

HISTORICAL MEMORIAL CENTER

Pennsylvania State Police

Oral History Interview of:

ALBERT R. VISH

June 12 and 13, 2006

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. Welcome. My name is Shelly Levins (ph). I'm here with Retired Trooper Albert Vish and this is the Pennsylvania State Police Oral Histories Project. Today is June 12, 2006. We're here at the Pennsylvania State Police Academy and Mr. Vish, do I have your permission to record this interview with you today?

MR. VISH:

Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

All right. Well, thank you for being here. We really appreciate your effort.

MR. VISH:

It's my pleasure.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. What I'd really like to start off talking about today is how you came to become interested in a career with the State Police. Did you know a State Policeman when you were younger or how did you -- what was your first interaction with the State Police as a young man?

MR. VISH:

That goes all the way back to ninth grade in high school, Shel. We were asked to do a book report on a career and at that time I

chose the Pennsylvania State Police. So I've wanted to be one since ninth grade in high school. My first interaction with a trooper was probably still in high school. I can't remember the exact year or date. I was in my car and I was going out the road I believe to see my wife or somebody and there was a trooper parked alongside of the road and I pulled over and I had a talk with him and he was just so -- I mean, he just impressed the heck out of me and...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...I knew that's what I wanted to do, you know, ever since then.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And finally I made it. My police career started in 1966 in my hometown of Sewickley. I was on the Sewickley Police Force for about 11 months and then I applied for the state and finally I made it and, you know, that was my lifelong dream. So 1967 is when I came to the State Police Academy. I believe it was April of '67.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And that's how it all started.

INTERVIEWER:

And did you feel that starting out in municipal police or township police or whatever it was, was kind of a foot in the door to get into the State Police or why did you start that way rather than just applying directly to the State Police?

MR. VISH:

Well, I was married at the time, so I needed work naturally and I had three children -- or...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I better make this right because my wife's watching this. I think it was two at the time. I had the third while I -- she had -- we had the third while I was in the State Police. But -- no. I don't really think that it had anything to do with my getting on with the Pennsylvania State Police. I just knew I always wanted to go into law enforcement. I knew eventually, you know, I wanted to be a State Trooper and I was going to make it. That was my goal. Back home, they were looking for police officers, so I

applied and at that time, you know, when you applied, there was no training as such today. When I was sworn in, I was given a badge and a gun and said here it is, Al. You know, you're a policeman. So -- yeah. They didn't have -- the municipal police officers' training class of course wasn't mandatory at that time...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...so I never ever went through that. I was a police officer for 11 months again and then I applied for the State Police and made it. But I don't think that, you know, that helped or hindered me either way. Personally I think it probably hurt me because when I came to the Academy, naturally I had 11 months of police work under my belt, you know, in the little town of Sewickley, PA, and I probably thought I knew it all. I really didn't know anything, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

And that's the first thing they told us. I remember that distinctly. You know, for those of us that were police officers coming to the

Academy, the -- you know, when they greet you that first day, you know, they make sure that they put you in your place. If...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you police officers, you know, or former police officers think that you, you know, have all the answers, forget it. And they were right.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

They were -- I have them now.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. Right. They break you down before they...

MR. VISH:

Oh, they do.

INTERVIEWER:

...build you up. Right?

MR. VISH:

Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

Start with a clean slate.

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

So let's talk about maybe perhaps what a shock it was that -- being a police officer and then all of a sudden having to go through all that training. Tell us what happened when you arrived at the State Police Academy and had to begin your training. What did you have to do?

MR. VISH:

Well, I was here I believe a week and I remember calling home and telling my wife I'm not going to make it. You know, I -- at that time -- first of all, I was a big baby. Again, you know, I left my wife and my little babies at home by herself and then I'm out here by myself and I never do well without my wife. That's why, you know, she's here with me, you know, today. She's in the other room, but at least I know she's there. So it was really tough for me. I would call home at least once, twice a week, you know, explaining to her this is really tough. You know, they're not messing around with us down here. If you can't cut it, you're

going home and that was the absolute worse fear of my life was naturally to come down here after all those years of wanting to be here and fail. So it was pretty tough on me at that particular time. I was homesick. You know, every chance I had to get home or to make a phone call home, I did. I was constantly worried about the kids. The money was terrible I believe at that particular time, 1967. I entered the Academy and they were paying me something like \$3,100 a month (sic) at that time, which was half of our salary upon graduation that we would've gotten...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know, when we graduated. So it was pretty intense training and at that time also they had cut the training period from six months down to four. So they had to cram I would imagine six months worth of training into four for us and it was intense.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Why do you think they did that, cut the training?

MR. VISH:

I believe it was probably because they needed more people out in the field, you know, and that was the way to get them out there quicker, I would think.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I don't think they cut anything out of the training. We were in class on some days until eight o'clock in the evenings, so...

INTERVIEWER:

Uh-huh.

MR. VISH:

...it was pretty tough.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

Not to say that it's not tough now. As a matter of fact, I don't think I probably would've made it. You know, today's day and age, these troopers, these kids are phenomenal and they're here for six months.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I don't know if I would've made six months.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I'm just glad it was four.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. And what sorts of things did they train you in? What did you have to do to graduate?

MR. VISH:

Well, we had to learn the Vehicle Code of the Commonwealth. We had to go through the Crimes Code. Back then, they weren't teaching us typing but they were teaching us penmanship. You know, how -- making the O's and everything and the -- when you were in elementary school, plus a lot of swimming. We rode the horses once a week. I don't know if they still ride the horses today or not. We had stable duty then, tons of fieldtrips. Just everything that -- you know, that we needed to be a well-rounded trooper out there in the field.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Yeah. And what about your weapons training? What did you have to do for that?

MR. VISH:

We had to qualify. We were on the range. I can't remember exactly how often...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...but we were on the range. You had to qualify before we could graduate. Everybody did and back then, you know, we were using revolvers as opposed to the semiautomatics that they have today. So the equipment was a little more outdated at that particular time.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But you have to figure I went through in '67, you know, and this is, what, 2006 and -- I'm sweating a lot.

INTERVIEWER:

You're fine.

MR. VISH:

I'm sorry. All right.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. And who -- do you remember say -- well, how large was your class first of all? The others who were going through with you.

MR. VISH:

Yeah. There were a hundred and -- I believe 126 in my class...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...which was quite a large class at that time. I believe we graduated 116. I'm not sure.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But it was a pretty large class.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. So there were some drop out?

MR. VISH:

Yes, there were. There were some that were, you know, homesick, thought this wasn't for them. They were here, you know, two, three weeks into the program and they thought maybe it was best to move on.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

We lost a couple I remember about three weeks, maybe four weeks prior to graduation because of grades, et cetera. So...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know, they cut them out. They cut you down.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Right. And all of those were men.

MR. VISH:

They were.

INTERVIEWER:

Correct? Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Back then, they weren't taking women. I believe the first class of women was '72. I'm not sure.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But in '67, no. They were all men.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

All guys.

INTERVIEWER:

Right. And what type of -- what did you have to wear during the Academy? When were you issued...

MR. VISH:

Well, pretty much -- we were issued the same thing that the cadets are wearing now. They were...

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

...blue in color, I believe. Just a shirt, tie and slacks, trousers, and that's what we ran around in most of the time.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Do you remember who some of your instructors were or who the director of the Academy was at the time?

MR. VISH:

I do not remember who the director of the Academy was. I remember some of the instructors. Well, my -- Sergeant John Angel, Lightner (ph), Sergeant Lightner -- he was our -- the white class's section commander at that particular time. But, you know, now I've kind of like forgotten, you know, the...

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

...names. That's been about, what, 30 years ago. Thirty-some years ago.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So...

INTERVIEWER:

What sort of physical fitness training did you receive?

MR. VISH:

It was tough. Yeah. We were in the gym daily working out, lifting weights, boxing, judo, swimming, running.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Cardiac hill is the -- I see the cadets still run cardiac hill. When I was running or when I was going through the -- I don't know if they still today. They had us run it backwards, up the hill backwards, and we used to do leapfrogs, going up and down that hill and again it was pretty tough.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

One of the big things I do remember in the training session, there used to be a big turkey farm out here someplace.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I don't know if it's still around, but they used to run us early morning, like six o'clock in the morning out to this turkey farm and put us in front of the turkey pens and that's where we did our calisthenics. So I remember that, so it was kind of gruesome, you know, but it was...

INTERVIEWER:

Smelly.

MR. VISH:

Oh, it was definitely smelly. But when I came out of the Academy, I was a mean, lean fighting machine of 180 pounds and I just absolutely, you know, felt the best I've ever felt.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So the physical training part of the entire program I think was the best for me.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Good idea. Thank you. Where...

INTERVIEWER:

Thank you.

MR. VISH:

Joe, where you going?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

(Inaudible)

MR. VISH:

All right, buddy.

INTERVIEWER:

Was there a particular piece of the Academy that was would you say the most difficult for you?

MR. VISH:

You're not -- we're not filming, right? We are filming?

INTERVIEWER:

It's okay.

MR. VISH:

No. I can't really put my finger on any one particular segment that was tougher for me than -- if I had to, it probably would've been the book-learning part.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

I always had a problem with the book-learning end, you know, of things because I -- my mind was constantly wandering on other things that I would rather do, naturally, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

The physical end of the Academy I enjoyed very, very much. But the classroom work was tough.

INTERVIEWER:

So if you...

MR. VISH:

So...

INTERVIEWER:

...were to say that there was a piece that you particularly excelled at, would that have been the...

MR. VISH:

I'd have to say...

INTERVIEWER:

...physical...

MR. VISH:

...it was the physical end of it. Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

I hated the horses. Hated the horses. You know, I -- every time I'd go down to the stables, you know, I just -- I got kicked by one and ever since then -- and you weren't allowed to touch those horses. You're probably still not allowed to touch them today, you know, but one of the cadets that was in charge of -- or not the cadets. One of the troopers that was in charge of the stables came over and took care of the horse at that particular time.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But we as cadets were not allowed to touch them, you know, and they were kind of nasty, so you had to be...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...careful around them and obviously I wasn't careful enough, so I got kicked by one. But I never liked the horses.

INTERVIEWER:

Had you had any experience with horses before you came?

MR. VISH:

None. Never. Outside the fact that, you know, maybe I took a ride on one with my friends on a weekend, but...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...I had no experience whatsoever.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. So once you were done with your four months -- and of course like we had talked about earlier, they wanted you to start as a clean slate, but you weren't. You had experienced the police.

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

Police work for almost a year.

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

So what were you able to draw from there in your Academy training and how was it different from the things you had learned in that year with the Sewickley Police Department?

MR. VISH:

Well, every...

INTERVIEWER:

What was the difference?

MR. VISH:

Well, the big difference, Shelly, was the fact that when I was a Sewickley Police Officer, I had no training at all.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

None. Everything that I learned, I learned from fellow police officers that were on the job with me or whatever I would pick up, you know, reading from a -- this book or that book. When I came to the Academy, everything was just totally different. I knew nothing. That 11 months, you know, just absolutely was nothing. No help to me at all when I entered the...

INTERVIEWER:

No?

MR. VISH:

...Academy because here, we had to go to the books. We did it by the books. We learned the -- all the Vehicle Code stuff and all the Criminal Code and all the Crimes Code, you know, from the books, the way it probably should've been learned, you know, back in...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...1966 when I was with the Sewickley Police Department. Not taking anything away from that 11 months. I enjoyed it as a matter of fact very, very much. I was the youngest man on the police department at that time, which meant that I was the beat man.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So I enjoyed walking the beat, you know, interacting with the people and rattling the doors at night, you know, making sure things were locked up. That kind of stuff.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But when I came into the Academy, again, you know, everything was done different. I liked to kind of compare it to Sewickley Police Department. I was an amateur. The Pennsylvania State Police, I became a professional.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So I thought that was a big difference.

INTERVIEWER:

Now in the mid to late '60s, these were somewhat tumultuous times for -- in the United States and obviously in Pennsylvania...

MR. VISH:

Sure.

INTERVIEWER:

...as well. So what was -- what would you say were the public perceptions of the State Police at that time?

MR. VISH:

I remember the Pennsylvania State Police always being looked upon as the premier police department, you know, in the country at that time. I don't think that has changed. I think it's because,

you know, we're taught so professionally and I think we're -- it -- because when the cadets come out of this Academy and they become troopers, they know they have a responsibility to the citizens, you know, the Commonwealth and they've been taught to be professional. The smaller police departments I don't think had the time, the resources or the money, you know, to put that kind of training into their people. Again I also realize, Shel, early in my career that the Pennsylvania State Police could never, ever do the job without the local police departments.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

There's just too much territory, you know, for us to cover. You had to rely on the local police departments, you know, in your station area.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Yeah. Exactly. So when did you graduate?

MR. VISH:

I graduated in -- July I believe of '67...

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

...I came out.

INTERVIEWER:

Now in -- way back in 1923...

MR. VISH:

I wasn't here.

INTERVIEWER:

...Lynn Adams, he decided that everyone should memorize and recite the Call of Honor. So...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...of course you had to do that as a graduating cadet.

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

And I'm wondering if you may still be able to do that for us today...

MR. VISH:

I...

INTERVIEWER:

...if you think you can.

MR. VISH:

I don't think I can only because they've changed it, you know,
since my...

INTERVIEWER:

(Inaudible). Very slightly.

MR. VISH:

Yeah. So very slightly. I remember most of it. "I am a Pennsylvania State Policeman, a soldier of the law. To me is entrusted the honor of the force. I must serve honestly and faithfully and if need be lay down my life as others have done before me rather than swerve from the path of duty." And then from there it gets a little hazy. We had to recite that before we graduated...

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

...you know and...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...I can't.

INTERVIEWER:

You did well.

MR. VISH:

Well, I did better than what I thought I would do, you know, but I probably should remember it, but I can't. I know they've changed it.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. What would you say were your family's reactions to your goals of wanting to be a law enforcement officer and your enlistment and then your subsequent graduation? Can you talk about how your family felt about that?

MR. VISH:

Oh, absolutely. They were the proudest...

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

...proudest people that I could ever, ever, you know, hope to be with. My mom and dad were just beaming.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

My wife was ecstatic. If it wouldn't have been for my wife, I'd have never, ever made it. You know, she was the one that pushed me, that said yes, this is, you know, what I want to do.

Go do it. Don't worry about me. Don't worry about the children. I'll take care of things at home. You know, keep your mind -- keep yourself focused. As a matter of fact, the entire town -- you know, I can remember the neighbors, you know, when I got my acceptance letter running through the backyard, you know, over to my grandmother's place and my mom's place at that time and all the neighbors were excited for me, you know, and just -- it was probably the most exciting time in my life...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...or at least one of them, other than naturally the birth of my children and my marriage.

INTERVIEWER:

So Sewickley was where you grew up?

MR. VISH:

Sewickley is where I grew up. Right.

INTERVIEWER:

Right. And...

MR. VISH:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

...how big of a town is that?

MR. VISH:

It's one square mile. At the time, there were I think something like 7500 people in Sewickley...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...at that time. Very, very quaint little, you know, community.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

There -- and I don't want you to confuse it with Sewickley Heights, which is right next door to us, but Sewickley Heights and Sewickley were kind of like separated. But...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...a very nice town. I -- and I always wanted to move back there, but as I got into my career and I started, you know, getting older, everybody in Sewickley that I wanted to move back for, you know, was gone. They either passed...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...away, you know, moved on. So my wife and I made the best of it in Butler where I was stationed.

INTERVIEWER:

Right. Um-hum. So with such a small town, were there any other State Troopers in your town at that time?

MR. VISH:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

No?

MR. VISH:

None. I had a cousin -- actually it was my mom and dad's cousin. It probably wouldn't be my cousin, but he was a State Trooper when I was growing up as a child. That was my first -- I should say that was my first, you know, contact or interaction with a trooper. His name was Jimmy Aloy (ph) and he used to come over to the house a lot, him and his family and, you know, I would talk to him on -- for hours on end about being a trooper. But that was -- he was a trooper back in the '40s and '50s, so nobody else that I can -- I'm sure there was nobody else at that time, you know, from Sewickley.

INTERVIEWER:

Your colleagues at the Sewickley Police, what did they think about you leaving to go become a State Trooper and did they have aspirations of that themselves?

MR. VISH:

Some of them did, Shel. Most of them were I believe too old at the time because back in '67, the cutoff period was 30...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...and, you know, the police officers that I came on with in Sewickley were probably in their 30s or older. I was the youngest one at 24, I believe.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

I'm sure that some of them, you know, wish they could and hope they could and they would've made excellent troopers. But, you know, it -- just because of the age thing, they just couldn't. They were excited for me.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

At that time, I -- you know, I was a little overweight. I had to lose I think ten pounds or something and they would just constantly be on me when they knew, you know, that I had applied that make sure I was eating healthy. They wouldn't let me have, you know, all the candies and the sugars that I wanted to have.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So they really looked after me. It was a good experience. It really and truly was. I -- and I made some superb friends at that time. Some of them are still alive today, you know, and I -- we sit and talk and the surrounding police departments were even behind me. You know, the Edgeworth, Sewickley Heights, Leetsdale; all of these police officers saw me grow up, you know. They were the ones chasing me off the street corners. So they were -- you know, they were just so excited for me.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Yeah. One question that -- we were talking a little bit about your weapons training earlier.

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

But what I was curious is before you joined Sewickley Police, had you ever fired a weapon or owned a weapon?

MR. VISH:

Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, you did?

MR. VISH:

Yeah. I was into hunting and fishing.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I hunted a lot, so I had guns, you know, from the past. But the only shooting that I did was naturally while I was hunting or at the shooting range just shooting at cans or targets, et cetera. So -- yeah. I was familiar with armament; you know, guns, that kind of stuff. But it was nothing like I was -- you know, I wasn't really prepared for the formal training that I got when I came in here.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Yeah.

MR. VISH:

I'm just glad I had it, you know...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...again because, you know, Sewickley said here. Here's your revolver. Here's your badge. Go to it...

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

...kid. It was tough.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. Good. So once you graduated, who attended your graduation from your immediate family?

MR. VISH:

My mom and dad came down. My aunt -- I remember one of my aunts coming down. My wife came down. I don't know if my brother and sister were here. I know several next-door neighbors came down.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, good.

MR. VISH:

It was a pretty big affair.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And I was so proud. You know, I'm still proud. Again I may have mentioned it to you. You know, once a Statie, always a Statie.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

It was the best 25 years of my life and I -- you know, I look back on it as such. I made so many good friends, you know, here at the Academy and, you know, throughout my career. As a matter of fact, one of them is in there with my wife now. You know, Janie First (ph) and Joe Nolte. Joe has just -- I could go and on. You know, the major -- they're just amazing people.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

I wish I were back. I miss it.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Is there anyone from your graduating class that you became particularly close with?

MR. VISH:

From my graduating class?

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

Yeah. There was a young man that I used to ride back and forth with. As a matter of fact, I think he just recently retired. He was the oldest member of my class remaining, I believe, and his name was Don Sumter (ph).

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

Do you know Don?

INTERVIEWER:

I don't know if I do.

MR. VISH:

I think he retired as a corporal or a sergeant out of one of the satellite training centers. But he and I traveled back and forth and we got pretty close. Yeah. I could tell you stories about him, but I...

INTERVIEWER:

Let's hear them.

MR. VISH:

No. I'm liable to get some kind of detail scrubbing walls or something at one of these -- yeah. We used to fall out for roll call every morning, you know, six o'clock in the morning, 5:30. I

don't know when it was. But when I was in the Academy, it was cold, so I'd -- I'm almost embarrassed to tell you this now. So we would have -- we'd fall out in these old green -- they weren't mackinaws, but they were heavy coats that they naturally issued us and we'd be standing in line waiting for the DI to come out and it's cold out there and we're trying to stay warm and my nose would start running. Well, Don was always several guys up from me, so I would always run out of line and go wipe my nose on the sleeve of his coat, and he would just go ballistic. He would be chasing me. Two or three minutes, here comes the DI and the next think you know, Vish and Sumter are doing pushups out on the parade field. So -- yeah. Don I would have to say was probably -- I leaned on him quite a bit, you know, going through the Academy.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But we did okay.

INTERVIEWER:

You were a mischief-maker.

MR. VISH:

Well, I wasn't a mischief-maker, Shel. I was just kind of rambunctious. You know, I just couldn't really let it go. You know, I had to -- and I think it was good. We had to do that, you know, because the training was intense. It really and truly was and again, I'm sure it's the same way today. You know, the cadets -- these kids have to some release, you know, for some...

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

...of that tension and I guess that was mine, you know. Yes. I was always kidding, messing around and always getting in trouble for it. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, besides pushups, what other sorts of disciplinary actions were there?

MR. VISH:

Well, I remember one time we were supposed to go home. It was my class or my section's weekend to go home and you stand inspection every time before you go home. You had to pass this inspection -- room inspection and -- yourself and I didn't make it. So my punishment for that was I had to stay back. I lost my weekend and I had to spit-shine 116 pair of

shoes. I had to spit-shine all the cadets' shoes for that weekend. So, you know, stuff like that, and, you know, there were -- they called it -- we called it fatigue duty. Scrubbing walls, you know...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...scrubbing floors, the bathrooms, et cetera. I don't know if they still do that today, you know. I...

INTERVIEWER:

How long did it take you to shine 116 pairs?

MR. VISH:

Weekend.

INTERVIEWER:

An entire weekend.

MR. VISH:

I didn't do the best job in the world on them, you understand, but, you know, I did what I could do.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So those kinds of things. And it was all -- you know, they never, ever did anything to us to put anybody in danger or to hurt us. You know, these things were -- they were done to show you that,

you know, discipline is the number one thing. You've got to have it, especially in a police organization. Also in my career down here I remember maybe it was two months into my career, we were not allowed to -- you were never allowed to stand out in the hall or stand around anywhere slouching with your hands in your pockets, that kind of stuff. Well, they caught Al, so my punishment for that was the rest of my stay at the Academy thank God which wasn't really that long, I had to sew up all the pockets in my shirts...

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

...and my pants. So you can imagine how tough it was for me to run around this Academy carrying everything in my hands.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

So that kind of stuff. It was great. Great memories.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Kind of messing with your head a little.

