

**MATHESON HISTORICAL CENTER**  
**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

**INTERVIEWEES:** William D. "Bill" Joiner  
Courtney Roberts

**INTERVIEWER:** William M. Pepper, III

**May 2, 1996**

P: This is Bill Pepper, on May 2, 1996, with William D. "Bill" Joiner, long-time Police Chief of Gainesville, concerning incidents and events in history that he remembers over his tenure and residence in Gainesville, about things that would be historically significant to the community for the future posterity and recording and keeping of the record for the use of later historical work. Bill, tell me what years it was that you were Police Chief. What years were they?

J: I was appointed Chief -- let me think a little bit -- I joined the Department in 1936. My family moved here in 1932 during the Great Depression, the tail end of the Great Depression, so in 1936 a new Police Chief appointed me to the Department. On November 8, 1936. I think my date is correct. When the war started with Japan, I was a Police Sergeant at that time. J.P. Mobley was City Manager, and I got a call -- in fact, December 7, 1941, was the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Is that correct?

P: Correct.

J: Okay. Soon after that, it was 1941, I was working, I was Police Sergeant at that time, and I was working the night shift, midnight until eight in the morning, and I got a call from J.P. Mobley one night and he asked me to come over to his house. I went over and he had the mayor and some of the commissioners, a group of people there, and he said, "As of tomorrow morning at eight o'clock, you will be the Police Chief for the City of Gainesville." Well, you can understand that I was taken aback a little bit, but anyhow, I was appointed Police Chief at that time and I served a total of thirty-three years with the Police Department and twenty-seven of those years I was the Police Chief. (Note: Bill Joiner served thirty-three years with twenty-seven years as Chief. Bill was out of service to help his father's business for three years.)

P: So that would have been twenty-seven years, 1941 until 1968.

J: 1972. I retired in 1972.

P: Okay. How about that. What went on during your tenure, Bill, that you feel was significant in the way of the development of the police force?

J: Well, quite a bit. At the time that I took over, we had no written testing of any kind on an applicant asking for a job and no training of any kind. All that had to come later. Now, soon after I was appointed, I had an opportunity to go to Washington to the FBI Academy. At that time they called it the National Police Academy. I had the opportunity and the City Manager and governing body of the city approved, even though I had not been on the job long, they approved my attending the FBI National Police Academy in Washington, so I was up there for fourteen weeks of training. From that point, coming back to Gainesville, I was able to institute some forms for applicants for a

job as a police officer. Prior to that time there was nothing. A man just asked for a job and they either hired him or they didn't hire him, but W.D. Cahoon was the Police Chief following Clements. Cahoon was from Jacksonville. Now, he was a career law enforcement man, and he retired from Jacksonville as Chief Inspector of the Police Department there, and just getting into the war, we were having some problems with the head of the Police Department in Gainesville. Mainly, not staying on the job. He would be gone for periods of time.

P: Was this Cahoon that would be gone?

J: No, J.B. Phillips. J.B. Phillips was the Police Chief when Cahoon was appointed to take his place, and Cahoon was the man who hired me. After returning from the FBI Academy, I was able to institute some formal training for new police officers. Prior to that time, we had nothing, so that worked out quite well.

P: Now, selection and training was improved, and what else did you inaugurate or institute as a result of that training in the police force, Bill?

J: Well, that's a good question. I was able to put into writing certain rules and regulations pertaining to new police officers and also rules and regulations that govern the Department.

P: How many men did you have on the police force when you first took over, Bill? Do you remember, approximately?

J: I have to stop and think. I should remember that offhand.

P: What I was leading up to was what growth occurred during your administration from so many officers to so many. I'm sure it grew by leaps and bounds as time went on.

J: It did. When I took over, we had the Chief's position and we had a Lieutenant and a Sergeant. I'm thinking that when I took over -- well, let me back up just a little bit. At the time I was hired as a police officer, three men were hired. Up to that time, there was a total of nine men in the Department, counting the Chief. In order to improve -- now W.D. Cahoon had taken over as Police Chief -- and in order to improve the quality of the law enforcement in the city, Cahoon was authorized to hire. Now they had nine men in the Department and he was authorized to hire three men. I was one of the three that W.D. Cahoon hired. This gave us a total of twelve men in the Department at that time.

P: So if we can't remember exactly how many men were there when you took over as Police Chief, we know there were twelve when you went on the force.

J: That's right.

P: And then, how many would have been under your jurisdiction or how many on the Gainesville Police Department. approximately, when you left?

J: When I retired from the Department, we had 164 employees. Now that was police officers and civilian personnel, but under the Chief's command were 164 employees.

P: That's good. Now that required a constant reorganization, reshuffling, rethinking of policies as you went along to keep up with the growth, didn't it?

J: That's right. We had already instituted an examination for new recruits or applicants. We had already developed an examining period for new applicants.

P: Right. When you took over, did you have squad cars? Did you have police vehicles?

J: We had one police car and the Chief had a car. We were able to acquire some more vehicles and we had motorcycles. I guess we must have hired our first motorcycle officer after I had been there for two or three years. As time passed and the Department grew in size, we had a motorcycle squad that we used for escort service and for traffic control and that sort of thing.

P: Now you had some very good men working with you. I remember Bob Angel was over the detective force, and William Howell was over the traffic, I believe. What were the names of some of those men that you figure were significant? What were some of the names of the men that come back to your mind as being significant on the police force?

J: Well, one of them happens to be sitting right here at the table. He came along several years later. In fact, in 1947. In 1947 you came up to the University.

R: That's right.

J: Courtnay Roberts graduated from the University and he and I developed a friendship over the period of four years. You graduated in 1950, didn't you?

R: 1950. June, 1950.

P: That was my year to graduate.

R: That's right. At that time, I was managing the Agriculture Experimental Beef Unit for the University of Florida, and Bill and I met each other pistol shooting. We used to go out and practice at the pistol range considerably, and he suggested that we go together to a couple matches, and he's the one that got me into the area of shooting a real professional style and with a proper gun, proper customized gun, and that's one of the reasons why I was able to go up to the top of my profession with a pistol.

