met, was singing, so it's something that we still share. I have other interests, it wasn't the one thing that defined me, I don't think. I won't say at all that it didn't influence me or didn't change me, but it wasn't the only influence in my life. There were other things that were going on. I was less focused on the police group than a lot of other coppers. It wasn't our only social vent, there were lots of other things going.

KC: Tom, how do you keep the balance? Because I hear you say that you have and, yet, I've heard other officers – how do you keep the balance when you go to work, it can be exciting,

TW: Of it can be exciting

KC: It can be a charge, it can be thrilling.

TW: It can be depressing.

KC: It can be depressing, I mean, you are seeing people at sometimes their most exciting points in their lives and at their deepest sorrow and their most painful. I can feel that you have a very big heart, so to have the big

heart to connect with people like you did, and yet to have balance in your life where that doesn't encompass you.

TW: I don't know how that happens, I'm not sure. Part of it, I think, is just that I had a very strong support system outside of the Department. I think that that's a big piece of it. The Department was not my only source of support or entertainment or recreation or any of those kind of things. And, I don't know that you do it on purpose, I don't know that. I think we should be, because I think having that broader perspective is healthy, I think it helps.

It's odd, because having said that, I still get calls from people in the neighborhood saying, "Okay, this just happened, what do I do?" I'm the resident authority on what happens if you've been the victim or there's some calamity or there's some problem in the neighborhood. A few years ago there was a murder out in White Bear. This has nothing to do with us, this is not related to Saint Paul at all and not related to our Department, but a friend of the victim called me and said, "This is what happened, what's going to happen now?" So, I went through the process with her and I told her what was going to happen. She knew who the victim was, and we knew who the suspect was. I made a couple quick phone calls and found out some things that weren't for public consumption. So, then she felt a little better. I don't have the uniform any longer, but I still have that big brother thing going on. [Laughs] Part of it is just that I am, in fact, an extrovert and I like people. I like meeting people and if I can do something positive for them, I like that, too.

KC: How does an extrovert, because I'm an extrovert, one of my favorite sayings for an extrovert is, *A joy not shared is cut in half*.

TW: Oh, yes, exactly.

KC: And, *A sorrow not shared, is twice as hard*. So how does an extrovert have these hard things happen on the job and find enough places to talk about them? Where did you cry when the Nipper [Tim Jones] was killed?

TW: Oh, at home, yes.

And at Ryan's funeral, oh god, I was just a puddle. There's a song called the The Minstrel Boy. The lyric is, "The minstrel boy to the war has gone, in the ranks of death you'll find him. His father's sword he hath girded on, and his wild harp slung behind him." That was played on the bagpipes. Well, I'm singing the lyric because it's an old Irish song and god, we got to the part where his father's sword he hath girded on, because Ronnie is a good friend, and I just bawled. I was standing there in ranks. People couldn't figure it out. There were just huge tears. [Pause] There are times, but for the most part, you focus on the parts that make you laugh, and there are lots of those, too.

KC: Tell me a story about one that made you laugh.

TW: I was a patrol boss in Western District and went by the corner of Selby and Milton and there were two kids standing on the corner. They were people that I knew and probably had dope in their pockets and this kid, a White kid from the burbs, in a Volvo station wagon, is driving around the block. I ran the license plate and it came back to Edina. I'm thinking, *do I want to make an arrest here? How am I going to solve this problem?* So, I stopped the kid and he says, "I'm going into the Salvation Army thrift

shop.” I said, “Are you, come on let’s go.” So we went into the Salvation Army thrift shop and I said, “You got money in your pocket?” He says, “Yeah, I’ve got a hundred dollars.” He had five twenty dollar bills, which is the currency of [a dope buy]. Well, he bought sheets, he bought --- I made him spend the hundred dollars and the Salvation Army people were happy, they had a hundred dollars and the kid walked away without his dope, he had sheets. [Laughter] So that one made me laugh. I enjoyed that a lot. All the transaction. A little creativity, a little problem-solving. I kind of like that.

140:41

KC: [Laughs] What was your favorite year?

TW: Oh boy, I don’t know. Probably a couple years before I retired. I was working with—day boss with Jerry Vick. Nancy DiPerna was our boss, had a great crew and the job had really become fun again. It was just a good time. If there was a problem, I was expected to solve it. I could take whatever resources I needed and the expectation was that we were going to do as many positive things with the resources that we had as we could do. And, boy it was fun, it was fun to go to work every day. It really was. All I had to do was keep people apprised of what we were doing.

KC: Was this a new management style?

TW: Not for Nancy DiPerna, that’s kind of the way she does things. I had just come out of juvenile, which was a different kind of hard work. There have never been enough people assigned to the juvenile unit and it can really grind you down.



Nancy DiPerna
c. 1999

I had done just about four years there and it was enough. I was ready to do something else. And then get back in a squad car and chase people around and put people in jail that was like being a kid again. It really was, it was a very good time. We had a brand new bunch of kids come through Josh Lego,²⁸ Dylan Flenniken²⁹ and a bunch of vigorous kids. God, they were fun. All you had to do was steer them in the right direction. It was such a good time.

