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MR. WILLIAM WALSH

An Interview Conducted by

Carl Mosher

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William Walsh

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Mr. William Walsh

Born October 15, 1935 in San Francisco.

Resident of Mill Valley since 1940.

Interviewed October, 1978 in the
Mill Valley Public Library.

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WILLIAM WALSH

Carl Mosher

This is Carl Mosher, talking to Mill Valley Police Chief William Walsh. The date is October 10, 1978. Let's go back to the beginning, Bill, and talk about where you were born and when and how you came to Mill Valley.

William Walsh

I was born in San Francisco, October 15, 1935. I'm an only child, the son of William and Astrid Walsh. When I was about four years old we moved to Mill Valley, at 230 Evergreen in Homestead Valley. My parents still live there. I was raised there and attended Homestead School, Park School, and Old Mill School. I graduated from Park in 1949.

Mr. Mosher

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Walsh

He's a commercial artist, a sign painter.

Mr. Mosher

Is he retired?

Mr. Walsh

He's semiretired now. During the Second World War he worked in the shipyards at Marinship, and since that time he has worked in the county as a sign painter. I attended Tamalpais High School from 1950 to 1954 and then went on to College of Marin. I was hired as a police officer by Police Chief James McGowan in July 1957. Since that time I've moved through the ranks--sergeant, lieutenant, captain. I was appointed police chief in November 1972. In July 1976 I was promoted to director of police and fire services, a position I now hold. I have the responsibility of both the police and fire departments.

Mr. Mosher

Isn't that an unusual arrangement?

Mr. Walsh

Yes, it is. There are only about five or six cities in California that have one administrator for both departments. I think we're going to be seeing more of it, with the money problems that cities are facing currently, but right now Mill Valley's one of about six or seven cities that have created that position.

Mr. Mosher

There are some obvious financial advantages. Are there any other advantages?

Mr. Walsh

There are advantages in that the two departments work closer together in arson investigations and enforcement of fire codes and other building codes.

Mr. Mosher

I wouldn't think it could be done in a very big city. It would be overwhelming.

Mr. Walsh

There would be a point of diminishing returns, that's correct.

Mr. Mosher

What memories do you have of your early days in school here? I see you came here at age four, so you've been here through a very interesting period, including World War Two.

Mr. Walsh

I think my earliest recollection of Homestead Valley was that there was just a graveled road. Evergreen was not paved; it was a graveled road. I could leave my parents' residence and walk up to Mount Tam or onto the surrounding hills without going through yards. There were a lot of open fields. Today, of course, it's built up and fenced and all the roads are paved. The other thing that is quite noticeable is the automobile. In the forties there were very few cars that were parked on the streets. Most people had one car, if they had a car, and it would be parked in

the garage. Currently people have two and three cars; the narrow streets are cluttered with cars. It makes the streets difficult to traverse.

Mr. Mosher

I guess there are multiple residents in many of the houses, too. It's one of the by-products of inflation, I'm told, that in order to pay these high rents there are often two or three people living there. They each have cars, and that probably complicates it further.

Mr. Walsh

That and second units. A lot of the older homes have been divided and have an additional rental without off-street parking. That adds to it.

Up until about fifteen or twenty years ago the railroad came through the center of town, up between Miller Avenues, and there was a daily train that we could jump onto to get to the show. Mill Valley has changed considerably since the 1940s when I was growing up.

Mr. Mosher

You just mentioned one of the more interesting differences. The passenger trains were discontinued when? During World War Two?

Mr. Walsh

I don't remember the passenger trains.

Mr. Mosher

These were freights you're talking about?

Mr. Walsh

These were regular freight trains. For example they would bring gravel to Dowd's Moving and Storage. Dowd sold sand and gravel. The train would also bring lumber to the lumberyard on Miller Avenue and other supplies to Varney's Hardware.

Mr. Mosher

So the atmosphere was very different then than it is now. Everything was slower, obviously. I wanted to ask one other thing, to go back to your schooling for just a second before we continue about Mill Valley. What was your major at College of Marin?

Mr. Walsh

It was Police Science.

Mr. Mosher

When did you first get interested in that?

Mr. Walsh

After I graduated from Tamalpais High School I worked for a neighbor, Al von der Werth, who had the Greenbrae Shake Mill. While I was working for him I went into the Marine Corps Reserve, which was an obligation that all young men had at age eighteen. They either had to go into the service or go into the reserves. So I went into the Marine Corps Reserve, and I had training there.