P: This is Courtnay Roberts speaking now, and we will be getting into his tenure in a moment in more detail. Bill, let's turn back now to your thinking about the police force. What do you think were the biggest problems or problem that you faced as you were Police Chief early on, and any subsequent problems that came up that you can recollect that were major and of significant note?

J: Well, of course, the Department up to my time had no formal training of any kind. Now a man was just hired and put to work, and no real training. Of course, he was told a few things that had to be done, and he represented law enforcement for the City of Gainesville, and it was his responsibility to see that order was kept in the community and to protect the people from the thieves and the bad people. We grew. I'll back up just a moment. When they hired me, we had nine men in the Department, and three of us were hired at one time, making a total of twelve. That was done in order to improve working conditions. Twelve-hour shifts, to start with, back in those days. Seven a.m. to seven p.m., I believe, was the day shift and seven p.m. until seven a.m. was the night shift. Of course, more officers were on duty in the daytime than at night. We had just a very few men on duty at night, a desk officer and a sergeant in command of the shift, and a beat patrol man that walked the downtown business section, a beat patrol man by the name of Alday.

P: Was that Bobby Lee Alday's father, or was that Alday Produce?

J: Yes. It was the Alday Produce.

P: Uhhuh. I knew Bobby Lee. His son was my contemporary. I believe I can still remember the headquarters down at the old city hall where you all had to headquarter before the new one was built on 6th Street.

J: In the basement of the city hall.

P: I can remember going down there when I first came back in 1954 and going down there and reading the blotter and talking to you and to others, getting the news, and then the new complex was built on 6th Street. What year was that, do you reckon?

J: I just don't recall the year. It will come to me later. I believe it was 1953.

P: That new complex was a help in your work, wasn't it?

J: Oh, yes. Definitely.

R: We had a jail down there, also.

P: Yes. I remember.

R: Let me reel this back just a little bit, so Bill can remember. He and I have talked about it. Alachua County was a dry county and there was no alcohol or hard liquor allowed, and one of the major problems that he had before I was on the Department and I had after I came on the Department was moonshine, illegal alcohol coming into Gainesville through local areas and Georgia and Alabama and some of it from Tennessee.

P: Right. I can remember the names of some of the local bootleggers.

R: Absolutely. Yes, sir. That's one of the things I did. I worked on a case with Bill when I was just about ready to graduate from college. We helped shut down one of the biggest bootlegging operations in Gainesville.

J: Well, even more important than that, Courtnay, was the numbers racket. Bolita.

P: Bolita was big.

J: The arrest of that man -- his name was Thomas -- not only took care of the bootlegging but it broke up the numbers racket.

R: That's right.

P: Was that C.W. Thomas?

J: Yes. C.W. Thomas.

P: There was also a fellow named Oakley, I believe, that was involved in some of that.

R: That's right. A lot of the numbers situations came up to Gainesville from Tampa. The big Bolita was drawn in Cuba allegedly, and the numbers were spread all over the state. The money was taken all over the state of Florida, so a lot of police departments had a great deal of problem with the Bolita racket, and, of course, Mafia had their hand in on Bolita and the Mafia was also getting pretty well routed in certain areas of Florida down in south Florida when Bill was a rather new Police Chief. We thank God we were able to keep it pretty clean from moving into Gainesville area, but I tell you it was a real problem.

P: Wasn't Ybor City a kind of a headquarters?

R: It was one of the biggest areas for the numbers and Bolita there was anywhere in the whole state of Florida at one time. Of course, Miami was not slack on that either. Miami had a great deal of problem with this. Any of your coastal areas. That was one

of his major problem before I came to the Department, even after I came to the Department. So I do remember a great deal of it.

P: So you chased down and made a good case against the leaders of that, and got them shut down. That was quite an accomplishment.

R: Yes. It really was. It was remarkable, and we had several people that were involved in this that got themselves in a problem with the big bosses down in the Tampa area and at one time there was a man sent up here to literally beat a local person to death because he had taken a little money that he shouldn't have taken from the proceeds.

P: Skimming.

R: Oh, absolutely. It happened over near the old First Baptist Church, where they had a restaurant over there, the Windjammer, out behind the old Windjammer Restaurant. It was right on the corner of S.W. 2nd Avenue and 6th Street, well close to where 6th Street is now, but 6th Street was divided by a railroad track, but at any rate, when I rode back there on a motorcycle this man was beating another man almost to death, and he was using brass knuckles on him. When I stopped him, he tried to hit me, and I was able to take him because of Judo and Karate, which I was a master of, and I incapacitated him, handcuffed him, and we put a maximum fine on him, which he was able to pay and get out of town quick. He never did appear for court. But he was from Tampa area and he was sent up to kill this man.

P: A hit man.

R: That's right. He was a hit man, exactly what he was. He almost did kill him.

J: To back up a little bit, the arrest of C.W. Thomas really broke the back on illegal lottery business and bootlegging, too. Bootlegging and the lottery. But that was the straw that broke the camel's back.

R: This man was part of the Family, part of that same family. And he did not want to go to the hospital. He wanted to go home because he was scared if he went to the hospital, they might send somebody into the hospital. So he did go home and he did get some people around him and that's where he recovered was in his own home and the doctor went to his home and took care of some broken ribs and broken face bones and a few other things. When you hit a man with a set of brass knuckles, you're hurting him bad. They set out to beat him to death. That's what they set out to do.

P: Well, I remember a few things about my tenure on the "Gainesville Sun." This is Bill Pepper talking. I remember when I came back here, we had a fellow named Pearce, I believe it is, that was accused of killing a woman named Big Bertha at the Pink Elephant.

Out on the Waldo Road. That to me was one of the first cases that I felt that Gainesville had grown up to where we had something you might even put in one of those slick detective magazines because she was a woman of ill repute, to say the best, and he was supposedly a married man and denied, of course, his guilt but as I remember, he was tried. I don't know whether he was convicted or whether he was acquitted, but I remember it was a bloody, bloody murder out there. Bludgeoning, I think. What other crimes can you all remember that were of note or significance?

R: Well, Bill could tell you about a rout we had with the Cash Gang. They were bank robbers. They came into town. You might want to pick up on that, Bill.