MR. VISH:

Correct. Right. You know, that's the way they did it.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

You know, if you couldn't handle it, if you couldn't take it, this place could be really tough for you.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But they were great. They were great instructors. You know, they never, ever turned from us if we have a problem or if we needed to talk, you know. It was a good place to be.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I miss it. I imagine you can tell that.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Was there ever an instructor that was -- had a particular influence on you that really stood out from the others?

MR. VISH:

Yes, and I'm trying to think of his last name. His first name was Frances and I know if Joe was in here, he could give me his last name. Oh, my -- I can see him. He went on to be I believe a lieutenant colonel.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Frances -- the last name just -- I can't think of it right now. But -- yes. He was very influential on me because again, while I was at the Academy, I was -- you know, I was homesick all the time a lot. Fighting that, fighting the bookwork, that kind of stuff, and I remember him taking me aside one day -- as a matter of fact, at that time he was one of the -- my PT instructors.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I believe he was a corporal at the time or maybe even a trooper. But him taking me aside one time and just, you know, sitting down and talking with me. I think it was about maybe 12 weeks, you know, into the class and I was just kind of beat. Thought I was going to, you know, pack up and go home and...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...he talked me out of it, you know, and then he said, you know, this is nothing. You'll make it. You know, when you get out into

the field, you're going to see -- you're going to look back on this thing and just -- I remember that and I -- if I had to pick one, it would be him.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I wish I could remember his last name. I will, you know, before this interview is over.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. And did you thank him later in your career?

MR. VISH:

You know, I never remember formally thanking him. I do remember seeing him, you know, and again talking with him, but I don't really ever remember formally thanking him. And if I could do that, you know, I would do that.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

If I could just remember his last name. I'd put it in this interview.

INTERVIEWER:

Now we talked about your wife was proud and your -- or your parents were proud...

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

...and grandparents. How do you think your kids -- or how old were they when you enlisted and started at...

MR. VISH:

They were...

INTERVIEWER:

...the Academy?

MR. VISH:

...babies.

INTERVIEWER:

Just babies?

MR. VISH:

They were babies. But during my career, they were -- you know, they went through elementary school, high school. I remember them having a couple of problems with it...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...but not from their side or their end. You know, friends that knew that I was a trooper, you know, would badger them, get on their case every once in a while. You know, I don't know if it was

because maybe, you know, I had a run-in with them or whatever the case may be. But my children were absolutely ecstatic that their dad was a, you know, Pennsylvania State Trooper. Here's a story for you.

INTERVIEWER:

Good.

MR. VISH:

My oldest girl -- God love her. I -- you know, she's -- I'm not supposed to tell you how old she is, but she's my oldest. She has three children of her own now. But I remember when she was in -- a junior in high school and she was just -- they -- at that time, they were getting ready to go for their driver's tests. And she was driving at the time, but a friend of hers, a classmate I remember was scheduled to come over to the barracks that day for a driver's test. So my daughter, you know, in her infinite wisdom thought that she would help this guy, so she writes him a little note. She said here, you give this to the driver's exam unit when you go over there for your test. They'll take care of you. And the note said "Dear Trooper -- Dear Mr. Trooper, my dad is Trooper Al Vish and I want you to please give this young man as much consideration as you can for taking his driver's test," and she signed it Carrie Anne (ph) Vish. This kid

comes over for his test and he gives this note to the trooper.

Well, needless to say, he didn't take his test that day.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

Trooper sent him home. Trooper Vish gets called upstairs to the captain's office and I had to explain, you know, to him that this is just my daughter's way of being very proud of her dad being a trooper. But to this day, you know, I tell that story and my daughter gets mad at me because now she's kind a little embarrassed about it, see. But -- yeah. That's true. That's a true story.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I wish I still had the note, but the trooper ripped it up, you know, and sent the kid on his way.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

So he had to come back the next day. That's all.

INTERVIEWER:

With no note.

MR. VISH:

Right. With no note. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Troopers were giving driver's exams then?

MR. VISH:

Oh, yes. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

What year was that? Do you remember?

MR. VISH:

Sure. '67, '68. I put four months on the driver's exam unit.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, okay. Right.

MR. VISH:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Was that the first thing you did when you...

MR. VISH:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

After graduation?

MR. VISH:

No. First thing I did was -- well, they only gave driver's exams I believe two days a week or maybe it was three. Can't remember.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

No. I was on traffic at the time and then I put four months steady on the driver's exam unit.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And then civilians started taking over.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, immediately thereafter?

MR. VISH:

Pretty close to the -- maybe five, six years later...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know, the civilians started -- they still had a trooper there who was in charge of the unit...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

..but that -- you know, they freed up the driver's exam troopers for road work.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I enjoyed it. That's probably why they only kept me there four months. I was having too much of a good time. You know, the kids that came in there, you know, they were so nervous and shaky to begin with, you know, I would start off with the same speech every time I would sit, you know, with one of them in the car. "Listen, I want you to relax." You know, we're in uniform naturally. "Don't think of me sitting over here in uniform. Just think of me, you know, as an uncle, your dad who's taking you out for a drive." And they really appreciated that...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know. Sometimes it didn't work. So...

INTERVIEWER:

Anyone get in an accident while you were with them?

MR. VISH:

Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Really?

MR. VISH:

Um-hum. Yeah. A couple of times, they put us up against the barrier, you know, and then you'd just have to terminate the exam, you know, and stamp failed and you're upset. They're upset, you know, and they'd have to come back.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But it was good duty. I...

INTERVIEWER:

Really?

MR. VISH:

...enjoyed it.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Well, let's take a couple steps back. After graduation...

MR. VISH:

Okay.

INTERVIEWER:

...where did they send you and how immediate was it or did you have a little bit of a break?

MR. VISH:

When we came out of the Academy, they gave us I believe five days off...

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, good.

MR. VISH:

...and then we had to report to our duty station. Mine in my particular case was Butler, so I spent my entire career in Butler. But the first three months of my career, I was bounced around on the coach-trooper training program. So...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...I spent time down in Beaver, the -- Beaver Falls and I spent a month in New Castle and then back to Butler and then that's where I spent my career until '90 and then in 1990, I was transferred to the organized crime unit.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And I spent the last two-and-a-half, three years of my career there and retired from there. But it was still Troop D Butler I was detached from.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

So...

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

...I'm a Butler born and bred boy.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. How far is Butler from Sewickley?

MR. VISH:

About 25 miles.

INTERVIEWER:

Not bad.

MR. VISH:

No. It wasn't bad at all. At that time, they tried to keep us one county away from our home.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

See they didn't want to put you in your home county until you, you know, had some experience under your belt, and then you could transfer back. You could ask for a transfer anywhere after three years. We had to put three years in there...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...and then we could transfer. But I didn't -- you know, I didn't want to transfer back. I was close enough to home just to keep me, you know, out of that particular area where I was going to be running into friends or family and, you know, have to make those decisions, you know, do I or don't I.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So I was fortunate.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

Butler -- I raised my family in Butler. That's where we are today.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Good place.

INTERVIEWER:

Where did they live while you were at the Academy?

MR. VISH:

They were in Sewickley, my wife and the -- I believe we had two.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Shelly, if I'm messing this up, I know I'm going to hear about it. I know we had the oldest. I had two girls at the time. I can't remember when I had my son. He was born -- well, no. I had a year on. He was born in '68. Right? Al.

INTERVIEWER:

Al is 11/1/68.

MR. VISH:

Right. So I had the two girls...

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

...when I went through the Academy -- or my wife, you know, had the two girls...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...and they were living in Sewickley...

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

...at the time, so...

INTERVIEWER:

But as soon as you were stationed at Butler, did your family immediately relocate or did you just...

MR. VISH:

No. It was about a month or two before we moved from Sewickley into Butler. I remember a bad experience I had at that particular time when I was stationed in New Castle driving back and forth from Sewickley to New Castle and I was finishing up a midnighter in New Castle. Jumped in my car to drive home and fell asleep and ended up on the other side of the road. I don't know how. You know, I never hit a car. Never missed -- never hit anything and oh, it was scary, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And after that, you know, I knew it was time. We had to really do something quickly here, so we moved. We moved from Sewickley to Butler.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. You were allowed to live in Sewickley with your family and commute...

MR. VISH:

That's right.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

Right. There were no restrictions for the State Police as to where we lived.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, now today there are restrictions on -- with the locals. I don't know if there's any restrictions for the state. I don't...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I -- you know, I'm not aware of any. But local police departments sometimes put that restriction on their police officers. Want you to live in the area that you're policing.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. This three-month -- you called it coach training?

MR. VISH:

Coach training.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

Was that somewhat of a trial period?

MR. VISH:

Actually -- yeah. Absolutely. Actually it was only two months, Shel.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, okay.

MR. VISH:

Yes, it was. You had to keep a notebook and your coach kept a notebook on you. If you didn't perform, you know, up to snuff, that was one of the ways that, you know, they could weed you out. They could fire you.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Now it wasn't -- I don't want you think we went in there, you know, and they were -- it was like the -- going through the Academy again, because it wasn't. You rode with a seasoned officer, you know, for a month at a time and then you switched off and you learned from them. I think that was probably one of the best teaching tools, you know, that they could possibly come out with. I -- they still do that today, I believe, but I don't know for how long. Well, I think our probationary period at that time was 15 months, so all the way up through the 15-month period, you know, if you didn't perform the way you were supposed to perform, they could've gotten rid of you. Could've fired you, court-marshaled you.

INTERVIEWER:

Right. You had two coaches then?

MR. VISH:

I had two.

INTERVIEWER:

Right? And do you remember who they were?

MR. VISH:

I remember one of them...

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

...and that was Richard Merman (ph) who was stationed in Butler with me at the time. I do remember Dick.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Good guy. I was fortunate to get, you know, a good coach both times. Not that you get bad coaches, but these two -- the two that I had were exceptional.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I think they had to be, you know, just to put up with me and I -- at that time, again I was 25 years old. I was still growing...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...so to speak and maturing. So I was probably a handful for them. But...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know, they did it and they taught me what I needed to know to stay there for 25 years.

INTERVIEWER:

Right. And was there ever a situation during that two-month period that you felt you needed more training for that you were just overwhelmed with?

MR. VISH:

Absolutely. I remember when we first landed in Butler being talked to by the CO and I believe at that time, I want to say it was Captain Brannigan (ph), but I'm not sure. The staff talking to the new cadets. I believe there was seven of us that went to Butler at that time.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And I remember them telling us, you know, you just came out of the Academy, but here's -- this is what I want you -- we want you to remember your training at the Academy, but it is different out here in the field. And buddy, they were right. It certainly was, you know. Here in the Academy, you know, everything was kind

of like this is the way it is, cut and dried. When you get out into the field, things change.

INTERVIEWER:

The Academy was just a model?

MR. VISH:

Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you -- um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Absolutely. And rightly so. It gave me all the tools necessary for me to get out in the field and cope with the things that I was going to cope with out there. But it was certainly different. You know, it's not all black and white. There's a little gray area in there you see that you have to learn to deal with and that's where we did it, out there in the field...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...because we -- you know, it's tough to deal with a -- in a situation at -- like this at the Academy because it just doesn't happen.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

It's real life out there when you get out there.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Can you give us an example of dealing with that gray area?

MR. VISH:

I probably could, Shel, if I had some time to think. But...

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

...right off the top of my head -- I'm sure there are -- I could come up with many, many better examples of that gray area, but just for example, out on the highway, you know, you come across a speeder and you ask why were you speeding. You know, well, if you're going to go by the book, there's no excuses for speeding. Right?

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

Well, what about if the guy is, you know, in an emergency situation, taking a family member to the hospital, et cetera. You

know, those kinds of things. I've had that happen and my response to that was well, you know, here. Let me give you an escort. And I...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...escort them into the hospital and -- no. Did I arrest them? Did I cite them? No, I did not. So that's the gray area that I'm talking about. But there's -- there are a lot of other gray areas, you know, that I'd have to sit down and really think about for you...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...to give you examples of. But that's just a small one.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

It's not cut and dried all the time, you know, and I think anybody that can do police work that way -- you know, I was never able to do police work without compassion. Now there's...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...some people that can. There's some police officers, some troopers that can do that. I couldn't do that. I could never do that and I like to look back on my career, you know, and say that, you know, if I arrested somebody or if I cited somebody, they deserved it.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

You know, as opposed to I cited somebody or arrested somebody because the book said for me to do that. I think you have to temper good police work with compassion...

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

...and I tried to do that my entire career.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. A good philosophy.

MR. VISH:

I hope. You know, it's kind of tough for me to look back on it now and say it was wrong, but I -- when I look back on it, I think it worked out for me...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know.

INTERVIEWER:

With having your heart in it so much, I mean wouldn't you say -- and being on patrol that there were times when your heart got in the way? Like say you were to respond to a fatal accident...

MR. VISH:

Oh, absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

...you know, and just -- how did that...

MR. VISH:

Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

...affect you? How were you able to recover from that sort of a situation?

MR. VISH:

Well, it was very, very difficult. Again I -- along with my trying to do police work with compassion, you know, I'm also a very, very emotional individual. You know, I've been to situations -- I've been to accident scenes. I've been to other situations where my emotions did get the best of me, you know, and I would come

home and, you know, you can't sleep. You can't go to sleep. You've got to stay up, and I'd think about those things. For the most part, I was able to cope with it with the help of my wife and my family, you know. One thing I never did was bring the job home unless it was...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...one of those situations, you know, where I needed to talk to somebody about that and there was always somebody there for me to talk to. My family was so very, very supportive of me and my career. I think that's -- you know, that's why the passion is still there, you know, for me.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I think of some things, you know, even today and I well up inside, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So I've got to be careful. So don't ask me too many of those kinds of questions.

INTERVIEWER:

Those are the good questions.

MR. VISH:

No, they're not. Well, they are, but they're not for me to answer.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I have a difficult time talking about some of those things...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...because, you know, it did impress me. You know, whether it was the wrong way or the right way, you know, it was on that particular situation that I have to, you know, look back on and say yeah, this was a good situation for me. There were some bad times. No question...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...about it. You know, you're going to run into those things. I was very fortunate. You know, all my time was not spent on the

road. You know, I put a lot of time in with the community services unit where I really, you know, got out there and saw the good things that I -- that police officers could do for people...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...i.e. Camp Cadet.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

Right?

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

So I was fortunate. My life has been good, thanks to the Pennsylvania State Police and my wife. It's been good.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. Through these times, obviously your family was your support system, your...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...net that would capture you...

MR. VISH:

Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

...during some difficult periods. But did you feel like there was a network within the State Police family that could also catch you that you could really talk to that would actually really understand what you were going through because they've been through the same thing? Was that there?

MR. VISH:

Absolutely was there.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

From the day I came into this Academy until the day I retired...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...the Pennsylvania State Police was my extended family. There wasn't anything that I would hesitate, you know, to talk to them about. They came in with a peer counseling group. All the officers that I ever worked under were -- there -- we had an open-door policy constantly. I was so very fortunate, you know,

to get stationed where I was stationed at the time, you know, that I was stationed there, from '67, you know, to '92. I can't say enough about the personnel, you know, that I worked under. If I ever had a problem, all I had to do was knock on the door and walk in, you know, and sit down and talk with them. We were a family then. I don't know -- I would like to think and feel that that closeness is still there today, but I'm not sure, you know, because I'm not there. It certainly was when I was there. That was the biggest thing. The camaraderie was just unbelievable. It was fantastic.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Good people.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I can't remember one person that if I ever, ever had a problem wouldn't be right there to help me. Not one.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

The Pennsylvania State Police is the finest organization in the world. I believed that back in 1967 and I believe it today.

INTERVIEWER:

Wonderful. Now did you spend time off duty with any other troopers? Did your families spend time together?

MR. VISH:

Sure.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

We did. One of the guys that I'll mention and you have some articles on him that I gave you on Camp Cadet was Trooper Martinuska (ph), Carl Martinuska and Trooper Price. We always used to get together, our families, you know, back then. So -- yeah. We spent a lot of time together. Now that -- you know, that I've retired, you know, I don't see them as often as I would like to naturally, but, you know, everybody moves on. You know, you've got to move on and -- but while we were troopers, we were close.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

If one of us got into trouble, we all got into trouble, you know.

One for all and all for one.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

Great bunch of guys.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. What was the workload like when you first came on the job? What were your days like?

MR. VISH:

I don't think the workload back then was as tough as it is today.

INTERVIEWER:

No?

MR. VISH:

Oh, absolutely not. I think it was an -- easier times. You know, times change naturally and I'm sure we're going to talk about that when we start talking about the camp program. But also times change in police work. I think it may have been a little tougher because we didn't have the equipment that they have today. We didn't have the communications system they have today. We didn't -- maybe we didn't even have the training that these kids are getting today. So I'm going to say that the

workload really wasn't that tough back then. We were busy. We were very, very busy, but these kids today have more pressure on them than I ever had back in 1967, you know...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...in my career. It was -- it's just the times. I think things -- times are changing. I always have a habit of saying I miss the old days, the old times because they were good times for me, and I remember a couple of people taking me to task over that statement.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Saying Al, you know, the good old days weren't really that good. Well, they were for me, you know. I think they were just calmer times. Today -- we put too much pressure on our kids today. We put too much pressure on our -- on society today. You know, everybody has to succeed.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Everybody has two, three jobs. You know, back then, I -- while I worked two or three jobs to raise my family, it was a different situation. You know, today I think they're doing it for the wrong reasons as opposed to back then, you know, we were -- well, we were more family oriented back then I think than the -- than we are today. We were -- we -- there's a couple of things missing that I've noticed today that we had back then. For example, closeness in communities. You know, when I was growing up for gosh sakes, if I did something wrong in the neighborhood, the next-door neighbor grabbed me and he beat me and then I went home and my dad beat me, you know. Today you don't have neighbor looking out for neighbor. Everybody stays to themselves, you know, and it's the times. I understand why that's happening but I think it's sad. We don't have the churchgoing populous today that we had, you know, 25 years ago, 30 years ago, and I think these things all enter into any profession. Not only law enforcement, but, you know, whatever it is you're doing. I really and truly don't know to sit here and be as honest as I can with you if I would've made it as a trooper today. I really don't.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I -- you know, that's why I -- you know, I get so excited every time I think about my career and what I did, you know, and the times. I think we got so much more respect back then. Today it's not there and I don't know what the reason is for that. You know, it has to be -- I'm sure families, you know, enter into that. How these kids are trained, how they're taught, what they're learning in schools; you know, that kind of stuff. I don't know...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...Shel.

INTERVIEWER:

Maybe not the reason, but a potential solution?

MR. VISH:

Well, I think we have to get back to the basics and I don't know how often we've heard that. Right? I don't think it's important to have, you know, two, three cars in the garage. I don't think it's important, you know, that the kids have money in their pockets constantly. I think what's important is family. I thought that back when I was growing up. That's what I was taught. My mom and dad emphasized family, you know, the entire childhood. I think

the solution is we've got to get back to the basics. I think we put too much emphasis on material things today. Now I'm not going to sit here and tell you that I don't like material things because my wife would take me to task over that. But I think today -- you know, you look at these kids, they're driving BMWs. They're driving, you know, Cadillac's. Everybody has a car. You know, those kinds of things. So -- I don't know. Maybe I'm sounding too old. I don't know. And I can because, you see, I do long for the old days, you know, and people keep telling me, Al, you can't live in the past. You've got to change.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Well, I'm not opposed to change if that change is for the better.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But to change just because somebody says this is 2006, we've got to change I think is wrong.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. So law enforcement changes to reflect the changes in our society or to meet those changes.

MR. VISH:

Correct.

INTERVIEWER:

But would you say that law enforcement -- there's a necessity for law enforcement to stay one step ahead of the changes that are occurring in society in order to care for them properly?

MR. VISH:

Well, I -- yes. In a sense, I think they do. But sometimes I think society dictates how that change is going to occur or what change is going to occur, and I'm not so sure that that's how it should be. I think that the change should come from law enforcement looking at what's going on in society and saying hey, I think we better change this. I don't think it should -- that society should dictate, you know, the changes that law enforcement have to go through. And I can see that happening if -- you know, if society says well, you know, I think they're arresting too many people down here on this street. We better do something about it. And they go to council or go to wherever they have to go and they make a big stink or the press, et cetera, and all of a sudden law enforcement is pulled out of there, right, because it's the politically correct thing to do. I'm not a very politically correct person. I want you to know that. I have trouble

with, you know, being politically correct sometimes and again, you know, I'm sure that's because of my bringing up. You know, we didn't worry about politics back then. What we worried about was doing the right thing, for gosh sakes. You know, it's either right or it's wrong and some things that I see happening today for this politically correct thing, I just absolutely go berserk over. It's another subject you don't want to get me started on. Right?

Like...

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

Yeah. That -- I can't -- I'm not permitted to -- you know, to bring God into my life because that's not politically correct. I'm not allowed to -- this is America. Right? I got to worry about, you know, how I talk about things, about people, about, you know, other races, et cetera, et cetera, because they're over here in this country and I might offend them? Something is wrong. If I can't be an American, you know, and love my country, then I don't know what else is left. I have no problem, you know, with people coming into my country, but I do have a problem with them not respecting it.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

That's the way I am.

INTERVIEWER:

And being a law enforcement officer, you find that you look at today's social issues from that perspective more often than from the perspective of just the normal citizen?

MR. VISH:

Absolutely, and I'm not sure that's right. You know, I'm set in my ways. You know, I do have problems, you know, changing. You know, I can see that with my own children, you know, who will take me to task from time to time, you know, on issues. I look at an issue this way and they look at it, you know, this way. But -- yeah. I think you hit the nail right on the head. I have a problem. You know, I am law enforcement oriented and everything that I look at and try to solve is from a law enforcement point of view, and so I sometimes -- I do know my shortcomings, Shel, is what I'm saying. You know, I have them.

INTERVIEWER:

That's not necessarily a problem. It's...

MR. VISH:

Well...

INTERVIEWER:

...just a perspective.

MR. VISH:

...it is.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But sometimes I'm very, very set. You know, this is the way it should be. You're wrong, I'm right, you know type thing and it -- I try not to do that, but I do. I...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Strictly law enforcement oriented. I will not -- I can't tolerate some of the things that are -- that happen today and we overlook them simply because we think it's politically correct to do that. It's just not right.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Maybe we better talk about Camp Cadet.

INTERVIEWER:

We're not there yet.

MR. VISH:

Oh. All right. I'm sorry.