When I became twenty-one I knew several of the policemen: Carl Mead, Ed O'Connor, Eddie Grigg. We would hunt and fish together. It was when I was twenty-one that Chief McGowan asked me if I would be interested in joining the police department. After considering it for some time I agreed to give it a try, and so here I am.

Mr. Mosher

What other alternative did you have in mind? There's no heritage of police work in your family, apparently. Or maybe there is, going back farther.

Mr. Walsh

No. I thought in those days that it was exciting work. I have always enjoyed helping and assisting people, and I felt that it was the type of work which would be self-rewarding. The pay was not an attraction; the attraction was to work in a community where I grew up and to help people. Those were my motives for joining the department.

Mr. Mosher

So you had a real sense of social service. It's always a combination of things, of course, when people make choices. You're not exactly the type that most of us think of as a typical policeman. For some reason there's a belief in the land (I think it's considered as common wisdom) that policemen are always in a twilight zone between the criminal world and the straight society, and that really they almost have to be so they understand both. You wouldn't qualify by any stretch of the imagination in that area. I just wonder what your view of that conventional wisdom is?

Mr. Walsh

I don't know if I'm going to answer this correctly. I don't judge myself by other policemen. I'm sure that a lot of policemen have the traits you describe. My motives and my desires are to continue a department that has a long history of working very closely with the community. This was one of Chief McGowan's strong desires. And Dan Terzich, who became chief in 1961, had this desire to have a department that worked very closely with the community. I have attempted to continue that policy.

Mill Valley is an exciting place to work. People are very concerned about their community; they're concerned about their city government and their public employees. I know we have the support of the community, and we attempt to satisfy their needs. In contrast to a community with a transitory population, Mill Valley is a cul-de-sac with a family-type atmosphere. We're dealing with and working with people that live and stay in the community.

Mr. Mosher

I guess that would be one of the chief differences between police work in the community and the big city-- although here I guess it would be somewhat different because we're so close to a big city. Do you have pretty close contact with the comparable services in San Francisco?

Mr. Walsh

We work very closely with police departments in nearby cities, including San Francisco. Mill Valley is a rich community with high personal incomes. It is a bedroom community from which people commute to San Francisco to work. This combination attracts burglars from other communities. One of our more serious crimes is burglary. When burglars come in, they are coming into a wealthy community. It's a wooded community, it's easy to burglarize homes without being seen, so we are attracting this criminal element from outside. Thus we work very closely with San Francisco and other nearby police departments to resolve these problems.

Mr. Mosher

Nothing new about that, I guess. Maybe it's accentuated now. Everything's sort of bigger and speeded up. What you're saying about the crime situation reminds me that there's been sort of a rash, at least according to the paper, of home burglaries lately. It seems to involve young kids, rather than professionals, I understand.

I think that's a whole kind of separate subject, isn't it? Juvenile crime? I imagine you have some very marked ideas on that.

Mr. Walsh

We do have our share of juvenile crime. What you're discussing now is more or less an isolated incident. Periodically a group of kids will get together and get off on the wrong foot and burglarize homes. We had a case just a month ago where we arrested five children for several residential burglaries. A week later we also arrested a man in his middle twenties for more than forty burglaries in southern Marin, so we have both.

The one unique situation in Mill Valley is that we have approximately six schools that have a combined population of more than four thousand children. These children come from throughout southern Marin into the city limits of Mill Valley to go to school.

Mr. Mosher

You're not speaking of schools in Mill Valley strictly, are you? Did you say four thousand students? Or did I misunderstand you? Were you talking about all of Marin?

Mr. Walsh

No, I'm talking about the schools within the city limits of Mill Valley: Tamalpais High School, Middle School, Alto-Maguire School, Park School, Mt. Carmel School and Old Mill School. The combined population of these schools when they're in session is approximately four thousand children.

Mr. Mosher

You don't say! I just wouldn't have dreamed there were that many.

Mr. Walsh

It's quite a responsibility to impose on a community, to have that many schools within the city limits and to have the children for the most part come from throughout southern Marin to attend the schools. This creates an additional burden in forms of traffic safety and all the related problems that you have with a population like this. I think Tamalpais High School alone has eighteen hundred students, or it did have a few years back.