J: The Cash Gang was pretty active for a while.

P: Where were they out of?

R: Tampa primarily, I think, was one of their headquarters.

J: They were active in Tampa.

P: They actually hit some of our local banks?

J: They tried.

P: Were they burglars or hold-up artists?

R: Hold-up artists. We shot a couple of cars out from under them. We confiscated the automobiles. We put one of them at Billy Beach's auto wreckers. Do you remember Billy Beach?

P: Yes, I remember Billy Beach. Yeah. Billy was a good friend of police always.

J: Always.

R: Without any doubt.

P: And he was a very nice person. I enjoyed Billy.

J: A fine person and he was a good friend.

R: He had one of the cars that we confiscated and it had one of the bandit's wallets in the glove compartment with over \$300.00 cash in it and on top of that, his full identification. He didn't have it on him on purpose but he had it in the car and he tried to come back and get it out of the car at the compound. He tried to break into the compound and get it.

Well, I tell you what, we caught him and we even caught one all the way up into Georgia on a railroad trying to get away from everybody, just walking the railroad until something came by and he would jump on, but he never did manage because we caught him up in Georgia. It was a pretty heavy evening because we had to shoot two cars out from under them. We blew the tires on them and on top of that, they shot a number of shots at us. I mean they were hanging out of the windows firing at us with a 45 automatic.

P: Describe that chase. Where did it start?

R: It started in the middle of downtown Gainesville.

P: At the First National Bank?

R: Yes, at the First National Bank, and it went all the way up Main Street and up N.W. 8th Avenue and up N.W. 6th Street with gunfire going all the time.

P: During daytime hours?

R: During nighttime hours.

P: So they were in there to burglarize?

R: They were in there to rob and burglarize. They were going to do anything from crack safes. That was all their business. They also did daytime hold-ups.

P: Do you remember when the alarm went out. Did you get it off the beat or did you get it off some other tip?

R: We had a tip that they might be coming into our area so we were prepared and we had patrols that worked for this situation, but you know I can't recall right on the top of my head exactly what initiated the beginning of the chase. I think we spotted them by flyer, by appearance, and got a description on the car and one of the cars was stolen and that began the chase.

P: I see. They hadn't actually perpetrated a crime or begun it. They were here to case.

R: They were here for that purpose. Absolutely. All of them were wanted people.

P: How many of them were there?

R: Let's see. There were five, I think, that we had to contend with. We put five away. I believe it was five of them that night.

J: I think so. Yes.

P: In one vehicle?

R: No, in two vehicles. We stopped both vehicles. They got out. Of course, we caught three of them right away, one up in Georgia, and one later, but we caught all of them.

P: What date was that?

R: Oh my. I was still a Sergeant. I think it was in the 50's, wasn't it, Bill?

J: Yes.

P: It was before I got back then, because I don't remember it. That was quite a case.

R: Then we also caught one of the ten most wanted in the United States. We caught him in an apartment in Gainesville. We caught him in the bedroom and he had a gun under the pillow but he never got a chance to even go for it. I can't remember his name. You might remember. He was one of the ten most wanted at that time. I can't remember his name right off the top of my head.

J: I don't either.

P: Do you remember what he was doing in Gainesville?

R: I have no idea what he was doing here, but one of the fellows, you know we used to study these flyers. The Post Office had them everywhere but the Department was sent flyers on all of the ten most wanted, and several of us, like Chief Joiner, had graduated from FBI. I graduated from FBI National Academy in 1966 and so we were in the habit of really trying to memorize faces and people who were really wanted for serious crimes, and that's how this man was spotted.

P: About what year was that, Courtney?

R: That was either in the early 1960's or late 1950's.

P: Okay. I might even remember that case. I came back in 1954, I believe it was. For nine years I was City Editor and then Executive Editor for the paper.

R: It was written up in the "Sun". Yes it was.

P: Well, those are interesting cases. What about other celebrated cases?

R: Well, Bill, I think you will remember one of them. One of the major cases that we had here was the one called the Gainesville Eight. I'm sure you would remember some of that. It might have been after you left, but by the same token, there were some Vietnam veterans against the war who decided they were going to cause a considerable upheaval and probably at the national Democratic Convention was exactly their target I think to begin with, but they were going to rehearse their setup in Gainesville and I don't know if I should put the name of the man on that tape or not, but

P: If he was convicted, we would; if he weren't, why we probably shouldn't.

R: He wasn't convicted. He was tried but they turned him loose and when he came out of the federal court building, he said, "It shows you what kind of a system you've got. We did everything they said we did and they turned us loose."

P: I declare.

R: That was his words coming out of the court building. But at any rate, what happened was they had four hit squads with four men to each squad and they had rifles and pistols which were purchased in Miami, but due to a real good investigation and having a man on the inside of this group of people, we even found out where the guns were purchased, who purchased the guns, and what the serial numbers were on each gun, and when it came down to other intelligence information that was sent back to us by our informant, we found out that their plan was during a disturbance of some type or another out near the campus they would try to shoot a police officer, blame it on a student, and get the police to fire on the students. That was the plan, to cause a tremendous disruption. They were also going to blow out a certain area of power in the city, knock out a power structure in the city, to cause disruption. And that's when they were going to do the other thing. To cause distraction and divide the force, divide the amount of men that had to be in one place or another. When I found out what the plans were, I called the head of this group into my office and I sat down with him and I decided it was time to let him know some information. I told him that we had someone that gave us a full description of every weapon he had, which he denied having any of, and every man's name in all the four groups and four men on each team, their height, weight, description, everything about every one of them from the time almost they were born, also the fact that part of his family was tied in on purchasing the weapons in Miami, and I let him know that if anything happened in Gainesville to anyone, and especially a police officer, that I would seek him out and this whole thing would fall completely on his head, without question. I said, "Now, that's just between you and I, but you know it and I know it and if you want to know it for a fact, go look at the serial numbers on your own guns right now." Well, once he found out all this was true and everything I had said was accurate, he knew he had had it. He knew we had some kind of an informant on the inside, but he and all of his people moved to Miami immediately. They left Gainesville.