INTERVIEWER:

But we will talk a little bit about still those early days on the State Police.

MR. VISH:

See. You are...

INTERVIEWER:

Those first four years.

MR. VISH:

...asking some hard questions here. I asked you not to do that.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, actually this is easy stuff now...

MR. VISH:

Yeah. Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...because I'm interested in what sorts of equipment and uniforms and things you were issued in 1967. Can you tell me?

MR. VISH:

Yeah, as best I can remember. 1967, we were issued our uniforms naturally and you have to understand too, one of the other reasons I wanted to become a State Trooper was because I wanted to wear the boots and britches.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

I wanted to do that so bad and I came on in '67. I believe it was like six months prior to my coming on they did away with the boots and the britches. I was just heartbroken. You know, I...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So anyway, we get the campaign hat, a blouse at that time. I think they still wear the blouse today. I'm not sure. A Sam Brown. I don't know if you know what the Sam Brown is. It's a belt that goes across. That was our dress uniform naturally. We didn't wear the blouse. We wore the blouse in the winter. We had to wear the blouse and the Sam Brown in the wintertime. And in the summertime, we had just a pair of slacks, gray shirts at the time and we wore the summer straw hat. Our weapon was a six-inch Colt 38.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

The holster was a belt holster that we had that caused your pants to sag all the time. But -- and we always wore our tie inside the shirt, stuck inside the shirt.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

We were sharp. It was a sharp uniform. We had the Keystone patch at the time and not the new ones, naturally. And one of the other reasons that I wanted to join is because I was in love with the cars. At that time, they were green and white.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh. What type of car was it?

MR. VISH:

They were Plymouths. We drove 1967 Plymouths when I came in. If you were lucky going downhill you could get them up to maybe 75, 80 miles an hour.

INTERVIEWER:

Wow.

MR. VISH:

They were -- they had small engines in them, you know, at that time. But it was the color. See, the Pennsylvania State Police was always green and white. That's the color I remember, you

know, and when they changed that color I was disappointed, you know, and the man that changed that color was absolutely my favorite commanding officer.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh?

MR. VISH:

That was Colonel James D. Barger...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...when he made Commissioner and he went and changed the color of the car. I just couldn't believe they did that.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But he did. But nonetheless, that's it. That's what we were issued. You know, I don't know what they get issued today. We had very little in the way of -- we -- oh. We got a whistle. We had a whistle and handcuffs naturally.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Today I think -- I don't know if they're issuing Mace today or the sprays, the chemical sprays. Batons, you know...

INTERVIEWER:

You weren't...

MR. VISH:

...those were...

INTERVIEWER:

...given any other weapon other than your 38?

MR. VISH:

That's it. That's it. 1967 and then I was there for the changeover from the revolver to the 38 to the Ruger 357 and then I did not -- I wasn't there when they went to the semiautomatics.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

My entire career was with the revolvers.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Thirty-eight and 357.

INTERVIEWER:

Did they provide you shoes as well?

MR. VISH:

Oh, yes. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

They did?

MR. VISH:

They provided me with everything except my underwear.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Socks?

MR. VISH:

Socks; everything. Everything except underwear. And I had -- so, you know, I can understand why they couldn't do that, but -- yeah. Clothing was there. You wear something out, take it downstairs, give it to the quartermaster. You got a new one. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Was it tailored to your size?

MR. VISH:

No. If you wanted them tailored, you have to do that yourself.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, okay.

MR. VISH:

But they gave -- you know, they had your sizes. You weren't -- we were sharp. We did not go around looking disheveled.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, they had mirrors at the station. Before you left, buddy, on patrol, you checked yourself in that mirror and you made sure, you know, that you were looking good.

INTERVIEWER:

Would the commanding officer hesitate to tell you if he thought you didn't look so good?

MR. VISH:

Here comes another story.

INTERVIEWER:

Yes. Perfect.

MR. VISH:

No. To answer your question, they were not hesitant in telling you to go home and change.

INTERVIEWER:

Really?

MR. VISH:

I was a young community relations officer at the time and my wife just bought me this absolutely gorgeous double-breasted coat. You know, you had to wear a shirt and tie, coat, so I put this double-breasted coat on. It was blue in color, I believe. Now I thought it was gorgeous. So I show up at work and my lieutenant says Trooper Vish, the captain wants to see you in his office. This is my favorite captain now, I want you...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...to know. I'm talking about Colonel James D. Barger. And I'll never forget it. I walked into his office. I saluted him as I -- you're supposed to do, and he never saluted me back so I knew I was in trouble for something, but I -- you know, I didn't know what. I just came to work. So he proceeds to tell me that that was the ugliest coat that he has ever seen in his entire career and I look like a clown in it and he wanted me to go home right now and change it.

INTERVIEWER:

How horrible.

MR. VISH:

Oh, absolutely. But you know, I turned around, saluted him and he saluted me then and said that's all and I turned around and walked out of his office, went home, changed my coat. Never wore that coat again. I was crushed, you know, but -- yeah. That's -- you know, I volunteered. Nobody, you know, forced me into joining the Pennsylvania State Police. So I...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And I got over it. It certainly did crush me at that time, but...

INTERVIEWER:

This must not have been just any regular navy blue (inaudible).

MR. VISH:

It was so, Shel. It was a gorgeous coat. If you want to ask my wife about it, she's out there. She'll agree with me. It was gorgeous. It was double-breasted. That's the thing I think...

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

...that upset him, see. You didn't wear double-breasted coats back then. We wore black suits. You notice this? Black. This is it, buddy. That's...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...what we wore. When we left the Academy here, we had to be dressed. You know, when we -- they sent us home...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...we had to look good.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

And I think that, you know, that's part of the mystique of the Pennsylvania State Police. I never, never regretted, you know, any of my experiences that I had, you know, with these -- with the troopers, with the command because I knew I could count on them when -- you know, when I had to.

INTERVIEWER:

Maybe they were jealous.

MR. VISH:

I think they were I think a little bit, although Colonel Barger was a good-looking man.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

He was well dressed all the time, you know. But most of them were.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I love the Pennsylvania State Police.

INTERVIEWER:

Now besides your uniform and the Plymouth Fury, were you given an office or what sort of...

MR. VISH:

Oh, no.

INTERVIEWER:

...space did you have at the...

MR. VISH:

Well, when you...

INTERVIEWER:

...barracks?

MR. VISH:

When I first got out, the office was -- they were divided. The traffic was downstairs. The criminal unit was upstairs. Now

naturally the traffic was the biggest unit and everybody shared the same office.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

So when we would come to work, report for duty, we'd go to the traffic -- our traffic office, check our mailbox, you know, get our assignments if they had anything for us to do that particular day, pick up your car keys and you're gone. You left and you didn't get back to the barracks until your shift was over. If they needed you or if they had an incident for you, they called you on the radio. They assigned you your incident. You went out and took care of it. Other than that, you were patrolling or you were working with 10 or 15 cases that you had, you know, from previous investigations.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Going out, doing your interviews, trying to solve those particular cases.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

It was a full day. You were never, ever -- did we have down time? Certainly we had down time, you know, and I think the best part about the State Police was the fact that they trusted you enough to give you a job and know that you were going to go out there, you know, and do it. The supervision I'm saying is - - you know, you weren't scrutinized from the time you left the barracks until the time you got back. You know, if your commanding officer or if your supervisor needed you, he called you or if he had something for you to do, he assigned it to you.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

We worked most of the part, you know, alone. That's -- that was the job.

INTERVIEWER:

So you didn't patrol with another person? You usually went by yourself?

MR. VISH:

Only on midnighters.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

The only time we doubled up is at midnights and occasionally on midnights we never doubled up. To give us more patrol coverage, the guys that were supposed to double up would take separate cars just to give us better coverage. But for...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...the most part on midnighters, we were doubled...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...and I think that's the way it should be.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. How often did...

MR. VISH:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

...you have to do midnighters?

MR. VISH:

We got midnighters once a month for a string of five, so, you know, it was pretty often. I hated midnighters. Midnighters killed

me. Couldn't sleep, you know, and then I'd go home and try to sleep, couldn't sleep. It really took a lot out of me.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

My favorite shift was 4:00 to 12:00.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

Three to 11:00 shift.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I think it's, you know, more going on during those hours. You were busier, you know, and...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you had a lot to do.

INTERVIEWER:

What was your patrol radius around Butler?

MR. VISH:

We had -- we were -- they had the county divided into three patrol zones; north, south and central in the middle. So you would probably have maybe 10, 12 townships in your patrol zone. They were quite large. Some of them were bigger and some were smaller and, you know, back then -- that's why I said to you -- you know, made the statement that I did about -- the Pennsylvania State Police could not do the job without the local police departments, you know, helping...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...out and patrolling some of those areas. Just too vast, too much to do.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Was Sewickley within one of those patrol...

MR. VISH:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

...zones?

MR. VISH:

That's Allegheny County, see.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

I was in Troop D, which was Butler, Beaver, Lawrence, Mercer and Armstrong Counties.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

Allegheny County was another troop.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. So while you were patrolling, you never really had the chance to just swing up to Sewickley and say hi?

MR. VISH:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

(Inaudible) do that?

MR. VISH:

Well, I can't say I never did because...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...we did. There -- we were out looking for a prisoner who had escaped from the -- one of the prisons and we

-- I did have a chance to go down into Sewickley at that time. The prison was in Pittsburgh, so they detached some of us or took some of us from each troop, you know, to go out looking for this guy and that particular night, I did have a chance to go into Sewickley and eat with my parents...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...who naturally, you know, were just beaming. Here I sit, you know, in my uniform and a couple of my buddies in their uniforms and they were calling everybody over. Yeah. I was eating it up. I loved it.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you find the prisoner?

MR. VISH:

No, we did not. Eventually they did, but we didn't that...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...particular evening, no. That's the only time I can ever remember being able to go home, you know, while I was working. Just couldn't leave your patrol zone...

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

...you know to do that.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Did you feel like the space was too vast? That there was ever -- it was necessary for the State Police to hire more troopers, like there was just too much to do?

MR. VISH:

I did, yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I think that they -- you know, again, that's part of that pressure that they put on the guys. I think they need more troopers out there today. I don't -- you know, we're a rural police department, but some of those areas are so vast that -- yeah. There were times when I felt kind of insignificant, you know, in that particular

area because some of the areas, you know, if you got an incident in the northern tiers and you were down south, my gosh, it took you, you know, a half hour, you know, to get up there to answer the call.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So from that perspective I think -- yeah. They certainly could use more people.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. And besides just -- really quickly. Besides just traffic incidents that you're responding to, what other types of incidents did you need to respond to?

MR. VISH:

Well, we took care of anything that, you know, had to be done. I remember responding to bats in somebody's house. I remember, you know, numerous times coming out to look for lost dogs, lost children; you know, those kinds of things. We did it all, you know. There was never a dull moment.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

If you -- if I didn't have an assignment, you know, I went out and visited other police departments in that particular area. You know, a community relations thing.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

We were all community relations officers per -- not per say, but, you know, in ex-officio...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...while we were out there because it was our job to get out there and be seen by the public and make sure that they knew we were there, you know...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...to do whatever needed to be done for them.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

I think that's where we're going to stop for now. We're going to take a -- just a short break.

MR. VISH:

See, now I'm just starting to relax with you.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

Notice I'm not sweating.

[Hearing resumes]

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. Back. My name is Shelly Levins. I'm here with Retired Trooper Albert Vish. We're here at the Pennsylvania State Police Academy on June 11 (sic), 2006. This is tape two in our series for the Oral History Project. Welcome back.

MR. VISH:

Thank you, Shel. This is June 12.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh. Did I say 11? I'm sorry.

MR. VISH:

That's okay. You were probably thinking of my birthday.

INTERVIEWER:

Yes. Happy birthday, by the way.

MR. VISH:

Thank you so much.

INTERVIEWER:

And how old are you?

MR. VISH:

Oh, Shel. Sixty-four.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. Good. Well, congratulations.

MR. VISH:

Thank you.

INTERVIEWER:

Let's see. We were talking a little bit about the early days of your career and I have in my notes that you did traffic and patrol for about seven years until you...

MR. VISH:

That's correct.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

So I'm just wondering during the seven years if you have any stories that you'd like to share about traffic or what it was like to patrol and that sort of thing. I know that we've touched on that a lot, but before we move on, anything in particular -- anything funny or touching maybe?

MR. VISH:

Well, I had both...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know, touching and funny. I enjoyed patrol, you know, while I was there for the seven years that I was there, but I had aspirations to do other things. I wanted to -- I think -- again they may have been selfish reasons. You know, I wanted to try and be home for my children, you know, when they were playing their Little League games or when the girls had something going on at school. When you were in traffic -- and you worked shifts, so what I wanted to do was get off of the shift rotation as best I could and I did that. But, you know, you're asking about, you know, funny things that happened. I do remember one funny story that happened. It was on a -- I was working a midnight -- or -- I'm sorry. A 4:00 to midnight shift on patrol in Butler County

and the captain at the time was Grooms, Bill Grooms. Great guy. I said earlier I was very fortunate to work -- all the commanders that I worked under the command personnel were just absolutely great people and Captain Grooms was no different. But I remember I was out and I was coming back into the barracks. It was just before the shift ended for me and Butler called me on the radio. I don't know what the car number was, but it said Butler 12 -- Butler to Butler 12, you had a 1045 at -- up in Slippery Rock. Respond. And I was coming home. I -- my shift was over, so I got a little upset with that, you know...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...and myself, I was a little uptight. I said oh, gee. Now I've got to turn all the way around, go back, all the way up to Slippery Rock. I'll never get home before one, two o'clock in the morning.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So I turned the car around and I started heading back up to Pittsburgh. Now I've got to give you a little fill-in here. During that time, the troopers in the Troop D Butler -- not all of them, but

a lot of them were a little bit on the light side and at that time, they were making animal sounds over the radio. One would do a dog bark. One would do a horse. One would do a pig; any number of animal sounds. Right? I never, never participated in this, never. I was a straight arrow. I was afraid, you know, so I never participated. Also during that time, our radio system was so antiquated. Back then it was okay, but, I mean, in comparison. We had the radios that had two frequencies on them. To talk to the station, you flipped the switch up to number one and that was -- you could talk from car to the station and station could talk to you, but the other cars couldn't hear you. If I wanted to talk to another trooper to get some help, assistance or whatever the case may be, you had to switch the radio down to frequency two. Now the barracks can hear plus the other troopers. And so I'm on my way back up to Slippery Rock to do this accident and I said to myself Al, what is wrong with you? Again, you know, nobody drafted you for this job. You took the job because you wanted to be a State Trooper. Well, here you are, buddy. So I kind of talked myself into being happy. So I flipped the radio to frequency number two and I wanted to do an animal call and I didn't know what to do because, you know,

everybody had all of them, so I decided to do a chicken. So I take the mike and I cluck like a chicken. It was the best chicken call you've ever heard in your entire life ever. I don't hear any response other than Butler one to Butler. I want the names of all the guys out there and their car numbers. Well, Shel, I'm the only guy out there. I'm going up to do an accident investigation. It's a shift change. Everybody's just coming in. Well, here it was the captain you see who was out in his car doing whatever it was he was doing, so he hears this chicken call. So the barracks, you know, I guess says, you know, there's -- Trooper Vish is out there. He's the only one left. So I immediately got instant -- and I'm serious about this. I got sick because I thought there goes my career. I'm done. Back then, buddy, you just didn't play around like that.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So I pulled off the road. I composed myself. I went up, took care of the accident. I come back down. It must've been around I guess one o'clock, 1:30, I pulled into the barracks. I get out of the car and I'm walking into the back door and standing at the back door is Captain Grooms and he says to me -- I salute him

and he doesn't salute me back. And whenever that happens, Shel, you know you've got problems.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And he says Trooper Vish, he said did you happen to hear that sound on the radio that sounded like a chicken clucking? And I said yes, sir, I did. And he said you're not going to tell me that was you, are you. And I said yes, sir. I'm afraid it was. Well, he just spun around, never said another word to me except on the way, he said oh, Trooper Vish. He said we had some big plans for you, but now I'm not so sure.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

So I immediately got sick again right there at the barracks. I go inside, you know, do what I had to do to check out. I go home. The next day, I go over to work. I'm working a daylight shift. The lieutenant calls me in, Lieutenant Angel. I'll never forget that. John Angel. He was here at the Academy when I went through as a sergeant. And he sat me down and he -- the first thing he said to me was Trooper Vish, he said I understand you

do a pretty good imitation of a chicken. And I said oh, here we go. I said yes, sir. I'm afraid that was me. And he said well, he said you know we have to punish you and I said yes, sir. I'm sure. So he said your punishment is you get one day fatigue duty. I had to stay at the barracks and scrub walls.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And I also -- the most embarrassing part of this whole story, Shel, was that I had to type a to-from subject letter. That's -- you know, I don't care what you did. Even at the Academy here, you did something wrong, you typed a from-to or to-from subject letter as to, you know, the -- why you did it. So I'm sitting there at the typewriter trying to figure out, you know, what am I going to say in this letter. I just clucked like a chicken on the radio. So the only thing I could think of putting in that letter was I clucked like a chicken on the radio because I was happy, period. And I signed it and that thing went into my personnel file, you know. As a matter of fact -- I don't know if you've got my personnel folder or not. It's in that folder. You know, that's the only letter I ever had to type in my entire career.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But they didn't fire me, so I was happy about that. So from then on, you see, the rest of the guys, you know, started calling me chicken man.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, no.

MR. VISH:

So that was my nickname then. Chicken man.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

First and only time.

INTERVIEWER:

I guess there are worse things you could've done.

MR. VISH:

Well, you know -- but at that time I didn't think there was.

Believe me, I physically got ill. I really did because again, you know, back then things were different. You know, they were -- things were -- I think they were just more strict, you know, than they are, you know, today. I just -- but that was the mystique,

you know, of the Pennsylvania State Police. That's the way it was and I wanted to be one.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And I was and I didn't know for how long. Put that -- but it worked out.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you ever hear anymore animal sounds after that day?

MR. VISH:

Very, very few...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...and they were only when we knew the captain was on vacation. So -- yeah. The guys got the message.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. Right.

MR. VISH:

Oh, yeah. There were some great ones.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

You know, they were -- they really took pride in their animal sounds. But that was just, you know, to break up the evening. You know, that's how we, you know, amused ourselves out there.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

Especially when you're out there alone, you know, at 10:30, eleven o'clock at night on some God-forsaken road. You don't even know where you are.

INTERVIEWER:

But you never said wait, there's other people doing...

MR. VISH:

Oh...

INTERVIEWER:

...that.

MR. VISH:

...no. Unwritten law. Never, ever, ever do you -- no.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

Al did it. That's the way it goes, buddy.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But see, the dumb part about that was on my part though, you see and the guys -- you know, after it was all said and done and we were talking about it, they said Al, why did you own up to it. It could've been some other station, see.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

There was no way they could tell where the call came from. It's just that, you know, he met me at the back door. One of my bad traits is my honesty, so I fessed up. So the guys, you know, said well, good for you, Al.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

You took the beating for all of them.

MR. VISH:

I did. I did. I took it.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But I was proud to do it.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. That's funny. During your -- the -- when you're doing patrol and traffic duty the majority of the time and obviously some crime stuff and helping the locals and other aspects, were you allowed to dabble in any other pieces of police work that gave you an idea what other jobs you could be doing, other than traffic or patrol?

MR. VISH:

Well, see the backbone of the organization first of all you have to understand is the patrol section. They are the backbone of the Pennsylvania State Police. And the reason for that naturally is because they do everything, Shel. You know, they do traffic. They do the crime work. They do whatever has to be done. So I was getting a smattering, you know, of everything that I thought police work should be...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...while I was in the traffic unit. But I wanted to specialize and special-duty positions back then, you know, were far and few in

between. Most of them were saved for the older troopers who had put their time on the road and...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know and done their thing, so to speak. So the -- to -- I don't want to use a phrase that the -- you know, we always used back then. It was a gravy job, so to speak because, you know, I took things very, very seriously and everybody did back then, but the special-duty jobs -- there were some perks involved with them and that's what I wanted to do. Again I wanted to specialize so I could be home, you know, with the family more. I wasn't as concerned about rank. You know, I wasn't as concerned about the overtime and that kind of stuff as I was being home for my kids. I think that's important. So I wanted to get into community relations.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

At the time, the captain at the time was Barger. Again, Captain Barger. And I let it be known that I wanted to get into special-duty work and the way I did that was I didn't go in and tell

anybody. They posted a part-time position, a part-time safety education officer's position, and I applied for it and I got it.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And I wasn't there two weeks when the captain called me in and he asked me if I would consider being his full-time community relations officer.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So that's how that happened. Then I became the full-time community relations officer, which meant I was out of uniform unless, you know, there was a special function that I needed to do in uniform. So I wore soft clothes. I was steady daylight, unless I had a speech to do in the evenings, those kinds of things. I kind of made my own schedule. I was home, you know, with my family every night and I answered to nobody but the captain back then. That's the way the community relations office was run, you know, in Troop D Butler. Again I can't say that for the entire state.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But Captain Barger at that time pretty much allowed me to do what I wanted to do, you know, and it was just great.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So that's how I got involved in the special duty stuff.

INTERVIEWER:

You mentioned doing speeches in the evening and...

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

...mostly doing day work. Can you describe that more? What was involved? What sorts of things did you do?

MR. VISH:

Yeah. Most of the time my function -- as the community relations officer, I was responsible for five counties; Butler, Beaver, Lawrence, Mercer and Armstrong. At that time, we only had one full-time community relations officer. The stations had part-time community relations officers. So my function was to stay in contact with all five of those counties...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...which meant that on a daily basis, I was going to a different county daily, every day, visiting and meeting with various police departments in those counties, getting together with the alternate community relations officer on those stations in those particular counties, and then we would do programs together. Sat on a lot of boards at that time, you know, as the liaison officer between the State Police and whatever board I was on; Drug and Alcohol Council, Youth Aid Boards; just a number of different -- the colleges -- I was at the schools constantly meeting with classes, talking about the State Police, talking about law enforcement in general. There was quite a bit of night work involved with the get-togethers and the speeches. I was the speech-maker for the troop at that time also.

INTERVIEWER:

Wow.