Mr. Mosher

Those enrollments are larger than I thought they were. Back to the juvenile crime business, though. Do you handle the juvenile situation in any unusual way here, or just the way it's normally handled?

Mr. Walsh

I think we handle it in an unusual way. More and more departments are moving into what we call juvenile diversion programs. The routine way to handle a juvenile matter would be this: A child would come in contact with the police department for a particular crime. He'd be arrested and cited to appear at the Marin County Probation Department. Instead, what we are attempting to do for children that come before us for their first offense, or minor offenses, is to handle it within the department. We have the position of juvenile officer, headed by Sergeant Jerry Harmon. He works with the children, meets with the parents, and follows up on a regular basis to see that the problems have been corrected. He tries to see if we can't work with the kids within the community instead of sending them outside to the County Probation Department where we would lose contact with them.

Mr. Mosher

Would these be just first offenders?

Mr. Walsh

Not necessarily. It would be first, maybe second offenders, depending upon the severity of the crime and the attitude of the individual. There does come a point where some become more or less hard-core; they defy their parents and defy authority. At that point we have to refer them on to the probation department, where they can be made a ward of the court and further restrictions placed on them by the courts.

Mr. Mosher

Conventional wisdom, these days, has it that the amount of TV watching young people do reflects itself in certain types of juvenile crime. What do you think about that?

Mr. Walsh

I think that it has. I think it has been well documented that a lot of the crime we're experiencing (not all

of it, but certainly a good portion of it) is a result of ideas which come from some of the violence that's seen on television.

Mr. Mosher

You find crime patterns, perhaps repeating, that have clearly been suggested by something on TV, I suppose. It's a well-known psychological fact that we all have a tendency to copy things that we see, so I suppose it isn't too far-fetched.

Mr. Walsh

No, that's correct. And you constantly read in the paper where not only juvenile but also many adult crimes are patterned after an episode on TV. Frequently it comes out in court that a criminal has patterned his action after a particular crime in a TV series.

Mr. Mosher

Do you feel that this sort of thing should be controlled more than it is?

Mr. Walsh

I feel that certain types of TV shows should be scheduled at times when young children aren't likely to watch them. I am not yet in favor of that type of censorship, but I think it would be better to show violent programs, more suited for adults, late at night instead of on week-ends and early in the evening when children might see them. I think that would be the first step. I know the whole subject is being studied now. I'd like to see some final reports on it before I make any final judgment.

Mr. Mosher

What sort of wrong-doing, crimes, whatever you want to call it, are unique to this area? If any?

Mr. Walsh

I can go over our basic crime rate figures for the last five years and give you an idea, and I think it would be interesting for people in the future who may listen to this tape, to have an idea of the type of crime that we have in Mill Valley.

Mr. Mosher

Good, let's run down on that. That's excellent.

Mr. Walsh

I have figures for the five-year period 1973 to 1977. During that five years there was an average of 3,106 crime, accident, and case reports. The calls for service (these are other calls--anywhere from a lockout of a house to a stalled vehicle) averaged 8,332 per year. These are cases in which an officer is called or sent for any given reason to assist the public.

In the last five years there have been three homicides and five rapes. Our armed robberies averaged nine a year, our felony assaults ten, misdemeanor assaults fifty-two. Those are all basic crimes against persons.

In the category of crimes against property, residential burglaries averaged 178 per year, commercial burglaries 58. Total thefts (grand theft and petty theft) were 640 a year and auto theft 54. Our total arrests for these crimes averaged 422 a year, and 206 of those arrested were juveniles.

In the traffic category we average 413 traffic accidents a year; we issue 3,570 moving citations, traffic citations, and 10,914 parking citations, mostly for parking meter overtime.

Mr. Mosher

This is approximately the last five years, 1973 up until 1977?

Mr. Walsh

The calendar years of 1973 through 1977.

Mr. Mosher

Do we have the same figures for the previous five years?

Mr. Walsh

Yes. I don't have those with me, but they're available. I felt this is what would be pertinent.

Mr. Mosher

You're absolutely right, but I think comparing the two might be enlightening.

What do you list the population of Mill Valley to be currently?