- P: I'll be darned. What year was that? It had to be Vietnam. I was up in Greeley, Colorado, as early as 1964 and Vietnam had been going some and heated up around 1967.
- R: Yes, it was late 1960's.
- P: Okay, at the Democratic . . .
- R: The Democratic Committee Meeting down in Miami was obstructed by this same group. There were arrests made by the FBI. They were tried in Gainesville, if you recall, and I think it was quite a celebrated trial. There was tremendous evidence put forth, as much as could be at the time, and we did not use a lot of the things that we possibly could have used because we had a lot of things in jeopardy at that time, people in jeopardy, but the case itself, they were found not guilty apparently of what they were supposed to have done, and actually when they walked out, that's when the head of this group said what he said on the steps of the courthouse, of the federal building.
- P: I think we could use his name if you have it.
- R: Oh yes. Scott Cameal. You don't remember that name?
- P: See, I was in Greeley, Colorado.
- R: Scott's still alive. He lives right out here off of Williston Road, right now, and he's a different man than he used to be. Totally and completely. As a matter of fact, he's a born again Christian now.
- P: Good.
- R: He is, Bill. And he's got three daughters and he's a good father and he just seems to be changing his whole life around.
- P: Well, those people had a cause they thought. It was almost religious.
- R: Yes. It was all conviction about what this country was doing and what they were not doing for their military, and they wanted to bring it graphically into the face of the public. But it wasn't quite the right way to do it and when it jeopardized people's lives, that's not a way to do it, and I think that might have turned the light on when they found out we had inside information on everything they were doing. But that was scary.
- P: Yeah. Well, it was very scary. Those things are awfully scary, I know. That brings up the fact. Did you ever have anyone threaten you, Bill, as Police Chief? Did you have anyone threaten you, seriously threaten you?

J: Well, I don't know whether you want to call it "serious" or not, but I just cast it off. I would say that I was not threatened, not seriously. No, in other words, I was never threatened enough to make me lose any sleep.

P: Yes.

R: Well, there were some threats made by the people that he and I shot down.

J: Yes, idle threats.

R: Threats with me on our lives on that bunch we closed down on illegal alcohol and Bolita. That was one, but I'll give you another one. A young man who was involved in various things that he shouldn't have been involved in, he was pulled into it because of his lack of education in the area of what he was doing. I got into a high speed chase with him on Waldo Road one night, and I had a small Valiant. The police car was a Valiant, way too small for normal police use, but we used it for command purposes just to check areas and all, but we got into a high speed chase and he had a Fairlane 500 Ford, and he slammed into that Valiant and knocked me all the way across Waldo Road into a ditch of water. And then he went out Montsdeocha Road, but I had already called in a backup and we caught him out on Montsdeocha Road. He jumped out of the car while it was still running. He had a little girl in the car and she was absolutely scared to death, but that's assault with a deadly weapon when you do that.

P: Oh, yes sir.

R: So he was sent to prison for five years. When he was up there, he sent back word -- of course, we get word through the inner circle of the prison -- he sent back word he was going to get me when he got out. At that time, I was shooting all over the state of Florida and I was . . .

P: So you caught him on the Montsdeocha Road and he went up to prison.

R: Yes, for five years, and when he got out the first thing he did was contact me and he apologized for the statements he made while he was in prison. I guess he figured they came back to me because a lot of times prisoners made idle threats against law enforcement officers. The information came back before a man was released, but it came back through prison areas. We had a lot of good friends who were in the correctional business and that's how we got word. Well, when he came back, he did come to see me. He said, "I want you to know I did make threats, but I have long since seen the error of my ways." Now, I'll tell you what I did for him, Bill, I found him work and got him going as a mechanic and he learned the trade. His only problem was he liked to drink a considerable bit and if he had been able to stay away from that, it would have been a wonderful thing. His ex-girlfriend tried to get a rape situation on him, got

him up to her room, and came on to him, and after it was over with, she tried to holler that she was raped but she had made the statement to other women that this is what she intended to do to him to put him back in prison. So we actually cleared him of that because of the fact that we really investigated it thoroughly and found out it was lies.

P: What was his name?

R: Trying to think of it right now. Goodness gracious, that was a long time ago.

P: What year was that, approximately?

R: It had to be in the early 1970's, I believe, late 1960's or early 1970's. Anyway, I cleared the young man on that rape charge and he met a very nice girl and married her. The only problem was he kept drinking and I don't think they were able to stay married, but he had to go under alcohol help for a while, but it was just a matter of no one taking time to work with the boy on problems that he had.

P: Is he still alive?

R: I believe he is still alive. I've never heard of him being deceased, and I think he still lives probably somewhere out in the Montsdeocha area. But at any rate, that's just one case. We do have a few cases where idle threats were made but we never did anything. Usually the outlaw did it to themselves. Anyone who caused a problem was his own worst enemy. I mean the police department was just there to protect and defend everybody. I'll give you a case that we had. When we had some problems with Iranian students. I don't know if you remember that. They went down on the courthouse square and they burned an American flag, a big American flag. At that time we had some Hell's Angel bikers in this town. We did not have a lot of men working that evening. I think we had about twelve men on duty on the street, so immediately we had to put at least as many as we could around the area where the courthouse was because there were a lot of people gathering when these guys were doing this thing and burning the American flag. Well, the bikers got real mad about that. Now these are rough, tough, mean, bad bikers. I mean the Hell's Angels are probably one of the most difficult motorcycle groups anywhere in the southeast. They were all over the United States. But they went in there and they wiped up on those Iranian students. We didn't have enough people to stop them. They rode over the curb with motorcycles and they just nailed them. Then they stole an Iranian flag and they went on out University Avenue all the way out East University Avenue to a little old bar that used to be out there called "Peanuts" and the next thing we know we had word there was a fire in the middle of the Hawthorne Road. Well, that fire was the Iranian flag. So I went out there and when I went in that little bar, there were about probably twenty or more bikers in there, and I walked right in amongst them and they asked me who I was and I told them I was the Chief of Police. They said, "You couldn't be the Chief of Police. He wouldn't even

come near this place." I said, "Well, you're looking at him." I showed them my credentials and they said, "You mean you came in here without any backup?" I pointed at the door. At that time we had not long hired some women patrolmen. This was in the 1970's. Sure enough, one of the littlest ones we had was standing in the doorway with her hand on a big 357 Magnum on her hip. I said, "Now she's a rather new patrolman." I said, "She's a dead shot, but right now she's a little nervous. So you'll want to consider all these factors and exactly where you're at and what we're doing." I said, "I came in here to solicit your help and understand that we're here to protect you, protect the Iranian students, and to protect everyone in Gainesville." I said, "We can't take sides. I hate to see anybody burn my flag. I fought for it." I explained all this to them and you know they cooperated one hundred percent! They caused no more trouble. They had no more things to do in the downtown area. They stayed clear of the campus, and that was it. It was just amazing because they couldn't believe that the Chief of Police went in there to explain it to them.