MR. VISH:

So, you know, in that five-county area, I was pretty busy.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. Sounds like though that kind of leading up to being this community relations officer, you had already made some contacts. Through your traffic and patrol, you...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...said that you had...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...been stopping occasionally at the local...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...police departments, so you knew people there already.

MR. VISH:

Right. Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

That helped?

MR. VISH:

Oh, it helped immensely, you know...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...because they welcomed me in, you know, when I had -- finally that was my job, to make sure the relationships between those police departments and the Pennsylvania State Police was the best.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So that's what I did. If they had a problem, I went up and saw what the problem was, got back to the captain and, you know, we tried to work that problem out.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Were there ever any that were -- the relationship was somewhat shaky and you felt like you needed to repair it? That you were the person to kind of build their trust back in with the State Police?

MR. VISH:

Yeah. There were a couple of police departments like that, but I think it was more out of jealousy than anything else. They always used to call us the gray gods back then. Did you ever hear that?

INTERVIEWER:

No. I haven't heard that.

MR. VISH:

Yeah. We were gray gods and some police departments resented that because, you know, they -- some of -- I'm not going to say it was -- you know, it was the police department's fault totally because we had some troopers, you know, that were kind of aloof, you know, above maybe talking to a local police department or a local police officer, et cetera. You know, those things did happen. The -- different personalities do that. But for the most part, I think it boiled down to jealousy on the local police-department level simply because -- I don't know. One reason or another. Maybe, you know, they wanted to be a State Policeman or a State Trooper and they didn't make it they couldn't make it for some reason. I don't know, but -- yeah. There were a couple police departments that weren't 100-percent happy to see me come in there. But, you know, I had friends on all of those police departments, so it wasn't the entire police department. So again I was fortunate that I had, you know, those particular people that did like me, you know, there to smooth the way when I had to go in and talk to the chief or, you know, one of the captains or something.

INTERVIEWER:

Right. Do you think a part of that jealousy was a matter of resources...

MR. VISH:

Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

...and that these smaller police departments felt like you had a lot and they had very little?

MR. VISH:

Absolutely. Absolutely. You hit right on the money. As a matter of fact, you're too perceptive sometimes, Shel. Yeah. You know, the State Police had all of the goodies. You know, the nice -- the big cars, all of the equipment that we needed and if we didn't have it, we had the resources to get it. So absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Sure.

INTERVIEWER:

As far as those resources go, were there any that you were able to share in some ways?

MR. VISH:

Oh...

INTERVIEWER:

Other than yourselves and your time and your knowledge, physical or financial resources you could share with the municipal police departments?

MR. VISH:

Absolutely. There isn't a thing that the Pennsylvania State Police didn't have that wasn't available to those police departments. Not one thing, Shel. We were there to support them and to help them in any way we could and we did. You know, if they needed a tactical team or if they needed our R&I people, we were there for them. Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

For the most part, you know, the local police departments and the Pennsylvania State Police worked absolutely superbly together. It was just that one or two, you know, police officers. Not departments so much, but individuals I think that maybe had, you know, a little problem, jealousy or something, you know, with us.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. So -- now there's the municipal police or the township police and then the State Police and then I guess if you're looking at somewhat of a hierarchy, then there's the federal...

MR. VISH:

FBI.

INTERVIEWER:

FBI and that sort of thing.

MR. VISH:

Sure.

INTERVIEWER:

So can you talk about that relationship?

MR. VISH:

Well, I've got some pretty close friends in the FBI that I've worked with over the years, more so the last two-and-a-half, three years of my career when I was organized crime...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...because we did a lot of work with the FBI on organized crime; you know, gambling, those kinds of investigations. So the FBI is -- they're tough. They're tops, but they're professional. So I can

never, ever remember having a problem, you know, working with them.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

It was a mutual thing. You know, it wasn't a situation where, you know, we were stepping on their toes or they came in, took over an investigation, stepping on our toes. Anything that I've ever done with the FBI has always been a mutual thing and it -- you know, it was a good experience, a good investigation.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Did you feel that if they needed to work with the local police that they would work through you to work with the local police or would they kind of jump over that (inaudible)?

MR. VISH:

Circumvent us?

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

No. I don't -- I've never felt that because I know there's -- you know, there's some things that the local police are doing that the FBI is helping them with. There's some things that the local

police are doing that the State Police is helping them with. The FBI is not. I never saw it that way. You know, they never circumvented anybody. If it was a local investigation or a local police department, then the FBI or the State Police would work with them. We didn't, you know, have to say well, maybe we better go through the FBI first or the FBI never said maybe we better check with the State Police first.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

They went to the department, you know, that had the problem and...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know they worked together.

INTERVIEWER:

So you didn't always have your hands in each other's business...

MR. VISH:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

...necessarily?

MR. VISH:

Did not.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, they -- we had our area of expertise. They had their area of expertise. Locals had their area.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

It worked good. It's a good working relationship. Again and it has to be. If you don't have that working relationship, then something is going to happen along the way. It's not going to work, you know, because you're going to have too many problems to -- you know, I think it was my grandmother or my mother used to say that -- what was that she always used to say? Too many hands spoil the soup or something...

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

...or something like that.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So...

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

...we never had that problem.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

We knew our boundaries.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. And there were somewhat -- of course there are, you know, figurative boundaries to that, but also physical boundaries.

MR. VISH:

Oh...

INTERVIEWER:

Right?

MR. VISH:

...absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

As far as...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...this is my jurisdiction...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...out here in this rural section...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...and this yours in town?

MR. VISH:

Yeah. Yeah. We always -- Pennsylvania State Police had jurisdiction throughout the state. Locals have jurisdiction, you know, in their bailiwicks, in their boroughs, in their townships.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And federal people had, you know, more outgoing -- it worked well.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

It's a good system.

INTERVIEWER:

I guess what I'm wondering though is as towns and cities grow, do those maps need to be changed or do the boundaries stay the same? How do you remedy that as -- I mean, you think about it now, towns are just -- they're growing exponentially and farmland is turning into developments every day. So...

MR. VISH:

What...

INTERVIEWER:

...how often does that change?

MR. VISH:

For the State Police, I don't think it changes at all. I think it remains the same. We are a rural police department, but if a local township or a borough police department requests our help, we're there to help them. I think you are seeing that change, Shel, on a local level where some municipalities or townships or boroughs don't have the resources or the money to have a police department, so they join together...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know and then we have a jointure of maybe two or three different areas. So from that aspect I think yes. You're probably right. There is a changing, you know, going on. But I don't think that the Pennsylvania State Police's function changes. I think that function is, you know, to preserve the peace and assist those police departments or law enforcement agencies that need the help.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I don't see that changing.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. I guess what I was getting at is as cities get bigger, that means there's less rural space, so less jurisdiction for the State Police or the...

MR. VISH:

Well, I can see that happening. If that's the case, sure.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

That's going to -- you know, that's going to tend to shrink...

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

...our area, our geographical area that we have responsibility over. But...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know I don't see that happening overnight.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

Not going to...

INTERVIEWER:

Or within your own career...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...per say?

MR. VISH:

Oh, no.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

No. I think what I do see happening with the State Police is the State Police being spread kind of thin, you know, and that's why I say I think we need more troopers, more Pennsylvania State Policemen than -- I think than what we have now. Again that's a personal, you know, opinion. We never had a problem handling any problem that we were confronted with, but it would certainly be nice to have a little more manpower.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. I guess -- kind of changing the subject a just little bit. Going -- also going back to what we were talking about...

MR. VISH:

Sure.

INTERVIEWER:

...before with the community relations position that you held.

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

What sorts of -- like what were the demographics of the people you were working with the most? Were you working with like senior citizen groups? You said some high school kids?

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

Younger kids?

MR. VISH:

It ran the gamut from -- mine -- my position was usually or mostly high school children through senior citizens.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But you have to understand at that particular time when I was a community relations officer, there were three of us that shared the office. There was me as a community relations officer. We had another officer in there who was a youth aid officer and another one, a third one who was the safety education officer. The safety education officer took care of strictly all of the schools, from elementary all the way through college. The youth aid officer did nothing but youth aid work. He was more of an investigator than us other -- the other two were. He had -- he was carrying cases. Worked very closely with the Juvenile Probation Office. Worked very closely with all of our people. If they were making an arrest on a juvenile, they had to consult with the youth aid officer. Then me, the community relations officer, I was the liaison between all of the other groups...

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

...and the State Police. So I ran the gamut, so to speak, but not the elementary kids. That was, you know, off-limits for me...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...because had the safety education officer do that. I spent most of my time with adults as opposed to even the high school. I was in the high schools -- I don't want to say rarely. I was in there often, but I was more so with the adult groups. That was my main focus.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Was that by choice or was because that's what the job needed...

MR. VISH:

That was because...

INTERVIEWER:

...kind of thing?

MR. VISH:

...that was what the job was.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

It wasn't anything that I wanted to -- you know, that I did or set up myself. No.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Camp Cadet was totally -- well, let's see. Back in 1970 -- see at that time -- I was the community relations officer at that time, but that was a different situation. I'd just come from the safety ed position...

INTERVIEWER:

So you held that, as well?

MR. VISH:

Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, okay.

MR. VISH:

Yeah. I did.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. I guess -- well, I was wondering how...

MR. VISH:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

...you made that shift from really working with a lot of adults...

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

...to...

MR. VISH:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

...really getting involved in youth.

MR. VISH:

Right. That's how it happened.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

When I proposed Camp Cadet, I was actually the safety education officer...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...and I was thinking at the time that there had to be more that we could do, you know, for the youth and that's how that got started. But we don't want to talk about that right now. Right?

INTERVIEWER:

Well, we have a couple minutes. I guess I want to really start by leading up to you seeking and developing Camp Cadet in your head. Maybe -- you're saying there's -- you thought there was something more you could do. Well, what were you doing first of all as safety education officer and then what was lacking?

MR. VISH:

That's a good question. I think back then in 1966 -- '67 -- I'm sorry -- '68, '69, I don't think there were any programs aimed specifically at young people. You know, you had your -- the basic safety education stuff that we were doing in the schools. The school bus safety, the stranger safety, those kinds of things.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But I don't think there was anything just geared towards young people in the sense of preventing crime. What I was looking at back then, Shel, was the fact that we were always investigating crime in an after-the-fact matter.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And looking back over that now, you know, I can see that I was somewhat correct in my assumption, you know, we couldn't do that because we were losing the battle. We had to come up with some way that we could prevent the crime from happening in the first place and I just -- you know, I sat and talked with my two colleagues. We were constantly talking and trying to develop new programs back then. So I don't know where I was when this thing hit me. I don't know if I was home. I don't know if I was in the office. But I started thinking if we could just show young people the other side of law enforcement and show them why, you know, we have to have laws, we have to have rules, I think then, you know, they would probably understand, you know, a lot better the role and the function of law enforcement and people that have to enforce those laws and rules.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So I came into the office and I sat down and I said to my two colleagues, Trooper Price at the time and Trooper Prandy, guys listen to this. I got this hair-brained idea. You know, I want to know what you think about it, and I said I want to take 50 young men -- and it was young men at the time, see. So don't be

chastising me for this yet. At the time, I said I want to take 50 young men out to camp and spend a week with them and show them the other side of law enforcement. I want to show them that we truly care about their wellbeing. I want to show them that we're not just interested in kicking them off the street corners, you know, harassing them and doing those kinds of things with them. And they both looked at me and they both thought that I was nuts, but then after they really -- you know, it sunk in, they started talking to me about this and we started bouncing this thing around and they said Al, if that's what you want to do, if that's, you know, your plan, we're behind -- we're with you. So with that said -- you know, I had to sell them first. They were my first office buddies. We had to go sell the captain and that wasn't going to be, you know, a soft sell. That was going to be a hard sell. The CO again was Captain Barger, James Barger, but I had, you know, an ace in the hole going for me, Shelly, at the time and that was Captain Barger -- I -- you know, I can't say enough about the man. I think he was one of the best commanding officers I ever worked for. I think he was one of the best commissioners that we ever had. Now there'll be some people that would disagree with that, but I'm talking from a

personal standpoint. This man -- I don't know what it was that clicked between he and I, but he treated me like his son. There wasn't a thing that I could do wrong in this man's eyes and he made me understand that and believe that and I -- that's my ace in the hole that I'm talking about. You know, when we went into the office and proposed this thing, he looked at all three of us and he said, you know, Al, I think you guys are nuts, but he said you have my blessing and anything you need to make this program work, you come and see me and it'll be done. And that's the way it was. I can never remember, Shel, anything that we needed to make this program work that he didn't get for us. He was a strong trooper commander. He believed in the youth, you know, of Pennsylvania and he believed in us three troopers, us three young troopers at the time. And if it wasn't for James D. Barger, the Pennsylvania State Police Camp Cadet program would not be here today.

INTERVIEWER:

The names of the other two troopers?

MR. VISH:

Trooper Robert. W. Price and -- he retired -- or he passed away, Corporal Prandy. John Prandy.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

He's deceased, so there -- Trooper Price is still alive and I'm still alive. Trooper Price retired with 20 years on the job and I stayed for 25. Trooper Price was with me I believe for three or four years of the program and then Trooper Martinuska -- and there's an article in that stuff I gave you about him on there. He joined me and he was with me then for the rest of my stay. He and I were very, very close. We still are to this day.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. A big idea. It all starts as a big idea.

MR. VISH:

Well, it does. I would never, never have dreamed in my wildest dreams that this thing would still be here today.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And -- you know, and that's saying something about the dedication of the troopers today, Shel, and that's why, you know, I get -- I'm very, very shy in talking about the Pennsylvania State Police Camp Cadet program. I'm no longer in that program. You know, I left in '92. You know, my career is over and I don't

like going places -- for example, two weeks from today I'm -- I was invited down to Camp Cadet for -- I can't even remember the county now. Can you imagine that? I'm going to another camp. You know, they're -- they've invited me out to their graduation. I sometimes hesitate to do those things you see because, you know, they're going to pour out the accolades, you know, on me and that kind of stuff and I've had mine. I really have. I think the troopers today who are running this program and the commanding officers and the State Troopers that have kept this thing going for 35 years are the ones that deserve, you know, the accolades. So I get a little uneasy about talking about these things.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Camp Cadet especially. All right. I'm sorry.

INTERVIEWER:

No. That's okay. That is where we're going to stop for today then.

MR. VISH:

Okay.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

Great.

INTERVIEWER:

Good job.

[June 13, 2006]

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. Welcome back.

MR. VISH:

Thank you. It's good to be back.

INTERVIEWER:

Wonderful and we're glad to have you.

MR. VISH:

Thank you.

INTERVIEWER:

This is the Pennsylvania State Police Oral History Project.

Today is June 13, 2006. My name is Shelly Levins. I'm here

with Retired Trooper Albert Vish and we're here at the

Pennsylvania State Police Academy on tape two, a continuation

of tape two, but a new day. So I think we left off yesterday talking about your approaching Colonel Barger and this big idea.

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

So I want to just continue with that same thought process and really go into detail about the development running up to the first camp, which happened in the summer of 1970.

MR. VISH:

Correct.

INTERVIEWER:

So when exactly did you approach Colonel Barger? Was it a couple years before 1970 or...

MR. VISH:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

...how long did you have until you started that first camp?

MR. VISH:

We started -- we approached the colonel -- Shelly, I believe it was early January of that year.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

And we worked just a little better than six months -- seven months actually because our camp was in August, getting it together. So we had a lot of work to do. We had a lot of...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...ground to cover as far as, you know, what we were going to do, where we were going to come up with the programming. Funding was the big part. So after we did those kinds of things, the three of us sat down actually and split the job up. I believe if I remember correctly now -- we're going back to 1970. You're taking me back quite a ways there and if my memory serves me correct, at that time it was myself and Corporal Prandy and Trooper Price. Trooper Price was in charge of programming and Corporal Prandy at the time was in charge of funding and I took on the role of overseeing, you know, the entire project and trying to figure out how we were going to choose the young kids who were going to go. And we split it up that way and for probably six months anyway, it was very intense because naturally we had our other duties to do. But at the same time, you remember Colonel Barger gave us

-- he was captain at the time -- total -- you know, his blessings.

Go do what you have to do.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

If you need, you know, help, if you need somebody to fill in for you, that kind of stuff, you know, it was there. So it really wasn't that difficult for us. A seven-month period was ample time for us to get everything that we needed together and the funding was absolutely no problem. The funding back then -- back when I came on in '67 and I'm sure prior to that and even after that I'm sure, Pennsylvania State Police was not permitted to do any soliciting.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

We just weren't. And it was no different back then, but there was a slight difference. That difference was again we had a CO at that time, you see, who was -- he was interested enough in the program. He thought it was worthwhile and he trusted us three enough that we went out and solicited. Now I'm not -- you know,

I hope that doesn't get anybody into any difficulty or trouble here, but how else were we going to come up with funding?

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

You know, so we did it. That's all. We -- you know, nobody ever talked about it. We never -- you know, we never said well, okay, here. We're going to do this or that for funding, et cetera.

Myself, Trooper Price and Corporal Prandy, you know, we had our contacts. We knew who we had to go talk to and we did it and the funding was absolutely no problem. At that time, we had a budget of \$3,000 to run this program. Today it's a little more than that, so it would be a little tougher, you know, for the guys to get that money, unless your name was Joe Nolte. Trooper Nolte, you know, can come up with money for anything and anybody and I believe very strongly it's only because he believes so much in the program also that he's also willing to go out there and do what it takes. And that's what you have to do. So Trooper Price was working on the programming at the time and that wasn't that difficult a job to do because we wanted to run the first -- the idea behind the program was we wanted to make it like the State Police Academy here, naturally on a scaled-down

version. You know, the -- so the programming that we wanted to bring in and give to the guys, to the boys at that time was traffic safety because these kids are all the up-and-coming drivers.

The age group was 12 through 15. How I hit on the age of 12 through 15, don't ask because I have no idea. You know, I just threw that out there. I said 12 through 15 sounds like a good age bracket to really get these kids and impress them.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And even -- as a matter of fact, we had one year where we had two camps out there in Butler and we split it. We went 12, 13 and 14 and 15, 16 and 17.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

Well, we didn't have very much luck with the 14 -- or the 15, 16 and 17-year age bracket. We got a class, but it was nothing like the 12 through 15-year-olds that we originally put the program on, so we did away with that. We didn't go that way. We stayed -- we went back and did 12, 13, 14 and 15-year-olds. So the programming again was a lot of traffic safety. We had our own

people, State Troopers come in and teach these kids, you know, all about traffic safety; the rules of the road, that kind of stuff.

We had a -- maybe I should just go through a day for you...

INTERVIEWER:

That'd be great.

MR. VISH:

...in the schedule. Back then we started the program at six o'clock in the morning. The kids got up at 6:00, fell out for roll-call, PT -- you know, physical training, that kind of stuff. Our PT instructor was not a police officer. He was a retired Army paratrooper and he was tough. I had to -- you know, a couple of times we had to make sure that, you know, he remembered that we were dealing with kids and, you know, not adults because he really -- he put them through their paces and he expected a lot from them and he got it. He was just -- he was in the best shape I ever saw in a man, you know, he was at that time -- let's see. How old was I when I was -- in 1970, I was -- let's see. I came out in -- '67, '68, '69, '70 -- I was 28 years old myself and this gentleman was probably in his 30s. He was a building contractor and he was just as tough as nails. So the kids would fall out at six o'clock. He would have them for about an hour, hour and a half. But during that time, you know, we were teaching them

how to march. We had the flag-raising ceremony, and then they would go on a run plus their PT and physical training -- or the physical end of the camp. At -- let me see. How did we do this? 7:30, they were done with that and 7:30 to eight o'clock, we just gave them a little break. Go back to their barracks, get cleaned up, get ready for breakfast. Eight o'clock -- 8:00 to 9:00 was breakfast and then from 9:00 until noon, they were in class and their classes consisted of PSP history, the laws of the Commonwealth, the driving, the safety, the drug-related courses and classes. The R&I people came in and showed them how they take fingerprints, process a crime scene; just those kinds of police-related classes. And then from noon to 1:00 was lunch. From 1:00 to four o'clock, we had it structured for them to -- this was where we hoped the attitude change was going to come in. From 1:00 to 4:00 was free time for them, but that free time was structured. That didn't mean, you see, that Bobby could go off by himself, sit in some corner of the camp and do nothing. We had it set up that they could play softball, volleyball, touch football, go swimming if they wanted; you know, those kinds of things. But they were doing that with police officers. All of that, that -- from one to four o'clock was interaction with the police

officers at that camp at the time. If one of the troopers or one of the police officers we had there wanted to take a group of guys, go off into a corner someplace, sit with them, talk to them, you know, answer some of their concerns about -- answer their questions about the job, what it's like being a policeman, et cetera, they did that. From 4:00 to 4:30 again we gave them a little half-hour break to go get yourself cleaned up, get ready for dinner. Five to six was dinner and six to eight every night we had a guest lecturer come in for them. The FBI was there. We did the two-day hunter safety course for them. We had -- a State Police helicopter came in for them. We could never, ever get the mounted detail to come out. So six to eight was -- they were back for class. Eight to ten again was free time for them. Again this is where we really indicated with them as police officers. We had movies to show them, full-length feature movies every night, question and answer sessions. You know, 10:30, lights were out and it started over the next day. So that's pretty much basically, you know, what the program was all about. Trooper Price handled that end of it. Again Corporal Prandy was in charge of funding and he did that well. And myself, I just kind of like sat back, you know, and oversaw everything that was going on.

Again, you see, getting all the accolades which, you know, I don't like. Joey Nolte deserves accolades. All of the troopers that are continuing this program today deserve accolades. Not Al Vish. Al Vish is gone. So that's pretty much it for how the program, you know, got started anyway.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Do you have any questions?

INTERVIEWER:

Well, let's see. Where do we start? My -- I guess I -- I'll just start with one -- you said that one of your main duties as you're developing this was to figure out how to pick out -- once you decided on the number 50, which...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...I'm not sure how you came up with that.

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

How to go about advertising for this and letting the public know this is available.

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

But then also choosing these young men.