Mr. Walsh

Officially, it's 13,500. There has been considerable building. I would say the population is probably about a thousand more, maybe 14,500. We have the same number of people living just outside the city limits in Homestead, Tam Valley, Strawberry, and the Alto area, which all use the services of the community and have an effect on the community also.

Generally our residential burglaries occur in the hill areas, the wooded areas, like I mentioned before. Most of the robberies occur along the 101 Highway, on the frontage road area where people can come into the eastern portion of Mill Valley, rob a store, and then get back on the highway. Very seldom do we have a robbery west of Camino Alto. It's generally close to the highway.

Mr. Mosher

Only an amateur would get far off the highway, I suppose.

Mr. Walsh

As I mentioned before, Mill Valley is a cul-de-sac community. It has the two major arterials, Miller Avenue and Blithedale Avenue, for entering and leaving. The location of the new Public Safety Building has aided the police department. The police department was formerly housed in the City Hall in the downtown area. This made it difficult to respond quickly to calls in East Mill Valley and other areas when we had to go through the busy downtown area. I think we all enjoyed working downtown. We were a lot closer to the business community. In 1975 we moved into the new Public Safety Building at 555 Sycamore. This allows us to go up either Blithedale or Miller Avenue, and we can respond much faster to all calls. In many cases we can now apprehend suspects as they're trying to leave the community, whereas in the past we would get there a little too late. That has been a benefit.

Mr. Mosher

Your new headquarters are closer to the highway, and that gives you a big advantage. The Public Safety Building has been a point of controversy in some ways. You might comment on that for a minute.

Mr. Walsh

The building was built after a long study by the Planning Department and the City. Originally Sycamore Avenue was going to extend from where it currently ends at Camino Alto at the Middle School, and it was going to cross the harbor to the Public Safety Building and out to the highway. People in the Sycamore area, feeling it would create another arterial like Miller and Blithedale, have opposed this. Currently the City is considering just putting in an emergency road from the building across the water to Sycamore,¹ which will aid us greatly. In responding to calls now we have to go down Roque Moraes and up Blithedale. To go to Miller Avenue we have to go down Camino Alto, which considerably increases our response time on emergency calls.

Mr. Mosher

Yes, that situation will have to be improved, and I think it will be. Do you think it will be resolved pretty soon?

Mr. Walsh

Oh, I'm sure it will. It's going to take some time, but it's the only solution that will reduce our response time.

Mr. Mosher

I think the statistics that you gave us a few minutes ago are very good. Do you have anything more that you want to add to the record on that?

Mr. Walsh

I mentioned that we've had three homicides. The three occurred in one year. It was in 1973. The Shallock family were long-time Mill Valley residents; Mr. Shallock was a reserve police officer. His son had a friend that had some mental problems. One night in '73 the friend threw gasoline on the house and set it on fire. When the Shallocks were escaping from the house he shot the mother, father, and son with a shotgun. It was a tragic time for Mill Valley. The suspect was apprehended the next day, and he's still in a state prison mental facility.

¹At the present time there is a foot bridge across the water at this location.

During the Vietnam War the Bank of America in Mill Valley was bombed. It had to do with the Bank of America having banks in Vietnam. It was an unpopular war, and throughout the state banks were bombed. It turned out that the Mill Valley bomber was a student from Tamalpais High School, whom we apprehended.

The other area that was interesting was the Ellsberg case. Daniel Ellsberg¹ moved to Mill Valley and had a lot of his Pentagon papers. The house was not burglarized for the papers, but the burglar obtained the papers in the house and took them out. We recovered them, and the papers were ultimately turned over to a Congressional subcommittee to evaluate their sensitivity. So in several cases Mill Valley found itself in the national spotlight in the last few years.

Mr. Mosher

One of the things that we need to talk about, kind of a painful subject in a way, is the drug traffic. We're familiar with the more or less socially approved drug, alcohol, but the rest of it, marijuana, cocaine, and on down the list, is relatively new, isn't it? In the last-- what? Six, seven, eight years?

Mr. Walsh

It goes back probably about fifteen years. These drugs that you speak about have become more popular with a segment of the population, not only in Mill Valley but nationwide. Criminals commit a lot of crimes to get money to sustain their habit. Currently a kilo of marijuana, which is 2.2 pounds, sells for about \$500. An ounce of cocaine sells for \$200 to \$300. It takes a lot of money to purchase this, so we find that a lot of our burglaries and robberies are by people who are dependent on drugs and have to commit crimes for money to buy their narcotics.