P: Yes, that's right.

R: Well, it made a difference. It's just some of the things you remember.

P: Yes. Did you have any particular problems with the University of Florida in your tenure as Chief that you can recall, any demonstrations that you were called out on or any continuing problems that you had with them?

J: Yes, we had a number of demonstrations out there, right at the crossroads of University and 13th. We had some pretty serious disorder there several times, but it finally leveled off. I would say that it was pretty serious for a short time, but it didn't last a great while and the main point of interest was University Avenue and 13th Street.

R: Let me add a little something to it. We did have riots, strikes, and civil disturbances like every university city in the nation at one time. If it happened in Burkley, then it would happen in Gainesville.

P: You know where I was when that was happening? Up at Boulder, Colorado, at the University of Colorado, and that was a hotbed, too.

R: Well, you recall the fact that the Communist Party U.S.A. was trying to infiltrate colleges and they would take demonstrators and they would sit down in the middle of an interstate highway, which was then 441 and 26, State Road 26. Well, that happens to be against the law. That's what's called blocking interstate commerce. Well, when I looked that up in the law book, we charged them \$500 apiece and there were about forty of them and that's a pretty good-sized fine. Well, we found out that that would slow them down, but we also did find out that some of them were getting money, some of the people who were professors at that time with various universities, some at the University of Florida, and I

can give you names on that, too. I don't know if you want all those names on that tape. But by the same token, they were carrying Red Communist Party U.S.A. cards signed by Gus Hall out of New York. Gus Hall was the head of the Communist Party U.S.A., secretary to Communist Party U.S.A., and actually signed those cards. We were required to search people after we arrested them and I just happened to notice that this was part of some of the things that a couple of them were carrying who were professors at that time, causing a considerable bit of problem and bringing in professional agitators which we caught a few of and proved without a doubt that this was what was happening. At one time they wanted another Kent State to happen in Gainesville, so when we had a riot out at University and 13th one time, they were taking wrist rocket sling shots, they were firing fire crackers which were cherry bombs at that time would really blow up considerably. They would pull it back, and one guy would light it. They let the cherry bomb go in the sling shot and it would explode right near a police officer's head or his face and another one in the crowd would take fried marbles, marbles that they fried so the marbles would fracture and blow into pieces when they hit, then they'd shoot a fried marble and hit a police officer like you'd think you were shot. It sounded and felt just like a bullet hitting you right after explosion. We had like fifty-six walking injuries in one of the riot situations.

P: All police officers?

R: Police officers. Fifty-six of them. One of them even got hit in the face with a full coke bottle half full of sand and it broke his cheek bone. He had to have plastic surgery on his face. By the same token, we had less property damage, less injury per person in this city than any other city our size in the country. We did a good job on it, but it was serious. It was a serious situation. Things could have happened. They could have escalated to the point if it had not been handled really and truly carefully. We had called in an additional backup one time and a unit was sent up from Marion County and when they fell out of about eight cars, they fell out with double-barreled twelve-gauge shotguns and we rounded them all up and had them put the shotguns back in the car because two or three things, we didn't want to take a chance on somebody getting shot by some incident happening accidentally. That was exactly what these people wanted to happen. They wanted law enforcement to get to the point where they would do something really, really scary and cause a real problem. We did not do that. We were on duty at one time as many as thirty-six hours without reinforcements, and we had everybody we could. Finally the Florida Highway Patrol came, and they gave us backup. At one time we had to close down twelve city blocks and call out the National Guard.

J: Right, we had the National Guard at one time.

P: When would that have been?

R: It was in the 1960's.

P: During the Vietnam War?

R: A lot of it was during the Vietnam War conflict, but a lot of this was when you were having a rebellion, we had nature children running off and going everywhere and sleeping in parks and out at the air base and everywhere, and all this stuff going on, and it was really a rebellion against family, against God, against this country, and it was just rebellion against everything.

P: And anything authoritative.

R: Exactly. Anything that had any authority to it. But Gainesville also had its share of rather strange things that were more or less like panty raids. We had panty raids.

P: Oh, I remember that.

R: You do remember the panty raids.

P: Well, not only do I remember it, but I was a student and you know I didn't have a whole lot of sense. You know I was just a kid, and they got to running and I got to running with them and I had no cause to promote or anything like that. I was just running pellmell wild and we ran across the campus. You'd thought we were going to tear down a building the way we were carrying on.

R: That's exactly right.

P: It was really a mob psychology that you get caught up in and you don't realize until you're an adult what you were doing and how dangerous it was or what was at issue even.

R: Well, it's a funny thing because it never amounted to much, but by the same token we thank God that like another situation, nobody got hurt seriously and nobody got killed or anything and then we also had the period when we also had streaking on a national level, people running down the street with no clothes on. It was not uncommon to have a football game with sixty thousand people in the stadium and somebody would take off absolutely, buck naked, right down the center of the field and clear the whole field, 120 yards, out the back gate, and how they'd make it all the way out! Of course, people were sitting there absolutely ripping apart with laughter and everything, and, of course, law enforcement didn't have really enough men, really quickly johnny-on-the-spot, to do something with it at that time. They knew where law enforcement was or they wouldn't have done it.

P: So anyway, what about the relations with the University Police Department, Bill? Did you have any particular problems relating to that jurisdiction?