MR. VISH:

It's a good question. All three of us at that particular time; myself as community relations officer, Trooper Price, safety ed officer and Corporal Prandy, the youth aid officer, we had access to the schools. So every time we were in a school to do a program or to talk to somebody about, you know, a problem they were having, we gave them our pitch for the State Police Camp Cadet program. So that's how the -- we got the word out, plus news media. Back then, Shel, you know, all we had to do was pick up the phone, you know, and tell them hey, the Pennsylvania State Police have an idea for a program, we need some publicity, and it was there.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And I'm sure it's that way today, but the Pennsylvania State Police, you know, has this reputation that they are the best. We are the best and we always will be the best, so coverage wasn't a problem for us. So we got the word out that way. Our problem was choosing, you know, the kids because back in 1970, the first camp we had, we got well over 200 applications.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And that was only strictly Butler County at the time, you see, because the program was set up to run in individual counties. So Butler County Camp Cadet -- back in 1970, we had five of them. We ran one in Butler, Beaver, Lawrence, Mercer and Armstrong Counties. We did that for a while until, you know, the counties themselves picked up on their own then. So we didn't want to take any boys from outside of Butler County or outside of Armstrong County or Beaver County. We wanted them to develop their own programs and the reason for that was that we didn't want to intermix funding. If we went out and got funding for Butler County and we start taking boys from Beaver County and Armstrong County, et cetera, you know, we didn't want to run the risk of somebody saying hey, you know, there's kids right

here in Butler County that want to go this camp. Here we are donating and we're bringing kids in from outside the county. We never had to do that anyway. That wasn't a problem for us. Again our problem was that we could only take 50. So how did we do that, you know? We started by first come, first serve. The first 50 applications that came into the barracks are -- were the first 50 kids that, you know, were signed up to go.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

The other 150 were put on an extra list. At that time and they don't do this today unless Joe Nolte does because Joe's got -- if you haven't figured that out by now, he's my hero. I want you to know that. But what we used to do back then, you see, is Prandy, Vish and Price divided those 50 kids up and we went out and interviewed each one individually. When we got there to the family, there had to be one of the parents there, either the father or the mother or both. We didn't care. We sat down and we explained the program to each kid. We told them what to expect. This program was again designed with a lot of discipline, Shel, because back then one of the things that I had noticed working with the kids and with youth is the lack of discipline. Well, you

can't go anyplace, buddy, and get better discipline than you can get from the Pennsylvania State Police Academy. So that was number one for us, discipline. We -- you know, we demanded respect and we got the respect and we also gave the respect back to these kids, which I think was -- you know, they -- the key to the success of the program. But we would sit there and talk to the child and the parent and we weren't talking so much to the parent. We're talking to the child. We want him to know what he's getting into simply because Pennsylvania State Police Camp Cadet program is not for everybody. There are some kids out there that don't want anything to do with it. They don't -- you know, they won't fit in. So we wanted to explain this to them. We wanted them to make the decision. After we got done with the interview -- it took about an hour -- we asked the child one question and one question only and that question is why do you want to go to this program. Can't look at mom. Can't look at dad. You look at me and you tell me why you want to go. If your answer is well, I really don't want to go. Mom thinks it would be a good thing for me or Dad thinks it would be a good thing for me, the child didn't go to the camp. Child had to want to go to this program. And after that, if he said yes, I want to go to this

program and I want to go because I want to learn more about police work, I don't -- we didn't care what the reason was. What we were concerned with is we wanted to hear him say he wanted to go and he wasn't being forced to go because the program wasn't designed for that, Shel. It's -- we're not -- you know, it's not a program for bad kids. It's not a program to solve their discipline problems that they're having at home, those kinds of things. While we worked on those at the camp, you know, discipline-wise, we didn't want to turn this program into another camp for bad kids. So that's how we did it. You know, we did it exactly that way for maybe the first five years or so. After that, we were getting so many applications, you know, we were up around the 300 mark for kids, we had to come up with a better way. Well, at least what we thought was a better way. And what we hit on then was we took all of the cards. We divided the county -- I'm sorry -- into five sections and what we did was took ten kids from each one of those sections so we could get a cross-section of the county.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And we did it that way until, you know, I was gone and new blood came in and they came up with some other ideas to do it. But we never, ever gave up doing the individual interviews until again, you know, the old regime was gone, the new came in. I believe the process now is that they take them over to the barracks. Mother and Dad comes in, in mass and they just talk to there and tell them what to expect and what to bring to camp, those kinds of things.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I thought the interview was a great, great thing for these kids simply because it gave them, you know, the choice. You either go to the camp or you don't go to the camp. We didn't have time -- the camp was so busy, we were so busy out there and it was so structured, we didn't have time to deal with problem children, so to speak. It doesn't mean that we didn't take problem children to the camp because we did, but we took them because they said they wanted to go, you know, and then we dealt with our problems as they, you know, arose out there.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Well, for these first 50 -- okay. So you had 200. You took the first 50...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...and -- spread out and went to their homes.

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

Right?

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

Interviewed them. Out of that initial group, how many didn't work out and you had to go into your next...

MR. VISH:

The extra list?

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. Yeah.

MR. VISH:

I'm guessing. It would be better -- easier for me to answer the question over the entire time that I was involved with the

program on how many. We didn't have probably -- in the 25 years I was with the State Police, we didn't have ten...

INTERVIEWER:

Wow.

MR. VISH:

...that said they didn't want to go. We did have them, but I can't think of more than ten. As a matter of fact -- I'm so very proud of this program. The first three years of the Pennsylvania State Police Camp Cadet program, from 1970, '71 and '72, we put 150 kids through that program. We decided to have a class reunion for them...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...three years later. We had 148 show up for it.

INTERVIEWER:

Wow.

MR. VISH:

So, you know, we were so excited about that, you know. It was just amazing to have 148 kids show up.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I -- and I wish we would've kept, you know, better records. My wife will constantly ask me questions, you know, just like you're asking, Shel. As a matter of fact, some of them might even be as hard as the ones you're asking. But questions like, you know, do we still have the rosters. I wish I did. I really do, you know, to this day. Who would've known back in 1970 -- I certainly didn't. I never, ever dreamed that this program would be what it is today and that's why it's so very, very important for people like you, the Pennsylvania State Police, you know, to embrace this program and embrace those people that are still working this program or want to work this program because there is a difference and -- the difference being, you know, the captain says you're going to do it as opposed to, you know, people like Joe Nolte again wanting to do it. You know, that kind of stuff. There's a big difference there. I don't think they get enough credit for that and I really don't believe that they get enough backing today to run the program the way I had the opportunity to run it. And again, you know, I don't want to sound redundant, but back then, you know, I worked under a CO that was absolutely committed to this program and he didn't care, you know, what he had to do to free up myself, Corporal Prandy and Trooper Price to get it done.

And that's what these kids need today, you know. They need the time to do it. They can't do 15 other jobs and try to do something this important -- and I say important from the standpoint, you know, we're dealing with the youth of today, you know, the leaders of tomorrow and they've got so much on their plates, you know, today that they have to worry about. It's tough for them to run a program like we ran it back in 1970. I realize that and that's why I'm so proud of these guys. That's why I'm so proud of the program because it has survived. Not because of Al Vish.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Now obviously a camp can't be run by three people, so how did you go about finding the other volunteers and the other...

MR. VISH:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

All these other people. This person who did your PT and the nurses and all these people; how did you get them? How did you let them know that this a volunteer opportunity?

MR. VISH:

That wasn't very difficult either. Back then at the time, we only had a staff of ten, so I had to come up with seven other people.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Five counselors, two nurses. Actually eight, counting the PT instructor. It wasn't a problem for us to do it all. All I did was approach the other troopers that I was working with at the time. Trooper Bard (ph) -- his wife was an RN. Nancy Bard. You talk about wanting to interview somebody, Shel. You should be interviewing Nancy Bard. Nancy Bard is the oldest time-wise living member of the original Camp Cadet staff. She's still working with the Butler County Camp Cadet program as their nurse. She started with me in 1970 and she's still doing it to this day.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So she's the only one from the original staff that's still involved. She in turn talked to a friend of hers by the name of Rose Bush (ph), which was another trooper's wife at the time. They were both working at the Butler Hospital. So they volunteered their

time to be the nurses. So they were the original staff, so that took care of our nurses. The cooks, et cetera, were taken care of by the camp itself. Camp was held out at a place called Camp Lutherlyn. So we tapped into their kitchen staff and they cooked for us, provided the meals, et cetera. The counselors were all -- well, they weren't all. At that time, what I wanted was to go and get all police officers. Didn't matter if they were State Police officers or not. What I wanted to do was just expose them to law enforcement, and there are other police departments out there, you know, that are just as qualified as the Pennsylvania State Police. So that was the idea. I got as many as I could. Naturally that short of time period the first year -- we only had, you know, seven months to put this thing together. It was tough to get all police officers because some of these police departments only have, you know, four, five, six people, so they couldn't give them to me. So I got one or two or three and then the other volunteers were from Slippery Rock University at the time. One of them as a matter of fact went on to become a major in the Armed Forces. One of them is -- was working for the CIA after that. But that's how I got the staff. From the second year on, naturally we had the entire year to start planning the program. It was no problem.

Everybody there was a police officer either from the Pennsylvania State Police or from outside the State Police. Actually they -- there was only two -- three of us from the State Police, the original three; myself, Prandy and Price. The others were from the smaller municipalities, you know, in Butler County.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And, you know, they volunteer their time. That is so very, very important for people to understand. Nobody got paid in this program, nobody except the three State Police officers that were assigned to the Pennsylvania State Police Camp Cadet, and we got paid our -- naturally our original eight-hour day, our salary. The other 16 hours that we were out at that camp was donated. But the other police officers from the community, some of them had to take vacation time.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

They felt strongly enough about the program to do that. They were willing to give up that time. But nobody got paid in this program. So it's...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, it's a pretty unique program.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Now with these eight, nine, ten, eleven people then...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...worked in the camp -- well, I guess first of all how did you find Camp Lutherlyn and use them continuously over the years? Did you already have a contact there?

MR. VISH:

Sure.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, as community relations officer -- again I think we talked about this briefly where I had to go out and talk to the community. You know, I had to interact with this organization, that organization. Camp Lutherlyn, there was a gentleman by the name of Miller, Ed Miller who was the director of this church camp in Butler County and he's the first one that I approached.

While they didn't give it to us free, you know, they cut the cost for us so that we could get in there with this \$3,000 budget that we had, you know, set up. As a matter of fact, it was \$1,500 for the week. That took care of room and board.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And then the other \$1,500, we bought T-shirts for the kids. We had to buy sporting goods equipment at the time because we had nothing. You know, I'm still amazed at how we did it, you know, on \$3,000.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

There was a lot of, you know, going out, begging, asking, those kinds of things...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...which we weren't permitted to do, but, you know, people, Shelly, are -- were willing to give to the Pennsylvania State Police. They weren't looking for any favors. They weren't

looking for anything back. They were willing to do it, you know, because they felt that strongly that the Pennsylvania State Police knew what they were doing and they wanted to help the kids, so it wasn't a problem, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I don't know what kind of a problem it is, you know, because I'm not involved in it. Joe -- every once in a while I talk to him and I talk to some of the other guys throughout the state. They don't seem to be having any problems. You know, some of these people have money in the bank that they don't have to ever worry about going out and getting, you know, funding.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

How they did it, you know, I don't ask.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

It's not important.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you solicit in uniform?

MR. VISH:

Um-hum. Sure did.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

While that was -- again, and I want you to understand that was a no-no. We weren't supposed to do that. If we were out doing for example a program at the Kiwanis Club or the Shrine Luncheon Club, we were there in uniform. Low and behold, they would always ask us what they could do to help us. Well, gee.

INTERVIEWER:

Go for it.

MR. VISH:

Of -- it's amazing that you would ask. We have this program called the Pennsylvania State Police Camp Cadet program. We need funds.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Well, there it was. That's all we had to do. We had a couple of donors back then that took on the entire cost of the program for

two or three or four years for us. The Shrine Luncheon Club came to our aid. Every year they would come up with between 700 and \$1,000 for us. Never had to ask them again. It was there.

INTERVIEWER:

Was there a clause in there that you needed to recognize them in some way? Most often at least I find in non-profit fundraising, when a sponsor gives you something or a donor gives you something, you've got to put their name somewhere. Was that necessary?

MR. VISH:

Not one of them ever asked us for any recognition.

INTERVIEWER:

Wow.

MR. VISH:

Not one. So what we did, Wednesday afternoon for every year that we were -- we ran Camp Cadet and to this day, we do the same thing. We hold a luncheon for all of these donors.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

We bring them out to camp. They love to sit there looking -- talk to the kids. You know, see what's going on. State Police helicopter comes in that day. They watch it land. They go over and, you know, they get to look at the helicopter and that's when we give them their recognition. We tell them thank you for, you know, the monies that they give us. We put on a nice feed for them and they're just thrilled to death, you know, to be there.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But not one of them has ever, ever asked for anything.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. What was Camp Lutherlyn like? Is it a big place?

MR. VISH:

Huge.

INTERVIEWER:

What type of facilities did they have?

MR. VISH:

You know, it was your typical camp. They had a lake out there where the kids could go swimming at that particular time or we even -- there were fish in that lake. They even allowed us to fish. They -- it was just spread out. Acre-wise, I don't know how many

acres they had. Maybe 100 in the camp. They had separate or different campsites set up because we weren't the only ones out there, Shel.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, okay.

MR. VISH:

See, they had band camps going on at the same time.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

They had other church groups out there. But they were nice enough to give us our own separate campsite. It was called Camp Shawlis (ph). We were off by ourselves. Nobody bothered us. We had -- in a circle, we had about 15 small cabins that housed ten kids apiece in those cabins. They had their own showers, you know, et cetera.

INTERVIEWER:

Wow.

MR. VISH:

We had our own parade field there. So we were pretty much -- the only time we interacted with the rest of the camp is when we ate. We had to go up to the cafeteria to eat...

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

...you know with them. Other than that, we were off by ourselves.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So it was a -- really a neat setup. We stayed with Camp Lutherlyn for about the first I believe ten years or so. Then, you know, things change. You know how things change. It started to get a little bit pricey for us.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So we had to start looking other -- elsewhere and we ended up at Slippery Rock at the Boy Scout Camp, Camp Bucoco, which was another very nice facility. They did a super job for us. You know, it wasn't -- we were by ourselves. There was nobody else up there at all. They had an outdoor swimming pool for us and -- but the cabins weren't as nice naturally as Lutherlyn because, you know, the boy scouts were a little more rouging it than...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, than the church camp was used to. But it worked well for us and it was right in our budget. So again, we still maintained that \$3,000, you know, \$3,200 budget.

INTERVIEWER:

Wow. All the way...

MR. VISH:

All the way.

INTERVIEWER:

...through, same...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...budget? I mean, of course in 1973, \$3,000 is...

MR. VISH:

It was a lot of money.

INTERVIEWER:

...a lot of money compared to 1980. Three thousand...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...dollars isn't quite as much. So I...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...find that interesting that...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...your budget didn't go up as times changed.

MR. VISH:

No. Didn't. These people again were willing to work with us, you know, and they believed in the program enough that they cut the cost for us. You know, they...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...couldn't give it to us free, but they did what they could at the time. I don't know when the big -- the first big budget jump was.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Again, I just didn't -- we didn't keep, you know, those kinds of figures. If I were to go dig out the old checkbooks, et cetera, I

could probably tell you. But we never, ever had a problem with the budget. I don't think we ever went over maybe \$5,000, \$6,000 the entire time I was involved in running the program.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I don't know what their budget is. I do know but, you know, only because I was -- I sat on the Board for a while. I can understand. You know, probably a quarter of the budget today is food and lodging up at the camp. They moved it back to Lutherlyn, but it's...

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, today?

MR. VISH:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

It's totally different today. There are different people there running it.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

They do much more. They supply much more for the kids today, too. They give them -- they have uniforms today. We didn't have uniforms back then. We got the kids a T-shirt, you know, that said Pennsylvania State Police Camp Cadet on it. They wore shorts, you know, or whatever they could wear at that time.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I don't know. That -- I don't want involved today because my way of thinking as opposed to the way the young kids think today is so much different. So, you know, I try to distance myself. My wife has told me that it's time, you know, for me to let it go because I do every once in a while get upset, you know, when I see some things. But for the most part, you know, these kids today know what they're doing. I'm talking about the troopers who are running it. They -- I called them kids only because of the age difference.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I want you to -- it's -- again, it's all with due respect. But they are kids, you know, and they have superb ideas. It's their program. It's not mine.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Okay. I guess what I'm understanding is that yes, 1970 involved Butler County. But it sounds like it also involved other counties simultaneously or was that the next year?

MR. VISH:

That was the next year.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

Actually it was like -- in the first three years, we strictly -- it was strictly Butler.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. Okay.

MR. VISH:

First three years was Butler. After that is when the other stations in Butler Troop -- you see, Butler, Beaver, Lawrence, Mercer and Armstrong. That's...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...Troop D.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

Each one of them picked up their own camp.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So now we had five camps going...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...in Troop D, but not in Butler. We only had the one.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

They were at different times. None of them were running at the same time. They all picked different weeks so, you know, the command had time to schedule to go out to this camp or that camp.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

We ran that way for I believe maybe one or two years and then after that, you know, the camp started falling off for one reason or another. Station personnel -- didn't have the station personnel to do it. The -- they weren't interested in doing it, you know, that kind of -- they didn't know where they were going to get the money. Didn't want to go out and, you know, hustle and solicit because they weren't supposed to do that. You know, that kind of stuff.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So it fell back to Butler. Butler and Armstrong County were the only two counties to maintain their program, and today it's only Butler and Armstrong County. However, Butler County now has taken in Beaver and Lawrence County, so they're taking Beaver and Lawrence County kids...

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

...to the Butler program now.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. We're not going to talk about today just yet. So I guess one -- within these last couple minutes of our -- of tape two, I do want to just ask you kind of a blanket question. Just your first -- or not your first impression, but your overall view and thoughts of how the first camp went. Okay? So you've got all these months of planning and then here it is. It's show time.

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

How did it go?

MR. VISH:

It couldn't have gone any better. It was the absolute best experience of my career up to that point. There was absolutely not a problem. We never, ever wanted for anything. Everything again that we asked for, you know, we got from the CO, from our commanding officer. All the programs showed up on time. They were there. The kids were just absolutely a great bunch of kids. It was the best experience that I could have ever asked for. Was I a little apprehensive? Absolutely. You know, did we have any problems from the standpoint of homesickness? Absolutely. But, you know, we handled those problems. We never lost anybody. Nobody went home. We never had any discipline

problems, you know, where we had to take anybody home or send anybody home. We handled all of our problems at that camp and it was just a marvelous experience. Just great.

INTERVIEWER:

Had you done any camping yourself before this?

MR. VISH:

No, I had not. You know, I'm not a camper from the standpoint that, you know, I go out and put up a tent and camp. Did that one time on a motorcycle trip to Canada and I swore I'd never do it again. And I'm not even -- you know, to this day I'm not a camper. I am people-oriented. I am a -- I'm kid-oriented. But I've got to be inside, you know. I've got to have bathroom facilities inside, that kind of stuff, and we did. We were fortunate to have that. While they were outside facilities, you know, they were covered is what I'm saying. You know, it wasn't...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...like the outhouse thing...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...or the woods.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So that first year was absolutely the best. Tremendous.

INTERVIEWER:

So no issues for you yourself with the whole outdoors thing?

MR. VISH:

Absolutely none.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

Now later on, we -- I had some issues, you know, in some of the other camps. We'll probably talk about those, I'm sure.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

But that first camp -- you asked about that first one.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Couldn't have been better. Everything went like just clockwork.

INTERVIEWER:

Price and Prandy felt the same way?

MR. VISH:

Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

Did they?

MR. VISH:

Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

I guess one of the newspaper articles that you gave me -- I'm not sure if it was Price or Prandy, but their statement was that it was a little bit shaky that first year...

MR. VISH:

Well, shaky...

INTERVIEWER:

...and something about getting stung by bees.

MR. VISH:

Well -- yeah. Those...

INTERVIEWER:

(Inaudible)

MR. VISH:

You know, those are like logistic problems...

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

...that we have no control over.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

Yeah. I remember exactly what they were talking about.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

As a matter of fact, when we were setting up for graduation time, we had the kids carrying benches, et cetera over to the area where we were going to graduate and there were bees' nests in the ground, you know, and they -- we stirred them up a little bit. But it wasn't, you know, a problem that threatened the camp or threatened, you know...

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

Yeah. There were -- he was right. He just worried more than -- nobody worried more than me. He was probably the second in line as far as worrying goes. Trooper Price -- nothing bothered Trooper Price.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, he was kind of like the rock, you know, and when he left and Trooper Martinuska came in -- you saw the article on Trooper Martinuska.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. I did.

MR. VISH:

He and I became so very, very close. We worked our entire careers together as partners. He was fantastic. Just a good man.

INTERVIEWER:

I think that's where we're going to have to stop it for right now. Take a short break.

[Hearing resumes]

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. This is the Pennsylvania State Police Oral History Project. My name is Shelly Levins. I'm here with Retired Trooper Albert Vish and today is Tuesday, June 13, 2006. We're at the Pennsylvania State Police Academy and this is tape three in our series. So welcome back.

MR. VISH:

Thanks, Shel.

INTERVIEWER:

Thank you for being here.

MR. VISH:

Oh, it was my pleasure.

INTERVIEWER:

We were talking a little bit about your thoughts on that first camp and how of course there were little things that happened, but overall you were just so happy with how it turned out. One question I had was -- that we didn't really touch on was graduation and after the week of all the things that you have already explained that they did morning to night, hard work, what the kids were like on that day when they knew it was over and they knew had gotten through it. Can you describe that?

MR. VISH:

Sure. Friday -- our camp ran from Sunday to Saturday.