Mr. Mosher

There's a general belief in Mill Valley, and perhaps elsewhere, that there are a lot of drug dealers in this vicinity. Do you find that to be the case?

¹Ellsberg obtained copies of classified documents about the Vietnam War and released them for publication by the New York Times. They became known as the Pentagon Papers.

Mr. Walsh

Yes, we've been told by state and federal agencies that Miami and Marin County appear to be the cocaine "capitols" of the United States. They're not dealing so much right in the county. They live here and are selling it in the Bay Area. We do have a lot of these people in the community and throughout Marin County. I can't say that Mill Valley has any more than other cities in the county, but it has its share. I think the arrest statistics (you see them in the paper) substantiate this.

Mr. Mosher

They certainly do. Why do you think they congregate here?

Mr. Walsh

There's a lot of money in narcotics. Marin County is one of the richest counties. I think it's the third richest in personal income in the nation. These people have a lot of money; they like to live in expensive areas, in expensive homes. It's also a nice place to live, and I think that that attracts them, too.

Mr. Mosher

For a long time Mill Valley has been a place where many musicians live, both classical and so-called popular. I know there are a lot of rock groups and so on, and they're presumed to use a lot of drugs. Is there any connection there, in your experience?

Mr. Walsh

Yes. I actually wouldn't want to stigmatize any segment of our population, but it is true that the percentage is higher among these artists and musicians, creative-type people who do use marijuana and cocaine. I don't think there's any great use of heroin or other type drugs, but drugs seem to be popular with the artistic type, not only in Mill Valley but throughout the nation.

Mr. Mosher

Do you work with federal or local officials outside Marin County very often on cases involving drugs?

Mr. Walsh

Yes, in practically all large seizure cases the information will come from state or federal agencies--like

customs when the drug has come across the borders into the United States and they follow it to the destination. We naturally work very close in that way.

Mr. Mosher

What percentage of this type of case gets into the newspaper? We see them occasionally, but I suspect you probably work on a lot more than we hear.

Mr. Walsh

No, I think most cases get into the paper. It's only if the investigation has not been completed and it would hinder the completion of the case that it's not in the paper. Ultimately it will get in during trial, and the verdict is usually in the paper. I think, too, it depends on what the paper feels is important. There are many cases that are not in the paper, and it's because the paper has decided that it has enough news for that day, and it doesn't go in.

Mr. Mosher

Are there different types of crimes that are peculiar to different places, geographically? I guess the drug business fits into that question. I wonder if you think of others that are peculiar to a given place. Our place, to be specific.

Mr. Walsh

No, I think we don't have any one area where we have more use of narcotics than others. With the juveniles, they definitely have their areas where they like to congregate--in the Locust area, around Evergreen, the uptown area around the bus depot. They congregate in these types of areas, but as far as any specific type crime is concerned, there's no one area in Mill Valley that has more than the other--except, as I indicated before, burglaries are generally in wooded areas where they can't be seen, and the armed robberies are basically near the highway where they can come into the community and leave rapidly.

Mr. Mosher

You should be an expert on where juveniles foregather in this county. Where did you go when you were a Tam student, if you'll excuse the question?

Mr. Walsh

When I was in Tam they had what they called the Canteen. The Canteen was behind the high school on Almonte Boulevard. It was a little sandwich shop where we went at noontime for lunch. After school and in the early evening we would congregate there and talk with our friends. That burned down I would say in about 1960. After that there was C's Drive-In, which is where Colonel Sanders is now, in the 500 block of Miller. For a long time the kids would congregate there. Now they are spread out a little more. They meet in the Locust area and also the uptown area. We also find them up on Fern Canyon Road and in the Cascade by the falls, and up above the golf course. These are the areas that seem to be popular for them now.

Mr. Mosher

They may be a little more mobile than they used to be. Of course, young people (certain elements in particular) are always doing antisocial things and experimenting and so on, we all know that. How did the antisocial activity when you were at Tam compare with the antisocial activity at Tam now?

Mr. Walsh

I can't say that it's any different. There's only a small percentage of the kids involved. For the most part the juveniles are outstanding kids. There was that handful that caused the problems when I was in high school, and we have a handful now--maybe a little more, because the population has increased. But I'd like to point out that it's no more than twenty or twenty-five that cause the problems. The rest of them are no problem at all.