- J: No, we didn't have any particular problems with University police.
- P: How about the Alachua County Sheriff's Department? Did you have any particular problems relating to them?
- J: No.
- R: Good cooperation. I think there was good cooperation all the way around and we all worked together during a crises situation. We just didn't have enough manpower. When you're looking at 15,000 to 20,000 students and you've got like thirty-five men total, with all the groups together, maybe forty or forty-five men that you could throw into action, or with a few on backup and a few at the Department doing other things or in holding areas, it's remarkable how it looks. It looks pretty thin for a while.
- P: Did you have any trouble with anybody on the take in the Police Department, anyone that got involved in bribery or anything of that nature?
- J: I don't recall ever having an incident like that.
- P: How about police brutality? Did you have any officers who engaged in that?
- J: Yes. We would have a complaint occasionally of police brutality.
- R: We had to let one police officer go, as a matter of actual fact, for an incident where he used what we felt was unwarranted amount of force to subdue a person.
- P: There was one fellow in the Alachua County Sheriff's Department that had a terrible reputation that way, Julian Smith. Julian was very much accused of roughing up people from time to time when he thought no one was looking. I don't think he was ever brought to the bar of justice with it, but it was pretty well established that he would take care of anyone that got out of hand too well.
- R: Well, there's two or three things there a lot of people didn't know. I knew Julian pretty well. I'm not saying nay nor yea about anything because I wasn't on the Sheriff's Department and I wasn't there all the time but I can tell you that every real bad assignment where a person was a real difficult person to apprehend, they usually sent Julian, so the reputation that he had, on occasion he had to deal with some of the most heinous individuals, some of the most difficult to manage individuals that other people didn't want to mess with at all, and some of the other deputies would just hope and pray they'd never get that assignment. They would give it to Julian when nobody else would really want to try it, so a lot of the reputation I think that he had came with having to make a difficult arrest. The man had a very great fondness for law enforcement. I know that. And he did some extremely dangerous but heroic things in stopping

individuals that could have run automobiles into a crowd of people and killed them if he had not stopped them. So, some of it was justified maybe because he would get really upset when he'd have two or three people on him at a time and he was also a fighter. He used to fight a few years back when they used to have fights in Gainesville. Julian was a pretty good fighter. He was a pretty good scrapper.

P: He was a scrapper in every way.

R: Yes. A good scrapper. I think Julian was a southpaw. I think he was left-handed, if I recall. That was his power side. I don't remember a lot of about all of the calls that he had. I do know he got some real bad assignments. That I know. His brother worked on the Police Department. His brother was a sergeant on the Police Department. Glenn Smith.

J: Oh yes.

R: Glenn Smith was Julian's brother and I worked under Glenn when I was a rookie patrolling. Glenn was one of the best patrol sergeants I have ever seen, one of the most diligent, one of the most thoughtful of the people he served that I ever saw. I was the one who promoted Glenn Smith to Captain when I was Chief of Police because he was a good man.

J: He was a good man.

R: He was just as honest as the day is long, without question, and he loved his job. He loved the people he worked for. You know sometimes, Bill, people get a misplaced reputation because they have some unearthly people to deal with. That's true. And some of the things that you see happen nationally and you see police officers involved in, it's difficult for a person to sit in one place and tell you how it is to deal with someone who is high on drugs and really crazy. I mean totally out of it. They can't feel anything; they want to kill you; they want to bite your ear off; they want to bite your nose off; they would if they could get hold of it. They'll take chunks out of your arm with their teeth and you've got to put them down as quick and efficiently as you can or you're going to end up in little chunks and pieces yourself. It's a difficult thing for anybody who has never faced that to understand that a lot of things police officers have to do, they have to do in the blink of an eye and if it's not done, it can cause tremendous tragedy later on.

P: Right.

R: So, that's why a lot of people don't realize what a law man goes through.

P: Let me ask you, Bill Joiner -- we'll get to Courtnay and we'll kind of finish up with Courtnay here -- but are there any other things you can remember about being Police Chief that you think will be of benefit to go in this business for the Historical Society, Bill?

J: Bill, I don't think of anything in particular. We did develop a reputation for training our men, and that was something that was extremely important.

P: Oh yes, I think that we have established that.

J: Let the public know that that was taking place, and by the same token, the police officer himself had to be living proof of the type of men we had and the type of training we had.

P: Now, in your family history, Bill, we would kind of like to get a little bit on your family tree and I've got a chart here that you can put down where you were born and things like where married, to so and so, and then you father and your mother going back, a family tree, and if you could fill that out at your convenience as far back as you can remember, that will be part of the posterity, too, that we can put into the record.

J: Sure, Bill, be glad to.

P: That will be great. And I'll pick that up later. And we want you to do the same thing, Courtnay. I know your folks came from Williston, didn't they?

R: No, actually, I was born in St. Petersburg.

P: Oh, St. Pete!

R: My mother was from Portland, Maine, and my father actually came to the United States from Canada. He was in World War I, and he wrote a book called "The Flying Fighters" by Major E.M. Roberts.

P: I'll be darned.

R: It's an excellent, excellent rendition of World War I. He was with the Royal Flying Corps out of Canada, and when United States joined the war, he flew with Eddie Rickenbacker's group. He even crashed behind enemy lines flying with Rickenbacker one time and they fought their way out with 45 automatics.

P: I'll be darned. Well, you'll find a place here for your name and then your father and mother and their parents, and go back as far as you can, and we'll get that for the record. Now, Courtnay, let's turn to you. We've already covered some of the things in your administration, but when were you Police Chief?

R: I was Police Chief for only the last four years of my office. I retired in 1980 so four years prior to that I was Chief of Police, but I was Assistant Chief under Bill Joiner and I was Assistant Chief under Noel Freeman, so I did a considerable bit of work for the chief's office constantly. My major area was keeping track of all divisions at one time and any serious problems we had in the street, also to manage a rather large budget and quite a few people. It's like keeping track of a large family when you're Assistant Chief or Chief. You're almost father confessor as well as being a Police Chief.

P: When did you go on the police force?

R: June 7, 1951, wasn't it, Bill? You've got the date better than I have.

J: 1951 is correct. Could I inject something here?

P: Sure. This is Bill Joiner talking again.