Saturday morning was graduation. Friday night, we would have a party for them and at that party, it was time for them to, you know, cut loose. We'd bring a band in if some -- if we could get one, you know, and just pizza -- have a pizza party, which reminds me of a little story I can -- one year we had a problem at camp where we didn't have cooks. Camp staff for some reason, you know, was away. I don't remember what it was. But I'll never forget this. Sergeant Gary West (ph) from the City Police, Butler City Police said Al, don't worry about it. I'll take care of the kitchen and the cooks for this program. So I said well, how are you going to do that and he said well, I have some friends who are on the Guard at the Armory over here. They have kitchen facilities. They have cooks. I'll go over there and see if I can't talk them into coming up to cook for us. So he did. That week when we arrived at camp, you know, here comes Sergeant West and he's got two Guardsmen in tow. They're in uniform carrying their bags and he introduces them to us. This one was - - they worked in a kitchen he said at the Guard, at the Armory. So I said oh, great. Okay. We're in good shape. They're going to cook for 50 kids, staff of ten. It's not a problem. We -- he can

handle it. Right? Well, I knew we had a problem, Shel -- you talk about problems. This was one of them problems. I knew we had a problem when we were at the staff cabin, the entire staff where we also -- we met like toward the end of the day to just discuss any problems that we were encountering, that kind of stuff. So we're in a staff meeting and here comes this Guardsman, this cook, in his uniform, looking good. He's carrying a cookbook. So I knew we had a problem from the beginning when I see the cookbook.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But I didn't know how bad it was until he said -- we were talking about the party that we were going to have Friday night where we had pizzas delivered uncooked and then we had to cook these pizzas, you know, for the party. And he come in and he goes up to Sergeant West and he says Sarge, he said I understand, you know, we're getting like 30 or 40 pizzas here for the kids tonight, you know, plus corn. We had corn on the cob for them also. He said how am I supposed to cook this pizza and the sergeant, you know -- this was like the end of the week. He was so tired. This poor guy was just beaten on the sarge.

Every time he had a problem, he'd go to the sergeant, you know. So I -- the sarge said he was in charge of the kitchen. He would take care of it. Well, he had just about had it when he asked him how he was supposed to cook this -- these pizzas. And all he did was snapped at him and he said cook them in the box. Six o'clock that evening for our party, we go down to the kitchen. We're smelling things. He put the pizza in a box in the ovens. Sergeant West went just bananas. We were howling. Thank God we walked down there when we did. He'd have burnt the place down. But that was -- it was hilarious and it worked out, you know. We took them out of the boxes, put them on trays and we cooked the pizzas and everything was cool. Those kinds of problems, see, you know, we can deal with. You had to be there...

INTERVIEWER:

How...

MR. VISH:

...to appreciate it.

INTERVIEWER:

...was the food the entire week though? I mean...

MR. VISH:

Well, it wasn't bad, you know, because...

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

...Sergeant West spent his entire -- I -- we never saw Sergeant West. From, you know, the second or third day when he walked in there with his cookbook, Sergeant West was down in the kitchen with them, you know, making sure that everything went -- was cool. Yeah. Some good times. So -- what were we talking about?

INTERVIEWER:

We were talking about graduation and how you had a pizza party...

MR. VISH:

Oh. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

...the night before.

MR. VISH:

We would have a party for these kids, you know, and interact with them again, you know, dance. A little band came in. And then we would -- naturally we had to set aside time to practice graduation. You know, they were marching in, taking seats, posting colors; you know, that kind of stuff. So we did all that

and then graduation day came. It started at ten o'clock in the morning, I believe. The parents started arriving like 6:00. Yeah. We could -- that was another one of those little problems that we would always -- you know, we would always have somebody coming in two or three hours, you know, sooner, you know, than what they were supposed to be there and of course we'd have to, you know, assign somebody to take care of them. That kind of stuff. But the place would just be packed with parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters. You know, and our graduations were -- you know, I thought were really something. Very ceremonial. I -- to this day, you know, I get chills just thinking about those graduations and the pride that these kids have, buddy, when they're marching into the area where the -- we're going to graduate and they stand up and give that hand salute, you know, while we're putting the flag up and taking it down. It's just something to behold. You have to be there. I can't explain it to you, Shel.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

Again, I'm getting goose bumps just thinking about it and I've been gone from the program for, you know, 15 years. It's

amazing. That's all the thanks, you see, that -- you know, that Al Vish ever needed, you know, for the idea for this program. Just to see the faces of these kids and the parents. I mean, there were tears. People were crying, you know, and it just -- they didn't want to go home.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Beginning of the week -- and I know Joe can attest to the same thing. You know, the beginning of that week, buddy, they could care less if you'd take them home tonight. You know, by the end of the week, buddy, they wanted to stay that second week. They wanted to -- you know, they wanted to keep it going.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

It's a great feeling.

INTERVIEWER:

So you saw a pretty big difference in their attitudes from...

MR. VISH:

Huge.

INTERVIEWER:

...day one to day six?

MR. VISH:

Huge. As a matter of fact, I made a statement and I'll make it again today. I think the Pennsylvania State Police Camp Cadet program is the best community relations program that they have going.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

It was back in 1970. It still is in 2006. Whether or not they realize that -- you know, some of them do.

Some of them don't. I think it is. I think that's where it is. I really do. And if you're going to win the trust and the admiration and -- it makes some kind of an impact on the crime situation as it is today. I think that's where it needs to start, you know, with the kids, with the young kids. You got to show them that somebody cares about them.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Again, you know, some families it's tough to do that today because Mom and Dad are both working. You know, it's really

tough times. They have -- they don't have the time to spend with the kids. Kids need discipline. They really do. They crave it. You may not think so if you were to just ask one on one, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But they do.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Were there certain requirements that they needed to meet in order to graduate? Was there ever a situation where they couldn't meet them?

MR. VISH:

Never...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...and I never put any -- we never put any on our kids. Again each camp is an individual entity and...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...the way they run it is, you know, their business. But we never, ever put any stipulations, you had to do this, this and this to graduate. You had to be there for graduation to graduate. You had to -- you know, we certainly encouraged them to participate in everything and we made sure that they did that. Nobody was ever forced, but we never had to force anybody. Nobody ever sat out, you know, on the sidelines in any of the programs. We had rules and regulations that they had to live by. When a guest lecturer came in, you know, you stood up until we told you to take your seats. You know, we introduced them. You applauded. You know, you thanked them. Those kinds of things. Just be there at the end of the week.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And they were there. I remember I -- in all of my time there, I remember only taking one young man home because he was homesick.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Had him home for two hours and he came back to camp with me. That's it.

INTERVIEWER:

That's somewhat of a convenient thing that it's only the county that you're drawing kids from because then the home isn't really...

MR. VISH:

That's right.

INTERVIEWER:

...too far.

MR. VISH:

Right. Absolutely. We liked it that way. Again, you know, I -- my idea when we proposed the program and the camp was that each county had their own. We started the program, Shel -- when it started, it was strictly for boys. One of -- let me just say something about that. I don't want anybody to think that it's ever -- you know, hearing this tape or seeing this interview with you and I to ever accuse me of being, you know, sexist, whatever the case may be. I felt at that time back in 1970 -- I feel this way in 2006. I think the girls deserve everything the guys deserve. No question about it and we did. We had a girls' camp back then. I do not believe in coed camps. I do not. Didn't back then, don't

today. My reasoning for that is that I just think they should be separate. I don't think, you know, that you can -- I guess you can because they're doing it today throughout the entire state. Joe, correct me if I'm wrong. Are all of them coed today or are some of them still boys one week, girls one week?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

If they are, it would be very rare.

MR. VISH:

Oh.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

Most of them are coed.

MR. VISH:

I don't understand that, Shel. You know, there it is. Again, I -- that's why sometimes I feel like an albatross. I don't think it's necessary to do that. Want to have a girls' camp, I'm 100 percent for it and we did in Butler County. We had boys. We had girls. But they were separate. I think you can do so much more, you know, with separate groups. That's all I'm saying. I can't really understand -- if somebody could make me understand the reasoning behind a coed camp, you know, then maybe they might be able to convince me. Is it money? Is it because, you know, it's cheaper to do it together? I don't think it

is. You're charged per capita, you know, per child that's going to that camp, so the less kids you have, the less money you're going to be spending. I -- you know, at least it makes that sense to me. So while we never, ever had a coed camp, we did have girls' camps back then.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And I think that's -- to this day, that's the way they should be run. Boys' camp one week, girls' camp the next week. You're never, ever going to convince command of that I'm sure today only because of the manpower situation what it is. You know, they can come up with a million reasons why we have to go coed.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Too many hormones running at that particular time, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

Puberty.

MR. VISH:

Absolutely. You know, we spent most of our time chasing the kids away from the girls, you know, and in some respects

chasing the girls away from the guys. You know, I just -- I always had a problem with that.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. There were -- I mean, there were other kids at the camp while Camp Cadet is going on, so you had some interaction between...

MR. VISH:

Oh, sure.

INTERVIEWER:

...boys and girls.

MR. VISH:

Our camp was open. As -- one of -- as a matter of fact, one of the things we used to tell them at orientation when we out to interview them, we encouraged, you know, the parents to come out and see what we were doing with the kids. Some of the camps today are opposed to that. They don't want the families anywhere near there...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know for the week that they're there. Not us, not in Butler. We encouraged them. I said to them, you know, you want to see

what we're doing with your child, please don't call me and tell me you're coming out. Just jump in the car, come out. Because at that time, you know, we had the rumors going around that gee, you know, what are they doing to these kids out there? You know, taking them on forced marches, beating them; you know, those kinds of things. Didn't want any of that happening, see.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So I encouraged it. I told them to come out. Bring your mom, bring your dad, bring your aunts, bring your uncles. Eat a meal with us. I don't care what it is you want to do at this program. This camp is as much yours as it is your child's. Please come out and see what we're doing with these kids. As a matter of fact, one of the nights -- Thursday night we had a family swim out there where they could come out and see their kids, you know. It helped in two ways. It helped curb that homesickness because those kids knew that, you know, Thursday night, they were going to see their families. They were going to see Mom and Dad. Did we have a couple problems where they were hanging on, wanting to go home with Mom and Dad? Sure. But

they didn't. They didn't. So, you know, yes. They had that interaction out there, you know, with other people, both sexes.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Did you see the difference in them though when their parents were around and their attitude with their parents versus when they're with you and their attitude with you? Did you see that?

MR. VISH:

I did, but the difference was -- what we saw, Shel, was they were still clinging to what we were teaching them at camp. They were very polite with their Moms and Dads. You know, they -- yes, sir. No, ma'am. Or -- you know, while any of the staff were around them.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

We gave them time, you know, to show their parents or whoever came up to see them their barracks, where they were staying. Take a walk around the facility, you know, so while we weren't with them, you know, that -- the entire time, for the most part, those kids were just well-behaved. Just great.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So that's the difference we saw. Now once they got home, you know, and got out of that mode -- you know, we always used to tell the parents at graduation you take these kids home. If you tell them to do something and they give you any static, just tell them to hit it for about ten and you'll get their attention, you know. And the kids were, you know, just -- they were just great.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. So what -- when you say hit it for about ten, I'm assuming that's pushups?

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

Was that...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...the special type of discipline that they received if they acted out during camp?

MR. VISH:

For the most part, it was. Yeah. The pushups -- a couple of times, we had them running laps. You know, those kinds of things or fatigue duty. Okay, pal. It's your turn, you and your squad. We had them divided into squads...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...of ten and if somebody messed up, we didn't care who it was in that squad, the entire squad is -- was punished. Not just the one individual boy because we wanted them again, you know, to learn that, you know, this is a cooperative effort here. What happens to one of you happens to all of you, so you've got to act as a team, work as a team constantly the whole time. If you got caught doing something you shouldn't do, your squad was doing pushups or doing laps or you got kitchen duty, buddy. You know, after the meal, you stayed behind and you cleaned things up.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

That's what it was.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. I mean, I would assume that for a lot of these kids, they'd never done a lot of these things before, so there's a lot of basic instruction that has to happen. How was it getting over that...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...learning curve of -- I mean, even just doing the dishes. Maybe they'd never even done the dishes.

MR. VISH:

Right. Some of the kids -- you're right. You know, they had a problem with that because they never did do that, so, you know, we had to take a little more time with some than maybe with the others. But we never, ever wavered from doing that and we never, ever got any disrespect from the kids, you know, because we constantly had to remind them that this is the way you do this, this is the way you do that. We never had that kind of a problem. But you jogged my memory. You know, one of the other things that we had to bear in mind at that time too, Shel, was the fact that some of these kids didn't have it as good as they had it when they got to that camp. Do you know...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...what I'm saying?

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, some of these kids came from, you know, very, very poor families, very, very poor environments. You know, parts of Butler County or wherever it was, some of them never had ever had the opportunity to go to camp. This camp cost these kids nothing. I don't know if I mentioned that...

INTERVIEWER:

You didn't.

MR. VISH:

...to you. Absolutely nothing. We didn't even charge them a registration fee. I understand -- I know some of the camps are doing that now. We never charged anything for this program. It was free to anybody that wanted to go.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

We even took youngsters that had broken bones to this program. I believe we had one that was in a wheelchair. You know, we never turned anybody down from this program. If they wanted to go to this program, they went. And, you know, the kids just loved it.

INTERVIEWER:

So on the application, there wasn't anything like you need to be getting good grades or...

MR. VISH:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

...any other necessary requirements? It was just -- the application was just a basic...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...form?

MR. VISH:

All that...

INTERVIEWER:

Just your name and address?

MR. VISH:

Right. All we asked for was name, address, age, date of birth, township that you lived in, in Butler County and that was it.

INTERVIEWER:

Wow.

MR. VISH:

Mom or Dad's signature. That's it.

INTERVIEWER:

The reason I bring that up is because I've looked at an application online for another camp and -- explicitly stated that there were -- they were not going to accept any child who'd ever had a run-in with the law. So I'm wondering if yours was -- I mean, did you ask them have you ever had a run-in with the law before they arrived in...

MR. VISH:

No. Never. Did we have some? Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Matter of fact, Juvenile Probation Office in Butler County called us and asked us if they could send five kids who were on juvenile -- on probation.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

We took them. Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I understand and I know, you see, things -- some things are different today. You know, I've looked at some of those applications also. I don't know why, you know, they think they need to ask those kind of questions, other than the fact that they want to know who -- what they're dealing with. You know, what kind of a...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...kid they're getting. We never went into it that deeply. Shel. And I'm not saying that, you know, it's wrong to do that. I -- I'm just saying we never did. You know, back then we didn't think that much of those things. If this kid wanted -- cared enough to go to camp, wanted to go to camp, we took them. You know, we -- I'm not going to sit here and tell you in all the years that we ran the camp down in Butler from 1970 that some of those cadets

didn't end up in jail later on in life because I'm sure some of them did. You know, that wasn't the object. While we hoped that none of them would ever, you know, get in any trouble or any difficulty, hey, you know, life is life. You know, we don't have any control over them once they're out of our -- you know, out of our hands. So I'm sure some of them -- as a matter -- I know some of them did. You know, we see their names in the paper from time to time. But I don't really -- we don't talk about those, you see, as much as I want to talk to you about how many of them went on to be police officers.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

How many of them went on to become Pennsylvania State Troopers. We have quite a few. I -- and that's another thing. You know, again my wife would say to me, you know, how many of them do you -- went on? Do you have their names? No. We never kept that, you know, information.

INTERVIEWER:

An approximate number? Do you have any clue?

MR. VISH:

I would imagine we had at least a dozen in the years, you know, that I was running the program that went on to become Pennsylvania State Troopers.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Probably another dozen or so went on to, you know, local police departments...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...or in law enforcement some other way; Secret Service, FBI, you know, those kinds of things.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But again, you see, Shel, that was never, ever the intent of the program. You know, we weren't recruiting police officers.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But it's nice to know that that's the reason they chose law enforcement.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, so it makes me very proud.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I don't know. It would be something, you know, for somebody like Joe Nolte who is so deeply involved in this stuff to start maybe getting some of that information, you know, and doing some of those things. You know, looking around the troops, seeing how many are troopers.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

He probably has already started on that.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Sharp guy.

INTERVIEWER:

And of these kids that go on to be troopers or go on to be other police officers or law enforcement officers or even ones that go

on and have regular jobs in -- not in law enforcement, what kinds of interaction have you had with your former Camp Cadet kids over the years? Do you have any stories to share about them approaching you or...

MR. VISH:

Well -- yeah. The only -- the one that sticks out in my mind is naturally the one I told you about, the class reunion that we had for the first three classes.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

They're -- you know, the first three years, we put 150 kids through, so we decided we were going to have a class reunion for these 150 and 148 of them showed up. So we were pretty proud of that. Through the years, my wife and I can't go anywhere -- shopping, we're going down -- walking down a street, whatever...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...that somebody doesn't come up to us and say hey, aren't you Trooper Vish. And I'll look at them, you know, and I'll say yeah,

because now I'm worried about, you know, why are you asking. And they say well, I went through Camp Cadet with you. Don't you remember that? Now these people -- you know, this -- the -- they're in their 30s and maybe some of them are older, even in their 40s and I look at them and I say oh, please don't remind me of that. Do you know how old that makes me? You know, and it's constant and it's just -- it's very refreshing and it really makes my pride swell and my ego, you know, to have these kids do that.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

That's all -- you know, that's all I think that we can ask for. I remember when I first came on the job, 1967, as a young trooper. The young people back then just did not approach police officers. Police officer approached them, you know, they were very respectful. They would talk to them, but, you know, they just didn't approach police officers. Today it's different. I see a big swing, a big change, you know, in the kids today not being afraid to approach police officers, for whatever reason. I like to attribute it to the fact that, you know, they're understanding that we are human beings and we're no different

than their, you know, dad or their uncle, you know, or the guy down the street and that we do care about them, you know. Our main job is not to, you know, kick them off of street corners and harass them. Our main job is not to sit in donuts shops, you know, and eat a donut and drink a cup of coffee. While that might be part of the job, Shel, that's not the main thrust, you know. So I can see a change. It's always nice to have an ex-Camp Cadeter come up to us and say gee, I remember Camp Cadet. It was such a fantastic place. I had a great time. You know, I have several letters at home from, you know, past cadets, that kind of stuff...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...that have sent to me.

INTERVIEWER:

Were they ever allowed to (inaudible) twice?

MR. VISH:

No. That was my rule. I want you to know that.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I don't think Joe or I don't think any of the troopers here today, myself included want to go through this Academy twice, so I said the same thing, you know, about Camp Cadet. You go one time. That's it. And back then, Shel, you know, again we're getting 200, 250 applicants every year for 50 positions. So we said no. You know, be proud that you were one of the few that got to go through it. So no repeats.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I believe there might be some camps that do that. Butler doesn't.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. When did you start the girls' week? How far along...

MR. VISH:

See, I knew you were going...

INTERVIEWER:

...did...

MR. VISH:

...to ask that, Shel. That's one of them hard questions again. I think our first girls' camp was when we first -- when we put the

first females through the Pennsylvania State Police Academy and if my memory serves me correct, it was 1972...

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

...because out in our troop we got two of them, Trooper Marilyn Stackhouse (ph) and Trooper Kathy Doubt (ph). So Kathy was assigned to me when she got out there and she helped us with the boys' week that week and then, you know, we talked to her and she decided that she was going to do a girls' camp and she did. So it was separate now, you understand; boys one week, girls the other week. So it was 1972.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. The camp at that point had already been pretty established?

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

Were there any differences in the instruction or in the activities between boys' and girls' camps?

MR. VISH:

Basically not, but I'm sure, you know, as I think back on it now, Kathy and the female counselors and staff out there certainly did, you know, do a -- some things different. You know, they -- I'm sure they had to just because of the gender, you know, female, male. That kind of stuff. I can't really respond to that because I - - you know, I don't have any recollection because I wasn't involved in it. Right? I was a guy...

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

...see.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

I said guys run guys' camps. Girls run girls' camps.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Didn't want anything to do with it.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And it worked well for us, you know. Again, not taking anything away from the females. They deserved everything the guys deserved and they had just as much fun out there, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

Same discipline?

MR. VISH:

Oh, absolutely. The program was run the same.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

The programming may be changed a little bit, you know. I don't know, you know, what girls talk about when girls get together. That kind of stuff.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Same discipline.

INTERVIEWER:

Now the first camp was in August. Correct?

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

And I mean I -- on the internet sites, there -- it's showing the last week in July, so did you always do it in August? Is that a recent change to July or doesn't...

MR. VISH:

It's recent. Again...

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

...you know, each camp depended on who was running it and when their campsite was available.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

We were fortunate enough that ours was always August. We tried to run it the third week in August out in Butler. I believe it's still in August, but it may be moved up to the second week, you know, or maybe the first week depending.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

Always August.

INTERVIEWER:

Ever a situation of severe inclement weather that restricted all outdoor activities?

MR. VISH:

Sure. We've had days, you know, when it has rained and just ruined, wiped out the entire day. We just...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...take the kids, you know, into the classroom, try to keep them as busy as we can either with films. We'll do a program inside, you know. Call in somebody from off the road to demonstrate the radar or, you know, whatever we could do for them. Sure. You got -- you always had to plan for those things.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, plan B and plan C. But fortunately -- I can never remember us having, you know, a week where it was a total wash, you know, we had a problem every day with a rain. We had maybe one, you know, and maybe one there.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

We were fortunate.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. (Inaudible) something that I remember wanting to ask you about...

MR. VISH:

Oh.

INTERVIEWER:

...and that's to say you have these classes.

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

What they would do in the afternoon (inaudible). It was always in the mornings and then the games...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

When you say classes, that makes me think that they're learning something, but then they also need to take a test or they're, you know, quizzed on what they're learning.

MR. VISH:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

What were those classes? Were they just really lectures, discussion...

MR. VISH:

Strictly -- right. Strictly lecture discussion. Never gave them a test. The only test those kids had is if we did the hunter safety course, which was a two-day course and for them to qualify for their certificate so they could hunt, they had to take a test. That was through the Pennsylvania Game Commission. We never gave them any tests. We did give them at the end a little form where they rated us. You know, evaluation forms. What they thought of the camp, that kind of stuff. Some of those are hilarious. I -- and I -- you know, I wish I had some that I could just draw from, you know, to remember and tell you. But that's the only thing we asked those kids to do. Fill out, you know, the evaluation for us.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I don't know if there's any changes where they take any tests today again because I'm just not -- you know, I'm not actively involved.

INTERVIEWER:

Did they do any CPR or first aid training?

MR. VISH:

Oh, absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

Sorry, but that was part of the classroom work.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Yeah. So again, you see, they're -- but, you see, we didn't have them long enough, Shel, for us to get them certified in CPR and first aid. What we would do is teach them how to do CPR and they had to come up and demonstrate that, you know, to our nurses and then we would give them, you know, an hour or so in first aid emergencies. But again, the program was so structured that we were so busy that we just didn't have the time to certify them the way the Red Cross wanted them certified. You had to take so many hours and I can't remember what it is now.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Right. Were there any situations during the week with Camp Cadet where someone was pretty severely injured or first aid was definitely needed?