Mr. Mosher

Another area, Bill, that we see a lot about or read a lot about in the newspapers these days, is sex crimes. Are they essentially the same as they've always been, or do you see any difference?

Mr. Walsh

It appears that right now nationwide (from the reports we get) there's an increase in rape statistics, and we have noticed that in Mill Valley. This year, 1978, we've had three reported rapes. In 1977 we had one, and in '75 and '76 there were none. So this appears to be a

crime on the increase. We find that a lot of crimes do go in trends. This is the first time I've seen this type of crime increase nationwide the way it has, and I don't know why that is, whether it's the publicity in the papers or perhaps the TV theory of giving people ideas. I just don't know why, and we're looking into it and studying it and trying to determine the reasons.

Mr. Mosher

It may have something to do with the loosening of certain social restraints that we used to feel a little more strongly than we do now. It's a period of change, and it could be an outgrowth of that.

We talked about the drug scene here, and you gave a very interesting summation of that. Alcoholism is the perennial problem, I guess. What would your comments be on that, in terms of your history here?

Mr. Walsh

Alcohol is popular now, even more so than marijuana with the younger people.

Mr. Mosher

That's a new emphasis, isn't it?

Mr. Walsh

We went through a period in the late sixties and early seventies when smoking marijuana was the popular thing to do among the younger people. I don't know if it's because the cost has risen so much, but now the young people are back into alcohol, beer and wine, more like it was in the late fifties and early sixties. And it does cause its problems.

Mr. Mosher

Which do you prefer? That's a terrible question, isn't it? Assuming that you're going to have both or a mix of them. . . .

Mr. Walsh

I think alcohol. They both cause equal problems. They both alter people's, would you say, better sense or discretion. The statistics that we're getting now show that marijuana is not habit-forming, whereas alcohol is. So I think we can see there is more damage to the

user of alcohol than to the user of marijuana. But from a police standpoint, they both cause similar antisocial behavior problems.

Mr. Mosher

This doesn't relate to Mill Valley particularly, but when I think of police work and prison problems, I think of capital punishment. Anyone who's spent his whole adult life in police work must have some views on this, philosophically and otherwise. Would you like discussing that for a minute?

Mr. Walsh

I think that basically I'm opposed to capital punishment, but we may have to have it until we find another solution to the problem of those people who are continually committing serious crimes of murder and bodily harm. I think the ideal situation would be to take these people who cannot conform to society and who are endangering society and put them on an island out in the Pacific Ocean and let them live there. As a police officer, and having seen the viciousness of these people and what they do in their rapes and murders and mayhem, I think we should have capital punishment until we come up with another solution to the problem.

Mr. Mosher

You evidently feel that it is some deterrent then; that would be inherent in that position, wouldn't it?

Mr. Walsh

Yes, it's a deterrent for an additional crime. If executed, the person obviously isn't going to be able to kill anybody else. Although we find that a lot of our murders are murders of passion, those are not the type I'm talking about. I'm talking about men like Gilmore, who was in prison for murder, broke out, and subsequently killed five more people. It's this type of thing that I think we've got to put a stop to.

Mr. Mosher

The chief argument used against that is the fact that justice is so uneven that the ultimate punishment, death, is inappropriate.

Mr. Walsh

That's one of the pitfalls, I think. Those are the things that are being worked out. I don't know when they'll be fully worked out, but the courts are struggling with those problems. I hope some time in the future they do resolve it.

Mr. Mosher

I realize this is a broad philosophical question that doesn't pertain to local problems. Nevertheless, I thought it would be interesting. On the whole I think you're remarkably uncynical for one who's been involved in police work for a good many years. I've known others involved in it who've become extremely cold and hard and cynical. Let's assume that's true. If it is, how do you explain it?

Mr. Walsh

Well, I've been a police officer for twenty-one years. I've been through all the knocks, so to speak. I think we probably all go through a period of being a little cynical, a little disappointed with the system.

In the past twenty years there have been several court cases that have adversely affected law enforcement. Cases like *Miranda*¹ and some of the others severely limit the powers of the police in exercising their duties. It appears that the criminal is getting more protection than society. As these cases come down and make it more difficult to do the job, to protect the community and the citizens, I think that some people can tend to become cynical. But I've always felt that the job has to be done and we have to overcome these difficulties. Do a better job, work harder at it, do it in new and innovative ways and move on.