J: Courtnay Roberts and I became acquainted in 1947 when he came up to the University of Florida and entered the College of Agriculture. Of course, he grew up on a ranch and it was natural for him to follow that as a livelihood. But he and I became acquainted. He came to see me about he wanted to get acquainted and he wanted to use a pistol range for firearms practice. So that was the beginning of our acquaintance and our friendship. He graduated from the University of Florida in June of 1950, and he worked at the University for a short time and one day he came to see me and said that he had made a decision, a very important decision to him, that he would like to change his career to that of law enforcement. Based on that, I hired him on the 7th day of May, 1951.

R: That's when it was.

J: So I'm responsible or guilty.

P: That's right.

J: Of his change of career. But I think his change of career was a wise decision because he has been very successful in the field of law enforcement.

R: One thing I want to add back in Bill's tenure of office and in my tenure of office, several of our dearest friends were either department heads or they were sectional heads of the University of Florida, and one of the ones that used to help us with forensic evidence was C.B. Pollard, Dr. Pollard.

J: Cash Blair Pollard.

R: Cash Blair Pollard. He was a very, very wonderful man, and he helped us immensely many times when we did not have all the ability to send things up to the FBI at that time.

J: Right. He was a close friend of mine.

R: That's right. He was a very close friend of Bill's. I mention him because I have great respect for him as I had for many college professors at that time, and some of the heads, like the head of the student body. We had some of the finest men.

J: He was in toxicology.

R: Yes, he was in toxicology.

J: He was called on quite often to do laboratory work and he might show you an important case and he was qualified to do that.

R: He was eminently qualified. Another man who was in the College of Chemistry was J.C. Ramsey and I used to shoot with J.C. He's passed away now; so has C.B. Pollard. Another one who I used to shoot with wasn't connected with the University but was a dear friend of both Bill's and mine was Carl Fettner. Fettner used to shoot with both of us at that time, and Carl was extremely interested and we were more or less mutual gun collectors. We liked antiques and we liked beautiful finishes that were put on guns and things of that nature, so we became very dear friends, but the reason I mention the assistance from the University of Florida was because we had a tremendous working rapport with them. They did help us a great deal when we requested it, so it was of great benefit to the Department.

J: We had a very fine relationship.

R: Oh, absolutely. I also want to mention that when I came on the Police Department in 1951, we did not have anyone on the Department at that time with a college degree except myself. But because of Chief Joiner's desire to upgrade every area of that Police Department, we started in with high school degrees, then went into a junior college requirement, and then if you held a command position you had to complete four years of college to hold a command position.

J: That brings us around to the point of when they opened the junior college and several men in our department enrolled in the junior college program at the very beginning. Several of our men.

R: That's right. We also had a desire, we couldn't get a criminal justice system, we couldn't get into the criminal justice system because there wasn't a program at the University of Florida, so I feel that Bill Joiner and I and several other people who were extremely

interested in the Department at the University of Florida, we got a criminal justice program started, but we had to really fight for it because they weren't sure that we would have all of the wherewithal to do this. They didn't know enough people interested to feed the program and it took off like wildfire. It's probably one of the biggest successes the University of Florida has ever had, their Criminal Justice Program. But that was one of the things we helped initiate. I have a background which I will give you before you leave.

P: That's good.

R: It's interesting to know that because of Chief Joiner's desire to upgrade and improve the efficiency of the entire Police Department that we went forward to try to do this. We tried to put a better quality end product out in the street to serve the people and the main requirement that I recall from being a rookie patrolman was the fact that that uniform belongs to the people. It doesn't belong to the man wearing it. You're a representative of the people and sometimes the only representative that someone may meet that comes into a city. Because of that, you had to use every area possible to be of service.

P: Now, Courtnay Roberts is continuing with things he has recollected here, so go ahead, Courtnay.

R: We had a problem at that particular time when a lot of restaurants were refusing to serve people of color or sometimes of various origins and because of this we were having sit-ins and takeovers of restaurants and businesses. Since we were having that in business areas, what it would do is people would just come in and sit down on every stool and at every table and, of course, the place would come to a standstill and nobody was ordering anything, and what do you do? How do you make an arrest of someone sitting in a public place? So, it was a very difficult thing to deal with until we had to investigate laws we had never been into before as law enforcement officers, laws that we had never had a reason to even think about, constitutional laws and areas of that nature. So, we did have that to go through and we were very fortunate that we were able to keep up with the accurate description of every one of these laws so we knew we did not overstep our bounds and we also were fair to everyone concerned. That was our main purpose -- to try to be there for everybody. We wanted to be available to keep the peace, but we also wanted everybody to know that the peace belonged to everyone. It didn't belong to a chosen few, so that was one of the areas that we dealt with. I'm trying to think of what we also had.

P: That thing you're speaking of was about 1962 and the reason I remember it was that in February young Charles Chestnut spoke to the Matheson Center on his recollections of early Gainesville and among other things, he said that the Gainesville Sun never covered any of that. I wasn't actually on the paper. We had just sold the paper but I think the wisdom, if there hasn't been any outbreak of any kind, the wisdom of ignoring it as best

you could until an incident came up because he said that he never heard or saw any of the Ku Klux Klan, but you mention that in the paper you get some hoods in here, and I question his wisdom and judgment to tell you the truth in the way he talked about it, because he was talking about it like it was a great sport and a game. I'm telling you there's some people that wouldn't have felt that was very sporting except when he had a bullet in his head.

R: That's exactly right. It was an extremely dangerous situation and there was some extremely hot blood involved in that particular time and in this nation, and it wasn't just in the Gainesville area, but it was all over the southeastern United States and in other places, too.

P: I believe the solution that he indicated that finally occurred was that a lot of these places just shut down serving and then eventually as the community became more educated and along, then everybody was served alike as it is today but it was a peaceful transition largely and he even said that and I just question his judgment a little bit, not that he isn't a good man or a good person but you know to fool around with fire and then laugh about it later after you've run through the powder keg room without getting blown up, that's what I saw.