MR. VISH:

Yeah. We had a couple of broken arms. One young man fell out of a tree that he was climbing in. You know, we told him numerous times not to climb in the tree. But he did, you know, so he fell out, broke an arm. Other than that, you know, nothing -- somebody had their hand slammed in a screen door, broke a finger. But nothing major.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

We were with those kids, Shel, 24 hours around the clock, buddy, and that meant, you know -- that was -- my biggest fear -- I'll tell you what my biggest fear was. My biggest fear was us losing one of those kids down at the lake.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

I just -- I was petrified. Every time they'd do swimming or boating, you see, because I don't like water. I'm not a water person and every time they would go down there, you know, I would just be petrified and here comes part of the staff, you know, coming up. They knew this and they would tell me Al, we can't find so and so. You know, so this -- they were constantly just badgering me. I was afraid of a few things out there at -- I was afraid of bats.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

Hate bats. They caught a bat, Shel, one day. I would get up in the morning -- you know, the kids would fall out at six o'clock. I'm up at 5:30 because I felt it was my job to do that because I was the boss. So I said the boss better be standing on that porch, buddy, when everybody else gets up because I'm expecting them up. So I'd go out on the porch. And there was this big pole holding up the roof and I'd be leaning there just like this in my shorts, in my Camp Cadet staff shirt looking good, Joe. Right? Well, I looked over on this pole and those idiots got up before me and they caught a live bat. They tacked it to that darn pole and I'm standing there and I turn around and look at that bat

and I -- oh, my. I went crazy. I screamed. They're howling. Here they are behind the building, the corner of the building. I jumped up -- my feet never hit the ground until I was out on the road which was about 50 yards down the end of the yard and there's that bat staring at me. They thought that was just hilarious. Next day I got up, they had my underwear up the flagpole. Oh, just, you know, camp stuff. But I got them back though, especially Sergeant West. Oh, the snakes -- we had snakes out there. Not afraid of snakes but, you know, I really didn't like them in my bunk.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

I'm laying there in my bunk and I look up and it was kind of chilly at -- that night and I had a light overhead that I was -- I could read from. Wrapped around my light is a snake. Oh, yeah. Those kinds of things. But again I got -- we got Sergeant West one day. We tacked his entire sleeping bag, sandals, shoes to the ceiling. It was so funny. It -- I -- it was a good time. I miss it very much.

INTERVIEWER:

So while the counselors are all playing practical jokes on each other...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...the kids horse around a little or were they...

MR. VISH:

Oh, sure.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

Yeah. The kids were -- you know, they always kept us on our toes. I'll never forget. I'm not going to tell you who was involved in this thing, but from the staff cabin, you see a -- I can see all of the cabins and it was like in between clean-up time and lunch and I look across the field and there's like a squad of kids, like ten -- there were ten in each squad and they're standing outside their cabin waiting for the last kid to come out so they can go to lunch. When he came out, they all turned around for some reason and I'm standing there and I look up and here's nine kids that just -- they're howling and the tenth one has his shorts down around his ankles. They ran up behind him, you know, and

pulled his shorts down. So it's just -- they were constantly, you know, doing kid things. You know, that was the name of the game. Even with all the discipline that we had, you had to let them be kids. You know, we didn't want them to grow up, you know, overnight instantly. This -- that's not what the program was for.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

We howled with them. You know, we laughed with them. We cried with them, you know. Yeah. I miss it.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Are the kids feeling like you're safe? After a couple days, they get to know you and...

MR. VISH:

Oh, sure.

INTERVIEWER:

...they can trust you and feeling safe?

MR. VISH:

Sure.

INTERVIEWER:

Did they ever share anything with you that you felt you needed to take action on? Something about (inaudible)?

MR. VISH:

Sure. I'm not going to say several times, but maybe a couple of times, you know, we had kids while we were sitting waiting for a program to start or -- we all -- all the police officers there, you know, were involved with these kids. They were -- we were constantly talking to them. And yeah. We had a couple tell us some things that we thought should probably be turned over to the juvenile people to look into or...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...maybe Children Services. That kind of stuff.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And we did. You know, we did what we had to do.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

These kids grow on you. You know...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...I remember them, you know -- they'd walk up to you and take your hand, you know. They want to -- they just want to be with you. They want to -- you know, they want -- and I can't help feeling that some of these kids never got that, Shel, you know. They never had somebody care for them the way the police officers cared for them out at that program, out at the camp, or the way Nancy and Rose took care of these kids. You'd have thought they were their own, you know. It was very gratifying.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. You speak of Nancy and Rose and I was wondering if...

MR. VISH:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

...you can tell me a little bit more about these two and why they're so special to Camp Cadet.

MR. VISH:

Well, I guess the reason they're so special is because they were two -- the two original nurses that started the program with me.

They were the original -- part of the original staff of ten. Rose and Nancy were nurses, RNs together up at the Butler Hospital. Their husbands were on the job with me, Paul and -- both of them were Paul. Paul Bush and Paul Bard.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So, you know, I became very, very close to their families and Rose succumbed to cancer a few years into the program, so we lost her. Nancy I can't -- you know, I can't say enough about Nancy Bard. Nancy is still to this day involved with the program. As a matter of fact, she comes down here or she has come down here to help out Joe Nolte with his Commissioners' Camp. So not only is she involved, you know, with the Butler Program, but she's also involved, you know, wherever she's needed. She's the oldest. When I say oldest, I don't want people to think she's in -- age-wise. I'm saying she's the oldest involved person from the original Camp Cadet in the state. Nobody has more time than her including Al Vish...

INTERVIEWER:

To still...

MR. VISH:

...at...

INTERVIEWER:

...be involved?

MR. VISH:

Right. That's still involved with the program.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, there was -- there were times -- I had left the program the last two-and-a-half, three years of my career when I transferred to the organized crime unit. I left the program another -- for another two-year period when I transferred to the crime unit. Nancy Bard has been with the program since 1970 and this is 2006.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And the best part about Nancy is -- it's not the best part, but one of the things that we remember Nancy about, Shelly, is that there was not a graduation in all of those years that she didn't cry. I made it a point that every person on that staff had to get up and share their feelings with the parents at graduation. I would

automatically when it was her turn take out my hankie or a box of Kleenex and put it, you know, at the podium. She would -- I don't think she would say a dozen words and she was crying, you know, so I'd have to go over and hug her and, you know, calm her down and then she'd start again and she'd eventually get through it. But...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know, she just -- she was just a -- she is a fantastic person. I wish she were here -- would be here to do an interview with her.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

It would be a great one.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. She -- I'm sure she has a lot of stories.

MR. VISH:

Oh, my gosh, the stories she could tell you.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

Unbelievable, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Handing out medications to those kids, she saw those kids probably more than -- you know, than the staff did. Great people.

INTERVIEWER:

You said...

MR. VISH:

A lot...

INTERVIEWER:

...there about kids on medication.

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Were there some that needed to take regular medication and that was okay for you guys to deal with that?

MR. VISH:

Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Yeah. We had kids that were on constant medication. They had to have it every day.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

That's why we had the two RNs there. You know, they were qualified and legally they were the only ones allowed to give that medication out. The -- when the kids came into camp, all medications were taken off of them. Nobody had any medicines. They were turned over to the nurses. The nurses gave the meds at the prescribed time.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

It was a tough job for them. They had a big responsibility. But they never faltered, never wavered. You know, they were just amazing. Amazing, amazing -- I can't -- I just -- I keep saying it, you know, and I don't want to be redundant. You know, I was so fortunate, Shelly, with the people that I was surrounded by that I miss it so very, very much. Stop it...

INTERVIEWER:

Was there any sort of legal release or waiver that the parents needed to sign that kind of released you and your counselors from liability?

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

We did have a waiver that they did sign...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know, just to be on the safe side. But back then again in 1970, you know, we weren't -- we didn't do a lot of things that maybe we should've done, you know, along those lines. I think they're a little more up on that stuff today, you know. We have -- with the legal department here, that kind of stuff. We didn't have access to those kinds of things back then, Shel. So, you know, we did things kind of haphazardly. We put something together that they had to sign. Would it have stood up, you know, in court or if we would've been challenged on it? I don't know. We just -- we were fortunate enough not to have any problems.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, nobody ever, ever had a problem. If their child got hurt at camp, you know, they knew that we were there to take care of it. We certainly didn't want them, you know, to get hurt, but things happen.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So we were fortunate. I was fortunate. Pennsylvania State Police was fortunate.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. I guess I'm curious kind of going back to the topic of your -- Butler being the first and then the other counties surrounding following...

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

...and then that being pared back down maybe just Butler and Armstrong. Right?

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

Now it's very widespread.

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

But did other states -- did they have any programs like this that you used as kind of a model or...

MR. VISH:

I'm not so sure I used one as a model, but I know -- there was one that...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...I read and heard about. As a matter of fact, I was set up to go down and visit their program and never made it for some reason and that's -- the Kentucky State Police have one that's called Trooper Island. But I never got to go down to that program. I don't know how theirs is run. You know, I know nothing really about the program.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Other than that, I don't know of any, Shel, even today. But I'm sure there are. You know, I'm sure they -- some of these police departments have to have them, be they state or local police. I -- you know, I don't know.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. It's such a great idea, you would hope that more would adopt it.

MR. VISH:

Well, you see, I'm not going to sit here and try to take credit, you know, for being the only camp of this kind in the world or in the country...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know because I don't know. I'm sure there had to be some other programs going on someplace. Had to be. I'm not that smart. You know, I was -- I'm just an average, you know, Pennsylvania State Trooper who thought there was more that we should be doing for our young people, you know, and, you know -- my own children, you know -- I just love children. I -- you know, I wish my three children would move back home with me,

but they won't. You know, they're on their own. But -- so, you know, there's nothing special about Al Vish. Trust me.

INTERVIEWER:

I think we all beg to differ.

MR. VISH:

Well, see, I think, you know, other people are special, not Al Vish.

INTERVIEWER:

You talked about your kids. Did they ever attend?

MR. VISH:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

They did that?

MR. VISH:

Yeah. Two of them did. I have two girls and a boy. Two girls -- the older two are girls. They are -- they're my life. Not -- I'm not saying, you know, my son isn't. I want you to know that. My baby is my son. He's 37 years old. My oldest girl is 42. you know, she's 42 and my middle girl will be 40 this July and those - - my kids have been the greatest joy in my entire life. I -- if I -- I call my oldest daughter every day. If I don't talk to her every day -- she's a school teacher and she gets so upset with me because

I'll call her at school and she really gets upset, see. She says Dad, you can't do that. I said what do you mean I can't do that. You're my daughter. Call you anytime I want. I said, you know - - I keep telling her don't let me have to come down there, you know, and talk to some people. So my children have been so supportive of me over the years. I don't -- you know, I have no regrets in life, Shel. If it were to end today, you know, I -- there isn't anything that I could do to top what I've done, you know, with the woman I married, the three children that I have, my career, you know. Stop it. You're asking those tough questions I have. I have no regrets. You know, I want my children -- Tim, could you turn that thing off for a second?

INTERVIEWER:

Now in (inaudible) -- during the week, the first week, did you stay at the camp the entire week?

MR. VISH:

Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you ever try to take the kids to someplace like a field trip?

MR. VISH:

Yes, we did.

INTERVIEWER:

And how did that go?

MR. VISH:

Not well.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh. What happened?

MR. VISH:

Well, we took them -- actually it was a canoe trip.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

We were at camp and we got on the Slippery Rock Creek to take this canoe trip and it started to rain, so we had to -- you know, we had to get off the creek as soon as we could and take the kids -- get the kids back to camp. So we pulled off in this little opening of the creek and it just so happened that it was a neighbor's backyard and he wasn't happy with us. You know, he came down screaming at us, what are we doing, you know, we're -- and it was muddy now I want you to understand that. It had just rained and it was still raining and the kids were trying to get the canoes out of the creek and they ended up falling and just mud all over the place. We went back -- we finally got back to the campsite and, you know, all the kids had to go take

showers. They had to change clothes and it was just a mess and the guy threatened that he was going to, you know, call the police on us, et cetera, until we told him we are the police, you know, and he calmed down a little bit then, you know, and said well, okay. And there was absolutely nothing, you know, that we did wrong. We just -- that we just picked that point to get the kids, you know, off the creek and he was a little upset with that because evidently he didn't like people, you know, coming through his property. So we started thinking about those field trips. We did also another field trip to -- Slippery Rock had an area where -- it was like a conservancy. You know, they had paths and trails that you go down and see blazing star flowers. I don't know if you ever -- if you have those out here or not. They may be unique to Butler County. But anyway, we took them on this trail, you know, for this and the guys just thought that was the worst, you know. They're guys, buddy. They don't want to see flowers. They don't want to learn about, you know, this nature thing and again that was a disaster. So we kind of cut the field trips, Shel, out because we were so self-sufficient at camp, we really didn't need to do them. Some camps, you know, are based at areas where they don't have the facilities to do some of

the things like swimming, so they have to take them out, you know, someplace else to do the swimming and that kind of stuff. So we went back and sat and talked about it and decided, you know, no more field trips. These kids -- you know, they're not interested in that kind of stuff. We stayed at camp and did our thing. They were more interested in shooting the guns, you know, because we had them shooting at camp. You know, those kinds of things.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

They don't care about the blazing star.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, talk about that gun thing.

MR. VISH:

Well...

INTERVIEWER:

Thirteen-year-olds with a gun. What kind of gun and...

MR. VISH:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

...what...

MR. VISH:

We had...

INTERVIEWER:

...was involved with that?

MR. VISH:

It wasn't modern armament that I'm talking about. We had them -- we did a class for them on Pennsylvania history and we talked to them about black powder, flintlocks and the fact that some of those guns were made, you know, right there in Pennsylvania. We had two gentlemen, Paul Bard, Nancy's husband and a guy by the name of Charlie Walksmith (ph). Charlie was a civilian but he was the most influential, informed person on black powder in Western Pennsylvania that I had ever met. He had a collection that was worth thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars. So he and Paul would come out to camp and they would bring several flintlock rifles out, give a demonstration, talk to them about the history of that and then each kid got the opportunity to shoot it. So, you know, they were into that kind of stuff. That's the kind of guns that we're talking about. They'd -- we did not, you know, shoot our service revolvers. Some camps I believe today, Joe, shoot 22s or something. We didn't do any of that because, you know, we

tried to stay away from that. But the flintlocks, well, that was something, you know, unique. You never -- how many get a chance to shoot a flintlock rifle?

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So we did that with them.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you know if the girls' camp shot the flintlock?

MR. VISH:

Yes, they did. Absolutely did. What we did for the guys, we did for the girls. Just wasn't together.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

Yeah. They did and some of them are pretty good shots. Well, we found that. In most cases, the girls usually outdid the guys in those kinds of things and I can't -- you know, I can't give you a reason for that, but they were just a little more calmer, I guess. You know, the boys I guess were, you know, thinking of all those stories, horror stories of, you know, the kick, the recoil, et cetera, and the girls, you know, they really just didn't care. They did

what they were told to do and consequently they did a little better than the guys.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Doesn't mean that we're going to have coed camps. It's just that they did better.

INTERVIEWER:

One other activity was swimming. Now not...

MR. VISH:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

...all kids know how to swim.

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

So if they didn't, would you teach them?

MR. VISH:

Oh, absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

You know, we had a water safety instructor there. The -- very few of ours couldn't swim, but we did have some, so they were taken, you know, to the shallows, the -- they worked with them, tried to get them, as best they could in a week's time, you know, to learn how to swim. So -- yeah. We took care of it.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

As a matter of fact, I remember one year where we even -- we had a water instructor come out and certified the kids in something, Joe. But I can't remember what it was now, Shel. I don't think it was a true water-safety certification because that takes forever to get.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But they gave them kind of certification.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So we were -- you know, we were pretty hep on that stuff.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Now you brought in these experts to give these demonstrations.

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Were they the same people every year? Did you try to do different demonstrations each year?

MR. VISH:

For the most part, they were the same and that's what made the program manageable, Shel. We -- it took us, you know, a couple of years, two, three years to weed out those particular programs that the kids we thought didn't like...

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

...you know as opposed to the good, the bad, that kind of stuff. And then we brought it down to this is the schedule and we kept that schedule pretty much, you know, for the entire period that we had camp. People changed, but not the programs. Do you know what I mean?

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Sometimes the guy that was there last year couldn't make it this year, sent somebody else, that kind of stuff. But for the most part, the programs remained the same.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You never change, you know, what works. You know, why change something that -- you know, that you're not having a problem with.

INTERVIEWER:

You never brought the field trips back?

MR. VISH:

Never brought the field trips back. We didn't, you know, in our -- again, I'm sure there are -- I know there are for a fact -- matter of fact, I believe Armstrong County still has field trips.

INTERVIEWER:

I think I saw some that go to prisons. They go to prison...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...tours and that sort of thing.

MR. VISH:

Oh, we did do -- no. That -- I'm sorry. That wasn't Camp Cadet. At the same time, you know, Martinuska, Vish and Price were in charge of an explorer troop for the Pennsylvania State Police and I remember us taking our explorer post down to Western Penn, Western Penitentiary in Pittsburgh, and we weren't there five minutes. We were walking -- there was only 12 of them in the troop and we were walking through the cafeteria with one of the guards and the inmates were in there cleaning up and it got pretty hairy. They were making cat calls at our girls, you know, and they ushered us out of there pretty quickly. That was the only other problem I had ever had with a field trip. But -- no. we never took the kids, Camp Cadeters on any field trips.

INTERVIEWER:

What's this explorer troop that you're talking about?

MR. VISH:

It was again law enforcement post. What we did was -- a lot of troops have them. I don't know if they have them out here or not.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But we did in Butler. We ran it for a number of years where we had -- we took kids that were interested in a law enforcement career. Now these kids wanted to get into law enforcement and we had monthly meetings with them. Once a month, we met...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...and those kids, we took on all kinds of field trips. We did a lot of things with them at the barracks again -- basically the same kind of things we did with the Camp Cadet kids, but this was on a little larger scale because these kids were older. They were all seniors in high school looking at their careers. You know, the -- wanting to go on to law enforcement. So we did a little more in-depth stuff with them. Mock trials, mock crime scenes, those kinds of things.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Some of the Camp Cadet camps today are doing mock trials and mock crime scenes. I think it's really neat some of the things they're doing.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

That's what the law enforcement post was all about, explorers.

It's a step above boy scouts.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, okay. And that was integrated.

MR. VISH:

That is correct.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

That was -- didn't have a problem with that, you know, because we weren't camping. They weren't staying together overnight, you know. You were -- those were just meetings.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Okay.

MR. VISH:

That was coed.

INTERVIEWER:

So for some of these kids coming in, we've talked about how they either had an attitude problem or they're shy and quiet or they've got some social issues interacting with other kids

perhaps. And then at the end of the week, they're changed, like butterflies...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...coming out of their cocoons.

MR. VISH:

Right. Right.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you in your first years -- first year do awards of any type for kids who had changed profoundly?

MR. VISH:

Not so much for kids that changed profoundly. Well, I guess -- yeah. You can -- you could consider it that way. We instituted an award -- we had 13, 14 and 15-year-olds at our camp. So what we did was we gave an outstanding -- it was called the Colonel James D. Barger Award.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, okay.

MR. VISH:

And rightly so because he was the man, you know, that was there when I started it. So it was called the Colonel James D.

Barger Award. We gave it to the outstanding 12, 13, 14 -- there were four of them -- and 15-year-old. So what they had to do to win that award was, you know, nothing phenomenal. They had to show us that -- you know, they had to participate. They had to show leadership qualities. Nothing, you know, that they couldn't do and that's why we had given it to the -- we split it up into age groups. We didn't want the 12-year-olds to have to compete against the 15-year-olds and vice-versa. So -- yeah. We did. We gave an outstanding award for each age group. Other than that, those were the only awards we gave, those four, again because we wanted to make it kind of special. You know, we didn't want to go giving everybody some kind of an award. We had a class speaker who was chosen by the class. The outstanding cadets were chosen by the counselors. They were not chosen by Martinuska, Vish or Price. We did not want anybody -- because we did have Statie's sons and children out there...

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

...and we didn't want anybody saying well, of course that's why they want -- you know, so we had nothing to do with the choosing of who was the recipient of those awards.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Now did -- he was still captain at the time.

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

Barger. So it would've been the Captain Barger Award?

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

And then when he made Colonel, we changed it over to...

INTERVIEWER:

The Colonel.

MR. VISH:

...the Colonel James D. Barger Award.

INTERVIEWER:

And did he come to your Camp Cadet and...

MR. VISH:

Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER:

...come to graduation and see what it was all about?

MR. VISH:

Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

He was 100 percent behind the program, Shel. You know, he was very, very busy. He was here in Harrisburg all the time, but he lived in Butler. His family was in Butler, so, you know, we had no problem getting the commissioner out to our program.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So he was there.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. The one thing I wanted to lead up to with awards that I wanted to touch upon was...

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

...for these outstanding kids that were getting awards, I think there's something now called the Commissioners' Camp.

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

Are you involved in any way with Commissioners' Camp?

MR. VISH:

Not anymore. When we -- when they first proposed the Commissioners' Camp, I was asked to come down and sit on the Board, the first Board.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So I was on the Board of Directors down here as the president for one or two years. I can't remember. Maybe three years. Other than that, I was not involved in the program. I was there, help them set the program up. Joe Nolte is in charge of the Commissioners' Camp. He's, you know, the heart and sole of that program and he's the one that set that thing up. But I was involved on the Board. That's it.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Can you describe briefly what that's all about?

MR. VISH:

Sure.

INTERVIEWER:

How you go about choosing a certain number of kids when they've all -- they're all doing a good job in their own way. How...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...do you go about picking kids that are supposedly the best or what is that all about?