I don't see it getting any easier down the road. It's going to become more difficult. The criminal is more sophisticated now than he was twenty years ago but the police are better trained and more sophisticated. I guess I really just haven't found the time to let it get me down or disturb my thinking.

¹Miranda vs. Arizona: a landmark case establishing the constitutional rights, right to counsel, right to remain silent, of persons arrested for and accused of crimes.

Mr. Mosher

It has a lot to do with one's individual temperament, too, I think. You weigh part of this off against individual rights, which of course have to be protected. It does require, I imagine, walking a fairly difficult line to do so. This leads into a question that I'm curious about, and that's the requirements, the criteria, for selecting police officers. Are you involved in that?

Mr. Walsh

Oh, yes, very definitely.

Mr. Mosher

I'd like to hear your philosophy, and some of your experiences too, if you can do so without embarrassment.

Mr. Walsh

The selection process for law enforcement has improved greatly. We adhere to the POST standards, which are the Peace Officers Standards and Training in California, which have minimum requirements. Our requirements in Mill Valley are a little higher, but we have to adhere to the minimum requirements. There's a testing process, a written test. There's an oral test for police officer.

Mr. Mosher

Were you saying just a moment ago that this is a statewide requirement that these be taken?

Mr. Walsh

That's correct. There are state standards for police officers in California. They're regulated through the Peace Officers Standards and Training Commission of the Attorney General's office. You don't have to adhere to these, but there are advantages to the city to do this because the cost of the police officer training is reimbursed to the city.

When a person is hired, there's a written test, there's an oral testing procedure, and before the person is hired there's an extensive background investigation. It takes weeks to complete. An investigator will check on his grammar school records, talk to his teachers, talk to his neighbors, talk to his employers, looking for any traits of violence, let's say, or poor judgment. After this type of background investigation, we know quite a bit about individuals.

In Mill Valley we've been very fortunate to have an active police reserve, and we recruit most of our police officers through the police reserve. This, in addition to the background investigation and psychological investigation, gives us a person we know because he has worked with us for some time. He knows how we function in the community, what we expect of him. We've had a period of time to look at him, to see how he functions, how he gets along with the people in the community. So we very seldom have a person who does not fit into the community.

Mr. Mosher

What's involved in the reserve program? Is this a volunteer thing?

Mr. Walsh

It's voluntary; it's nonpaying. You have the same requirements as a police officer. There are two kinds of men in the police reserve. One is the local resident who lives in Mill Valley, works at another job but wants to be involved in the Police Department, like a volunteer fireman. This is the kind of man who never wants to become a full-time police officer but wants to serve his community. The other is the young man going to college, taking Police Science, wanting to get a feel of the police department. He wants to see if it should be his profession. This gives us a look at him over a long period of time. It gives him time to look at us and the community and do a lot of soul-searching to determine whether this is what he wants to devote his life to. Under this process you very seldom get somebody who would not fit in. However we do have officers occasionally who just cannot take the stress and strain of the job and have to leave.

Mr. Mosher

You mean a regular officer?

Mr. Walsh

Right.

Mr. Mosher

Does that mean that there was some quality in them that wasn't detected earlier?

Mr. Walsh

Not necessarily. I think we're looking for a

sensitive type person in this type of work, but some people are just too sensitive for it. There are many other factors that come into it. Things can go well for a few years and then there can be family problems, other outside problems and pressures that, along with the job, just make it difficult for the person to continue.

Mr. Mosher

Is it fair to say that there's kind of a love-hate relationship between much of the citizenry and the police? Sort of a conflict? They respect and rely tremendously on the police--and on the fire department, too, for that matter. Society's well-being is so locked in with it. On the other hand, there's a kind of ambivalence there, and a kind of a dislike at the same time.

Mr. Walsh

I don't think there's a love-hate situation. I think the community is very supportive of the police department. It passed the bond issue for a new police station by a two-thirds vote. This is something that hadn't been done in California in over ten years. I think there's strong support.

However, when a person gets a ticket, he can think of a lot of other things a police officer should have been doing at that time, other than giving him a ticket! This is about the only time you get any adverse reaction to the police.