KC: What do you miss about being in the Department?

TW: Maybe some of that camaraderie thing. There's an old saying, "I miss the clowns, not the circus." I think that that's true, there were people there that I became very good friends with. Guys like Dan Moriarty³⁰, who is one of God's funniest human beings. And Joe Younghans³¹, who I really came to respect and enjoy, and there were several others. John Harrington, I don't get to see John very often anymore and that's kind of a shame.

I see Kenny McIntosh,³² he and I work together now. He's one of my favorite human beings. I miss some of the people. The contact is

²⁸ Joshua Todd Lego was appointed police officer October 7, 1996; promoted sergeant October 13, 2001.

²⁹ Dylanger John Flenniken was appointed police officer April 5, 1999; acting sergeant October 26, 2002; reinstated police officer February 1, 2003; acting sergeant February 7, 2004; police officer January 21, 2006.

³⁰ Daniel George Moriarty was appointed police officer March 27, 1983; promoted to sergeant July 13, 1996.

³¹ Joseph Daniel Younghans was appointed police officer March 13, 1978; promoted to sergeant March 1, 1990; and retired May 30, 2003.

³² Kenneth Wayne McIntosh was appointed police officer September 8, 1975; promoted to sergeant May 4, 1989; and retired December 27, 2002.

different, the way you deal with people on the street. Sometimes my wife describes me as being pathologically social. But I'm not averse to striking up a conversation with someone on the street. It's a lot easier to do if you got that blue suit on. They don't think you're after their money or trying to hit them for a date or something, they look at you differently when you strike up a conversation out of nowhere.

KC: How did thirty years with Saint Paul PD make you who you are today?

TW: I don't know. I'm certainly different than I was thirty years ago. I'm more confident than I was. I am less cocky. I am more tolerant, I think that I'm much more tolerant than I would have been thirty years ago there. My son is twenty-seven now and he and I have conversations and he has absolute ideas. I think, you know, sounds a lot like me thirty years ago. We arrive at those conclusions in a much different process, he and I. My kid is much smarter than I am. He went to MIT, majored in math, clearly that's no place for me. And, again, the process by which he arrived at his conclusions is different than the one that I followed. But oftentimes the opinions are very similar and I'm thinking, *yeah, I looked at the world a lot like that thirty years ago also*. So, I'm more tolerant of him as well, because he'll change.

KC: If you were to look at the culture in Saint Paul Police, compared to the suburb across the river, compared to other departments in the State, is there a difference? Is this just another law enforcement department?

TW: Oh, no. It's clearly different. I think one of the best measures of that, is the people who come here from other departments. They come here and they tell you how different the culture is. It's always been my belief that

the culture is different, but they tell you how different it is. We've got people from Fridley, from Minneapolis, from Oakdale, from Roseville, from State Patrol, from all over. They tell you that the expectations are different.

KC: In what way?

TW: You're expected to function on your own, without close supervision and take care of the problem. If there's a problem, you're expected to take care of it. If you can't, then you get the help that you need, but you don't walk away leaving something to fester. I think there's generally an expectation that performance levels are going to be higher.

If you talk to coppers on the job now, they'd tell you that the sense of camaraderie that we had ten or fifteen years ago isn't as strong as it was then. But there is still a real bond and, I think, there's a closeness that's different than other departments. Other departments, I think, are protective of each other, this one is protective of itself. But, every officer expects the other officer to his job. And, again, not embarrass you, not get you into something that you can't finish. I think that that's kind of the heritage.

If you look back at the history of this Department, the guys who came on after World War II, they came back and they had an expectation. Things were going to be different, things were going to be better. The idea of the corruption of the 1920s and '30s, was simply not going to be tolerated, and they came back with the skills to make sure that it wasn't. They set the

bar high, the expectation is that everybody is going to maintain that level. It's been that when since the 1950s, the early '50s and, I think it continues. Part of it's the FTO program. Part of it's the choir practices, you get together and you share the experience. And, again, some of that's changed, but there clearly isn't nearly the drinking that used to go on, but they're still a pretty close group.

149:30

KC: The community seems to have a different relationship with the officers. Why is that? Saint Paul, when we lose an officer, [as citizens] we show up, we grieve. The day after Jerry Vick died, there were some other Saint Paul people and we were talking about it and someone walked up and said, "What's going on? Who died?" And, we said, "One of Saint Paul's finest." And, he goes, "Who cares." Minneapolis said, "Who cares." What makes Saint Paul different?

TW: If you go back to when Jerry Hoff was killed, there was a general, I think, sense of support from the community in Minneapolis, as well. Those things, I think, tend to bring that out. But I think there's a different atmosphere in Saint Paul, period.

The political system is different. The chief in Minneapolis, for example, you could be a sergeant one day and the chief the next if you back the right political horse, political candidate for mayor. That has never been true here. Politics are less involved, the Department is less involved in politics and, hopefully, the administrators from the Department are less political in the way they manage. So, there's a different level of trust

between the administrators of the police department and the coppers. I think that's part of what happens between the police officers, the coppers themselves, and the citizens. Different level of expectation and you meet it. I think that's a big piece of it.