R: It was dangerous alright. Each person looks at it from a different perspective, I'm sure, but as a law enforcement officer and, believe me, Bill, I can tell you that personally, and I'm not trying to shed any great light on myself or anything, but my mother was a working woman. She worked very, very hard to try to raise two boys. My mother and father separated when I was very small, and I was very young, but I was raised by a black woman who my mother found sitting on an orange crate over near Largo, Florida, and brought her home with her and took care of her and she was an elderly woman at that time. Her name was Miley Forks. Miley lived with us and she had her own room and everything, and she raised me and my brother. So I didn't really know in my lifetime that there was a difference between the color of a person's skin or anything because I thought that she was like my second momma. And I felt that way about her, so I was a little shocked when I got out of the University of Florida and stepped into a uniform and found all of these tremendous prejudices that were involved with a lot of people. A lot of people, an awful lot of them.

P: Yes, and very intelligent people. Very prominent people.

R: Exactly. It was rather frightening to see some of it and how deep rooted it was, and here we were in uniform and we had to remain as neutral, as neutral as possible, and yet that was not always possible. Miley Forks was a woman of great stamina. She could not read or write, but she knew the Bible exceptionally well because it had been read to her considerably. This woman did live during the time of slavery. She died at the age of 113 in a home down near Clearwater that we had her in, taking care of her, and we loved

her. She was like family, I mean truly like family. She was one of the sweetest women I ever saw. But by the same token, when you have that kind of a closeness and that kind of a relationship, certainly it would be difficult for you to feel any prejudice. I think as Chief Joiner has expressed, he had the same feeling too, that we were there to serve everyone and try to serve everyone equally and we even went out of our way, I went many times to various church services to get a feedback from the ministers in the community, also from Charles Chestnut, Sr., as well as Charles Chestnut, Jr. We knew both of them very well, and some of the other prominent black leaders in the community.

J: Charles, Sr. was a good friend of mine.

P: Well thought of.

R: That's right. Charles, Sr., was a well thought of man, as was his whole family. Of course, any community at that time was having difficulty. When I went on the Department, there were separate restrooms, separate drinking fountains, everything was separate, and you know I hadn't really noticed until everybody started calling it to our attention.

P: Well, the old rule of segregation was roughly that wherever you stood you could mingle and mix, but wherever you sat or lay down there was no mixing at all.

R: Isn't that incredible!

P: Yes. Unbelievable.

R: It was a problem. It could have been a serious one had it not been handled properly.

P: All right. Anything else, Courtney, that you can think of.

R: I could probably go on endlessly with various stories of a sort. I'm getting ready to write a book. I've got a lot of it on tape.

P: Why don't we do this then? Why don't we let me come back and you assemble some of these thoughts and we'll . . .

R: I've got a lot of them on tape right now, on video tape, a voice actuated tape recorder, and many of the cases that have occurred in Gainesville that I have brought to mind over the last few years.

P: We'd love to have that tape and we can transcribe that as part of this history. That would be great. Will you provide those to me and I'll come back and get these and bring you a copy of what we've done here and we can at that time, if we have any supplementary

tape, we can put it on and get these tapes and we'll treasure them and take them down there and get them transcribed.

R: If you could give me a copy of the transcription, I'd appreciate it, because a lot of these cases. What you have to be really careful of is you don't name names.

P: Well, actually you do. Now as someone who really understands the libel laws, you can't libel anybody that's dead. A lot of people we're talking about today now are gone. Another thing is that it depends on how widespread the publication, how much the damage. This is going to be for perusal of anybody in the public but as far as being widespread, it will be historical.

R: I was very careful in most of these tapes to try to not give names or anything because writing a book, it would be difficult.

P: Yes, you want to be pretty careful because that can be damaging. Let me ask you this, Courtnay, because this tape's getting ready to close, we could put another tape on if we have to, but you say your dad came from Canada and you grew up in St. Pete area. Right?

R: I was born in St. Petersburg, Florida, and when my mother married a second time, my stepfather had bought three thousand acres of land in the sand hills up around Brooksville, Florida, in between Highway 29 in Brooksville off of Highway 50.

P: How many acres?

R: Three thousand, for a dollar an acre. It was during the time you could pick up land pretty cheap, and I helped clear it. I helped fence it. I helped cross-fence it. I helped put it into pasture. I helped develop certain new feeds and seed crops from the University of Florida down there on that property.

P: In Brooksville.

R: In Brooksville. Hairy indigo, African pangola grass, and a number of different legumes. At this time they're not new, but at that time they were and we put test plots in on various farms around the state to see how these things could do in Florida, and we used that ranch as one of the areas where we would do test plots.

P: All right. Now your background will come on this chart, about your mother and your father and your background there, and then, Bill, you said you came from Alabama. Right?

J: Yes, I was born in Alabama.

P: Where were you born?

J: A little town called Albertville.

P: I've heard of Albertville.

J: Albertville, Alabama.

P: And what was the date of birth?

J: September 13, 1909.

P: All right. And you came to Gainesville first as a police officer? Right? No, you came first as something else, didn't you? You didn't come as a police officer, did you? When you came to Gainesville, you were doing something else, weren't you?

J: When we came to Gainesville, I'm talking about now in 1932, we were living in Texas, and 1932 was the Great Depression, the tail end of the Great Depression, and we had relatives in Gainesville, and my dad was in the real estate business and had been for many years, and on the Crash of 1929, my dad, my mother and father, like a lot of people lost everything they had. We were living in Texas, so that is really what brought us to Gainesville was the fact that we had relatives in Gainesville.

P: Who were they?

J: The Fettner family. J.O. Fettner, who was in real estate.

R: That was Carl Fettner's daddy.

P: Was he an uncle of yours, your mother's brother.

J: Mrs. Fettner was my father's sister, so we came to Gainesville because we had relatives here and felt we would stand a better chance of making a new start after the Crash in a place where we were known.

P: Yes. Okay.

J: So, my father did very well over the years. He prospered. He worked hard. In fact, I was familiar with Gainesville. My mother and dad spent a winter in Gainesville when I was at school in Atlanta and I came for Christmas holiday, and that was my first time in Gainesville, in 1925.

P: Kind of winding this up now. Courtney, what was your birthdate?

R: April 29, 1926.

P: You are a little older than I am.

R: Yes, sir. I just turned the big 70.