Mr. Mosher

Matter of fact, that question was a broad one. I didn't intend it to pertain particularly to Mill Valley. With the exception of day-to-day trivia, like parking meters and things like that, I think your relationship here is remarkably good, as far as I can tell from my interviews here. As a merchant I saw the parking meter phenomenon in operation for countless years, and it's different from anything else. It brings out fantastic qualities in people that embarrass them terribly a few hours later.

Mr. Walsh

Right. It's been my experience that a person will accept a speeding citation at a considerable cost a lot better than he will take a dollar or two-dollar parking meter ticket.

Mr. Mosher

There's something about them that infuriates people. I haven't yet, after all these years of watching them, been able to exactly figure it out.

Mr. Walsh

I think generally the person knows that his meter was getting close. He thought he could make it, or he was just going into the store to get change. These are the types of things, I think, that just annoy them. You're absolutely right. You had the meters out in front of your store, and you could see what goes on.

Mr. Mosher

I've seen some interesting little fights go on out there, no question about it.

Do certain kinds of outside circumstances affect police work noticeably? Something that traditionally is believed to affect peoples' conduct is a full moon, for example. Festivals and things like that are in a slightly different category, but I'm sure they affect your general police activity greatly.

Mr. Walsh

I think all policemen have joked about that at one time or another. The activity on a particular shift will be so excessive that they'll comment, "There must be a full moon out." I have not really paid an awful lot of attention to where the moon was when these things occurred, but the work definitely does go in cycles; it's not consistent. It will go along with a reasonable amount of activity, and then for some unknown reason things will explode and we've got more work to do than we can handle. Whether it's the moon or hot evenings or hot spells--I don't know exactly what it is, but a lot of times they do coincide with a full moon or hot weather.

Mr. Mosher

I understand there is a correlation between hot weather and crime. Is that true in your experience?

Mr. Walsh

Yes, I think that with hot weather you get more people outside for a longer period of time. If it's raining and cold people are indoors and are less apt

to create problems. I think this is more related to a crowd situation, a football game or a gathering or a dance or a festival of some type. If the weather's hot, sometimes alcohol will get into it, pull people down, and one thing leads to another. Your chances of having problems definitely are greater in hot weather than they are on a cold day.

Mr. Mosher

Your first statement reminds me of the growing traffic problem in Mill Valley, where, due to our terrain, the streets are very limited. What kind of a future do we have there? It is getting rather bad, to say the least.

Mr. Walsh

Yes, most of the roads in Mill Valley were built around the turn of the century. They were built for horse and buggy or the Model A Ford and not for the large car of today--although we're seeing a trend (with the gas shortage and the cost of gasoline) that people are getting back to smaller cars. Nevertheless, many families have two or three cars, depending upon the size of the family, and the streets are cluttered with cars. I see one solution in the future and that is for the city to pass ordinances prohibiting all-night parking. This would require people to have off-street parking on their own property or in a garage. I'm sure that in some of the hilly areas this would cause a hardship, and maybe we'd have to permit some cars to be on the street. If we could get cars parked off of the streets there would be less vandalism to cars, fewer thefts, and traveling in the streets would be easier.

Mr. Mosher

And there would be a lot fewer accidents. You must have a lot of dented fenders in your file.

Mr. Walsh

Right, an awful lot.

Mr. Mosher

What else do you think of, Bill? You must know a lot of things as a result of your years in this business that somebody's who's never been in it would never think of.

Mr. Walsh

I think I've covered everything. I just wish I could have had the opportunity to listen to the police chief or the town marshall in the 1900s, to hear about the problems affecting the community in those days. I hope our interview is interesting to people in the future.

About the only thing that I didn't touch on was the size of the police department. Currently there are nineteen sworn officers in the police department, including patrolmen, sergeants and lieutenants. There are six civilian positions to do the dispatching and typing of reports and statistical work.

I'm sure there are a lot of things I've neglected to touch on, but hopefully we can add to this, so there's a better history of the department.

Mr. Mosher

Speaking as a citizen, police and fire work affect us all so very much. It's a terribly important part of our lives. I know the consensus is that we have an outstanding police force here, and one of the reasons is the attitude you have and the job you do. I know I'm correct when I say it is much appreciated. Thank you for talking to me, Bill. I enjoyed it. I hope you did.

Mr. Walsh

Thank you, I did.

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