And, the other piece is one of the things I talked about earlier, those police officers that came back after World War II. They had a whole different image. They wanted their City and their Department, the department that they worked for, to be something that they could be proud of. They really did make a difference, they made it. The Dick Rowans,³³ and McCutcheons,³⁴ and Dick Feiders,³⁵ a whole bunch of those people, they set high standards, and that's still out there.

KC: You knew from the first day of the academy there were high standards you had to live up to?

TW: You bet, that was made clear. You weren't just a civil servant, you were somebody who people were placing their trust in. They were paying you a lot of money, relatively, and they expected you to do the job you were given.

³³Richard H. Rowan (1922-2005) was appointed patrolman October 13, 1947; promoted detective June 20, 1965; deputy chief April 17, 1964; chief June 30, 1970; and retired December 31, 1979.

³⁴William Wallace McCutcheon was 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 January 1, 1980; and retired July 15, 1992.

³⁵Richard Milton Feider was appointed patrolman November 1, 1949; promoted sergeant June 25, 1965; acting lieutenant January 1, 1984; reinstated April 1, 1984; acting lieutenant December 14, 1989; reinstate sergeant March 18, 1990; and retired January 31, 1991. Sergeant Feider was president of the Saint Paul Police Federation 1963 - 1967. His file includes many thank you letters from citizens, organizations, universities, mayors and governors, state officials and the legislature.

KC: So you knew from the first day in the academy that there were high standards that you were going to live up to?

TW: You bet, that was made clear, you weren't just a civil servant. You were somebody people were placing their trust in and they were paying you a lot of money, relatively, and they expected you to do the job that you were given.

KC: Saint Paul's finest is a term that I've heard rarely used, but used. Is that part of the sense within the Department?

TW: I don't know, I don't know that, you know, its New York's finest or San Francisco finest or whoever's finest [police].

I think the sense of what you are as a police officer in Saint Paul is different than that, and I think that that comes from the other coppers. I think that comes from the FTO program, I think that that comes from doing the job and I think that that comes from having good supervisors. Most of the patrol bosses are just excellent. Over thirty years I had some supervisors that I really had no regard or respect for, but not many. Most of them I really liked and respected, which is much more important.

KC: Did you do anything to help get rid of an officer that didn't meet the standards?

TW: Yeah, oh yeah. In the FTO program you'd keep that documentation and say that this person is not making progress on these standards, on these things that we expect any police officer to be able to do. And, make sure that it was well documented and you'd retrain them, give them another opportunity and if they didn't make it, sorry.

KC: Did you ever receive any pressure from higher up to keep an officer because they were a minority or a female?

TW: I didn't experience that. Sometimes those decisions weren't made at my level, the final decision. That doesn't mean that the documentation wasn't there or that we didn't, at least, do everything within our power to make sure that the skill level is what we expect.

I want to tell you one quick story about that. Tim Erickson³⁶, one of the guys I worked for a long, long time ago, he's one of the brightest people I've ever known, just an extraordinary guy. He used to say that leadership is easy. He said that people would follow you to the gates of hell if you had two things in place, you had a good reason to go there and some kind of a plan to bring them back. He said it was very simple. That was his approach to the job, and I would have followed him to the gates of hell. Not a problem.

KC: Any last stories that you want to share with me?

TW: I think we've covered them.

KC: Any last Vick stories?

TW: I think if you were going to get more Jerry Vick stories then you should go talk to Matt Toupal³⁷, his old partner and his best friend. He's got dozens of them. Or, if you have the opportunity, Dan Moriarty, who is one of God's funniest people and also an extraordinarily good patrol boss. He's

³⁶ Timothy Eugene Erickson was appointed patrolman May 5, 1969; promoted to sergeant October 10, 1973; and retired July 6, 1989.

³⁷ Matthew Louis Toupal was appointed police officer September 18, 1989; promoted to sergeant February 12, 2000.

working in the West District as an afternoon boss now and he was a great instinctive police officer. If there was something going on, he was darn close to it.

KC: Is he able to translate that?

TW: Oh, he's a great story teller, yes, and a funny, funny man.

KC: Can he translate the skills? Can he help other people develop that intuitiveness?

TW: Yes. Jerry Vick worked for him for a long time, and I think one of the reasons that Jerry's creativity flourished the way it did was because of Moriarty. He's a worrywart, but very good at trusting people and, again, making sure that the job gets done.

KC: You had mentioned author Terry Pratchett books that talk about "The Watch" — "THE COPS."

TW: It's a fantasy, it's about the Discworld, which is a place that's very difficult to describe. But he writes about the watch, who are the police officers in this community and he makes the observation that it only works because the citizens let it. And, I think, when we were talking about the difference between the City of Saint Paul and its police department and its relationship with its citizens and some other cities, that the cops here have either been taught or either understand instinctively that it only works because the citizens let it. The relationship between them is based on that. So, I think that that's probably one of the most profound differences between Saint Paul and some other agencies.

158:23

KC: Tom, thank you, thank you for making a difference in my city for as long as you did.

Retirement