MR. VISH:

Well, that's a tough situation, you know, to be in. What we did, however, was take and -- or we took the outstanding cadet of the class of the local State Police camps. So in other words, Butler has boys and girls going to camp. The Commissioners' Camp, you know, was coed and what we tried to do was take a boy and a girl from each camp. Doesn't necessarily have to be that way. Could be two boys. Could be two girls. But they were the outstanding cadets of that particular camp. As their reward, they got to go onto the Commissioners' Camp if they chose, if they wanted to go. Right, Joe? They had the opportunity to say no, you know, I don't want to attend. But I haven't heard of any of them doing that.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So that's how they were chosen. Camp is held here at the Academy, first-class stuff. Now you see, you've gone a step above, you know, the Al Vish Camp Cadet theory and it ends up here at the Academy where they have, you know -- you had dedicated people like Joe and his staff, you know, that run a first-class program here. Basically the same thing, only they go into - in depth here. They do so much more because they have so much more of a facility here, you know, to do those things. Yeah, they do take them on field trips here; the Governor's Mansion -- Joe got -- Joe has this program down. I'm proud of him, you know, because it's an offshoot of the Pennsylvania State Police Camp Cadet program and it's...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, it will always be part of it. They have two programs or they still -- do they still run the American Legion program here? They bring the American Legion -- the American Legion has a program where they send kids to the Academy for a week. It's

separate, you know, from ours, but this is ours. This is the Commissioners' Camp. So...

INTERVIEWER:

And...

MR. VISH:

...kind of a...

INTERVIEWER:

...would you say it builds upon the knowledge that they attained the previous summer?

MR. VISH:

Oh, absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

Absolutely does, you know, because they're doing basically the same things here. They learn to march. You know, you've got to have some understanding of what you're -- what they want here because when you get to this particular point, you know, they expect you to know, you know, some of these things and this program is so intense here at the Academy, they don't have the time to take somebody, you know, who has had none of this

training, you know, and get them on -- in line with the kids that have already, you know, been through the local Camp Cadets.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So yes, it is built on...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. And is there an age restriction? Because say your best cadet last summer was 15. Are they allowed to come to the Commissioners' even though they're 16?

MR. VISH:

They are. Right, Joe? There is no age restriction here.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, okay.

MR. VISH:

The age restriction is put on, you know, at the local level, Shel. So...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...that just carries over here. If the boy is 15 or 16 at the local level and he's not coming here until next year and he's going to be 17, so be it.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, if he chooses to do that.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. Now this Board of Directors of -- there was a Board that you sat on for a couple years you said for Commissioners' Camp.

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

But for regular Camp Cadet, there's also a Board.

MR. VISH:

That's right.

INTERVIEWER:

Can you talk about that a little bit and your involvement in that Board?

MR. VISH:

Yeah. For the first probably ten years of the program, we didn't have a Board...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...in Butler County. So, you see, again Martinuska -- at that time it was Martinuska and Vish. We were down to two people. You know, we did what we had to do to raise the funds to take care of the program. Then the command changes started coming in. Harrisburg, you know, now was getting a little bit involved with the program because the Bureau of Community Services wanted to know what the troops were doing out there with the camp and they started -- the legal department started to get involved, so here we go. You know, they're coming out with directives, et cetera, telling us hey, we want -- you've got to set up a Board. You can't do this stuff anymore, you know. The soliciting, et cetera, they said you get yourself a Board. Have the Board go out and do the soliciting. You guys just strictly run the camp. So that's what happened. We incorporated. We became a 501(c)(3).

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, all the -- we did all the things that we had to do to become a non-profit organization.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So...

INTERVIEWER:

And that was in the early '80s?

MR. VISH:

That was early '80s. Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

Yeah. As a matter -- you know, I remember prior to that, every time we wanted to do something we had to get permission from Harrisburg naturally. And if you'll notice in some of those pictures, Shel, we had the State Seal on there, the -- we had to get permission to do that. We had to get permission to call it the Pennsylvania State Police Camp Cadet program.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And I'll never forget -- again, I -- you know, I won't mention any names, but there was a -- you know, a lieutenant at the time who wasn't stationed in Butler who got very, very upset with us because we were calling this program the Pennsylvania State

Police Camp Cadet program and we were using the State Police logo. And he had the -- I guess -- I don't know if it was a verbal contract at that time, Joe, or it was an actual contract where he was selling State Police memorabilia, the shirts, et cetera, that had the same logo on and he was going to sue Al Vish because I didn't get permission from him to use the State Police logo. So I think that also, you know, added to the legal department because I know he -- you know, he was not complaining, but he brought it to somebody's attention down here in Harrisburg and consequently the legal staff, you know, got on that and everybody then had to get in line with, you know, making boards, having boards, having things kind of run a little more legal.

INTERVIEWER:

What was your position on the Board?

MR. VISH:

You mean back in Butler?

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

We were kind of like ex-officio members at that time because I was still on the job.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, okay.

MR. VISH:

So we didn't want the troopers involved on the Board so much. After, you know, I retired, I went back on the Board. I was president for -- I don't know how many years. For God sake, they wouldn't let me off until I finally decided, you know, enough was enough. I quit. So I was the president of the Board at that time.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. Um-hum. And who -- so how did you find Board members who were -- who was serving on the Board? Local community...

MR. VISH:

Exactly.

INTERVIEWER:

...leaders and businessmen or...

MR. VISH:

Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, during our -- my career, again that was job...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know, to go out and interact with the community. So, you know, I had people begging me to sit on that Board.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

You know, we never, ever had a problem, you know, to get people on our Board. But what I tried to do was get those most influential, you know. Those that had their pulse on the community and knew where they could lay their hands on money naturally...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know, to run the program. So...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...it was no problem getting people to sit on the Board.

INTERVIEWER:

Besides getting business sponsors and like regular individual donors and that sort of thing...

MR. VISH:

Um-hum.

INTERVIEWER:

...did you ever hold any fundraising events?

MR. VISH:

Yes. We held carwashes, bake sales, you know, your normal run-of-the-money things that you would do to raise money back then.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I came up with an idea -- the captain shot this down. It was a -- the first one -- the first and only thing he ever shot -- said Al, get out of my office. I wanted to -- I thought it was such a neat idea. I wanted to auction off a trooper for a day. Right? I mean, you know, you -- whatever -- whoever wins can do whatever they want with this trooper. Have this trooper drive them anywhere, take them to the store, do their shopping, you know, clean their house. I don't care what you do with them. The captain didn't think that was a very good idea. He said Al, he said, you're

killing me. So he said no, so we couldn't do that. So we had to go to the basics; you know, the bake sales and -- pardon? Oh, yeah. Oh, sure. We did '50's dances. Old dances...

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

...at our FOP building. Yeah. We had one of those annually every year. So we did some things, you know. But that only brought in like, you know, 300, \$400 at a time and we had some huge donors. As I mentioned, I had two of them that actually funded the entire program. Each one would take a turn every year for about maybe five years. So, you know, all we had to do was tell him hey, it's time for Camp Cadet and the money was there. But we never had problems raising enough money, Shel. If you were not afraid to go out and ask, these people were out there waiting for us to ask again, you know, because they liked the State Police. We were the top police agency in the country. We still are. We always will be and I wish I were back.

INTERVIEWER:

So that you could be auctioned off?

MR. VISH:

Yeah. They can auction me off. I don't know what I could do, but I thought it was a novel idea. I was happy with it.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

He wasn't. He always just used to shake his head and say Al, you're killing me.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. One other piece of Camp Cadet that you shared with me were these memory books.

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

So did that start the first year or was that later...

MR. VISH:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

...that that happened?

MR. VISH:

It was much later. I believe the first year was I want to say '76, but I'm not sure anymore, and we only did three or four tops...

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

MR. VISH:

...because those were expensive to do. They were professionally done. Jocelyn's (ph). Did you ever hear of Jocelyn's?

INTERVIEWER:

No.

MR. VISH:

They were big in the school rings and...

INTERVIEWER:

Oh. Right. Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

They did them for -- did the books for us, but we paid for them...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...and they were rather expensive, so we couldn't do them, you know, every year.

INTERVIEWER:

Is that something that you gave to the kids?

MR. VISH:

You know, Shel, you ask such tough questions. My wife asked me that question and I honestly -- you know, I cannot remember doing that, but I know we had to because why would I have

ordered ten books, you know, just for the staff. So I'm going to say yes, we did. We gave them to the kids.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But if somebody were to ask me to -- you know, to document that, I can't right now. I can't remember doing that.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

It just doesn't make sense that we would've ordered ten books because I remember it was expensive.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. And was there -- you also shared with me one group photo.

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Was there always a group photo that each kid got a copy of?

MR. VISH:

Every year.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

From 1970 on. Those are the things that I'm so sorry, you know, I didn't, you know, do a little better job on, you know, keeping those. But Shelly, honest to God, I never in my wildest dreams ever thought that this -- I'd be sitting here in front of you doing this interview.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Ever. You know, I thought this program was going to maybe go a year, two years tops, three years and it would be over. So I never kept any of that stuff. I

-- all my t-shirts, you know, all the shirts that we had -- we always tried to get a different shirt. I'd always end up giving them away.

You know, kids would ask me for them or something, so I would give it to them. I don't know if the '76 book is in there or not.

See, I don't have the '76 book. My daughter -- my oldest girl was in that book, in the '76 book.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So I'm sure she has it, you know. She took it from me. But you see if that were the case, see she should have her own. I don't know, Shel.

INTERVIEWER:

Very true. I think we only have a minute, so we're probably just going to stop and (inaudible) shooting tapes. Yeah. Because it's only 11:15.

MR. VISH:

Okay.

[Hearing resumes]

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. Welcome back. This is the Pennsylvania State Police Oral History Project. My name is Shelly Levins. I'm here with Retired Trooper Albert Vish. Today is June 13, 2006. We're here at the Pennsylvania State Police Academy and this is tape four in our series.

MR. VISH:

Shel, it's your fault that this is tape four because I don't have that much to say. It's just that you're asking tough questions.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, I think you have great things to say, so let's hear some more. I want to talk a little bit more about Camp Cadet. I know we've really gone over this topic, but...

MR. VISH:

Sure.

INTERVIEWER:

...it's -- I mean, it's you. Camp Cadet is you and one of the things was that in 1973, three years into Camp Cadet, a lot of people saw it as being very successful. People were very proud of it, like...

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

And it was wonderful public relation.

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

And subsequently you were given an award, so I was hoping that you could talk about that.

MR. VISH:

Do I have to?

INTERVIEWER:

Yes.

MR. VISH:

No hesitation. I like that. Back in 1973, yes. Captain Barger nominated me for this award as Outstanding Trooper of the Year. It was given by the Exchange Clubs of Pennsylvania at the time. That was not a first. You know, this was something that they did yearly. I don't know how long it had started prior to that, but Captain Barger nominated me for it in '73 and -- because of my work for the -- with the Camp Cadet program and I was chosen for that award for the -- and I was the recipient of 1973 as Outstanding Trooper of the Year.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

They gave me a plaque. You know, it's -- it just said to Trooper Albert R. Vish, 1973, Outstanding State Policeman of the Year. There was also a letter that went along with it explaining why, for my work with the youth of Butler County and establishing a rapport between the youth of Butler County and law enforcement in general by instituting a program called the Pennsylvania State Police Camp Cadet program.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Very proud of that. That was -- I have to say that was the highlight of my career, other than this interview, Shel. I'm really very proud of it.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Thank you.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, how did your family and friends and colleagues react?

MR. VISH:

Well, oh, my gosh. They just -- you know, they went crazy. First of all you have to understand Al Vish in his childhood, you know, was -- I was kind of a rambunctious child, Shel. You know, I wasn't into, you know, school. I wasn't into those things that, you know, would normally make Mom and Dad happy and proud, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So when this happened -- first of all, you know, the biggest thrill for my mom and dad was the fact that I made it as a State Trooper. They were so very proud of me and then to have this honor bestowed upon me was just, you know, beyond belief. My mother was, you know, just ecstatic. She went around telling everybody about it and my dad, you know, was a little more subdued. He just believed it and he was happy. I couldn't believe it at first. When I received the call, I received the call from the president of the Exchange Club in Allentown because that's where we had to go to receive the award. And he said Trooper Vish, I'm calling to inform you that you're the recipient of this year's Pennsylvania State Policeman of the Year Award. I actually said to him -- I started laughing and I says you've got to be kidding. I said who is this and, you know, he said no, no. I'm very, very serious. And I still didn't believe him. That call came in the morning. I was scheduled to work 3:00 to 11:00 that day because I had I guess some speeches to do and I went into the barracks and I went in to see the captain and then I said Captain, I got a strange call this morning and he said well, what was it about, Al, and I explained it to him and he said well, he said congratulations. And he had already been notified of it because

he had to be there at the presentation with me, so he showed me the letter and I guess it was true, you know. I went nuts. I -- you know, you couldn't talk to me for three or four days. So I was -- again that was the highlights of my career.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I'm very, very proud of that award. I'm more proud of the fact that he felt strongly enough and thought strongly enough of me to nominate me for that award because, you see, back then -- that was 1973. I had four years, five years on the job. Those kinds of awards were more for the working trooper, I call them. You know, the guys that were working crime. The guys that were doing police work. You know, they didn't consider my job -- most of my colleagues back then and even maybe today -- I don't know how it is today. But back then, you know, they looked at community relations, safety ed, you know, as kiddie stuff. You're not really a policeman. You know, you're just wearing the uniform, going out there, you know, talking to kids. You're not arresting anybody. You're not putting anybody in jail. Well, I couldn't make them understand, you know, that I didn't think that that was the way to, you know, eliminate crime by putting people

in jail. And that's why I made that statement, you know, about you -- we couldn't -- I could not any longer investigate crime in an after-the-fact matter. That's not the way to do things. You know, you have to try to prevent that. So -- yeah. It was a pretty big deal back then.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

But I'm so proud of it.

INTERVIEWER:

Over all of the years of Camp Cadet that you were involved anyway, would there be any way that you could give a ballpark figure of how many kids you think participated or that you interacted with?

MR. VISH:

Sure. I was involved probably 20 years anyway. Fifty young people a year times 20 is how many, Joe?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

Thousand.

MR. VISH:

I'm sorry?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

Thousand.

MR. VISH:

A thousand. And one year, we had two camps; that year I told you we put the 15, 16 and 17-year-olds in there. So that would add another maybe 50. So 1050 kids in the 20 years. Now the program -- since the program started, Shel, in 1970 is still going today...

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

MR. VISH:

...that's 35 or 36 years times -- can't say 50 now because the classes that they're running out of Butler now are probably close to 80 because...

INTERVIEWER:

Wow.

MR. VISH:

...we're taking, you know, from Butler, Beaver...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...and Lawrence County. So there's about 80 in those classes.

INTERVIEWER:

And that's just including -- at least when you were involved that's just 50 young men...

MR. VISH:

Right. That's right.

INTERVIEWER:

...because it wasn't 25 and 25.

MR. VISH:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

Right? It was 50...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...men and then 50 girls -- or...

MR. VISH:

Fifty girls.

INTERVIEWER:

...how many girls were in the camps? We never really...

MR. VISH:

Yeah. We tried to get...

INTERVIEWER:

...(inaudible) that.

MR. VISH:

...50. We tried...

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

...to stay with 50 and the early camps, they -- we did have 50. It waned as it -- you know, as it progressed, you know, through the years for some reason. You know, it was tough getting the females to go to the program.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So that may have been another reason, you know, why they decided let's go coed. You know, we only get maybe 20, 25 girls, so we'll just throw them in with the guys.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

It may have been. I don't know. But it was tough getting girls. I knew that.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. And one last thing I wanted to ask you about was if Camp Cadet when you started it, when you sat down and said okay, this is an idea and this is what we're going to do...

MR. VISH:

Um-hum.

INTERVIEWER:

...if you had a mission statement in the beginning and if that changed.

MR. VISH:

You know, I'm going to sit here and tell you no. We didn't have a mission statement at that time or a mission statement as they have today, you know, where if you start a program, you've got to have some kind of a mission statement. Our mission was to change the attitude that young people had of law enforcement, period. That didn't mean again -- you know, not only the Pennsylvania State Police. Law enforcement. Local policemen, the -- just the same as the State Police, if not more so the local police departments, Shel, because kids have more interaction with local police officers than they do with the Pennsylvania State Police. So if I had to choose a mission statement that would've been it. To...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...change that attitude that young people had of law enforcement.

Did it change today? Would it have changed today? No. I still think it's very -- it's so important that we make sure these kids understand that we are not superhuman beings.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, I think television has portrayed us in that light and for that reason, I never watch -- I have never watched a police program on television. I refuse to. Just don't do it because that's not the way it is. You know, we're human beings. We're just -- all we want is the respect due us and in return, we're going to give you the respect due you. That's our mission. It's not -- you know, not rocket science. You know, just treat these kids like human beings.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. Before we move on, I'm just wondering -- I want to give you an opportunity to share any other stories or memories that you have of Camp Cadet, whether it be with the other

counselors and instructors or with the kids or -- anything else that you think would (inaudible).

MR. VISH:

Oh, Shel. There's so many, you know, I wouldn't know where to start. My memories go back again to 1970 when we started the program. I wish I had that original -- the original crew with me today, you know. I remember some of them. Some of them I don't. I've lost track of them. Some I still keep in touch with. The stories are just boundless. You know, I could just...

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

...sit and we could do two or three more tapes on stories. The only thing that sticks out in my mind is the closeness that we had while we were there and while we made those friendships and they're still lasting today to this day. I could tell you stories of kids that would -- you know, that -- we had a kid in camp that went up in a tree every day. We'd be looking for this kid. We'd turn around. He's sitting up in a tree. You know, those things kind of like bothered us because we would always get a little start. You know, we would -- I was -- again, you know, I was the worrier of the program. I want you to know that. Every time I

would come on the scene, I'd -- we'd be taking a head count. I want to know I've got 50 kids here. Well, I'd always come up with 49 and Nancy or somebody would come over to me and say Al, don't worry about him. He's up in a tree. We know where he is. You know, those kinds of stories are so -- we had -- I'll never forget. I've got to be careful with how I say this one because I've got to be politically correct. We had -- Don Lee happened to be a young -- he was the man that I told you about that ended up as a major with the...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...United States Army in -- I believe in the Intelligence Service. He may have made lieutenant colonel. I'm not sure. But he was a black man and he was just the best counselor I ever had, bar none. He was so down home with us that he, myself and Nancy and Rose -- after the kids were all in bed, you know, and we finished our staff meeting, we'd just sit around, you know, and make sure everything was going well. Twelve o'clock midnight I'll never forget. Don brings down this watermelon and he's teaching us how to eat watermelon. It was the greatest thing you ever saw in your life and from there, we went into a watermelon

seed spitting contest. You know, just those kinds of things. The bat, you know, then running my underwear up the flagpole. It was just -- we had -- Trooper Martinuska, you had -- read the article on him.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Carl took over the programming end of the camp, so it was his responsibility to make sure that the programs were running on time. Whoever it was that was supposed to speak was there and he'd get them to the classroom, show them where they had to go; those kinds of things. And this one year, he was so uptight over the programming that we had this girl come in -- one of the programs was a girl from Juvenile Probation, Children's Services. She would come in and tell the kids -- show the kids how they could get in trouble, not by doing anything wrong, but just by being in the right place at the wrong time. And I'll never forget this. Carl was uptight because the first program was late getting there. Second program never showed. So she's the third one. Right? She's five minutes late getting to the campsite. Well, we met her at the entrance to the camp, so we knew Carl was on edge. So the rest of us talked this girl into -- just leave

your car here. Take out a roadmap. I want you to walk down this road because we knew Carl was standing there waiting for her. She was late. I -- we knew he would be there.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

He was a total wreck. So she takes this roadmap and she's walking down this path towards Martinuska and she's looking on the map and she's trying to find some kind of, you know, point -- there isn't any. She's in the woods, for gosh sakes. And Carl saw her and we were -- again we were hiding off into the woods and we were howling. He saw her and he spun around, never said hello to her. Never said a word to her. Turned around, walked into the classroom and never said anything. We finally had to go get her and bring her over to the classroom and we -- you know, we never let him live that down. He was -- it was just the funniest -- you had to be there I guess to...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...appreciate it. She was just beautiful, you know, with -- she was totally lost. It looked like she was lost, you know, reading

this roadmap. So it was great. So those kinds of things. You never forget those. There was so many. I just have to sit and, you know, write them down and think about them good.

[Off the record]

[On the record]

INTERVIEWER:

You were just talking about Trooper Martinuska and your relationship with him and...

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

...in that article that you gave me to read, they portrayed it as you two being pretty much opposites in personality and they said that one of you was the screamer and the other is the teddy bear.

So...

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

...who's who? Can you talk about that?

MR. VISH:

Sure. That's a pretty good accurate portrayal. Carl was the teddy bear. I was the screamer. Somebody had to be the screamer, Shel, you know, so it fell to me because again, you know, none of us were bosses there. I want that understood. The three of us that ran that program -- you know, we had equal responsibilities. But they kind of tended to look toward me because -- simply because it was my idea. I started the program. So osmosisly (ph) I guess they assumed that, you know, I was the boss. So I was the screamer. Yeah. Carl was the teddy bear. But there was never a time and Carl was with me for 20 years, you know, that we ever disagreed on anything that we could not work out. Carl, you know, was easier going than I was again because I was the worrier. So, you know, if something didn't just go the way I thought it should go, you know, I was kind of raising my voice. It wasn't in -- you know, in anger so much as it was my way of making a point. That -- and it's carried over even today. My wife has a problem, you know, understanding that every once in a while. She thinks I'm hollering at her all the time and I try to explain to her that's not -- that was my way of trying to get my point across, Shel, and that's basically the Martinuska-Vish thing. Carl and I were always on

the same page. He is -- he's my closest buddy. Screamer, me. Teddy bear, him. You know, everybody -- if I had to -- if the staff needed a talking to, it was Al that gave them the talking to, see.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And then what would happen is the staff would run to Carl, you know, and Carl would smooth things over. He was the teddy bear.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

It was a good combination and we worked that way through our entire career, not only camp. We -- you know, we would double up on programs, do programs together, et cetera. It was always the same thing. We were very close.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum. From 1970 to 1990, Camp Cadet was your thing. It was...

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

What percent of your duties were devoted to Camp Cadet during that 20-year period?

MR. VISH:

Well, by that time, Shel, we had the program pretty well set, you know, in stone and there was not that much that we had to do, other than make sure we had the kids, other than make sure we had the money.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So from that time period, it only took us -- we would start in say January to August every year getting the program set and ready, but we did -- we never had to put the time into it that we did that first two or three years. So we would maybe work whenever it was necessary in our two hours a day to do what we had to do for Camp Cadet and the rest of the time, you know, we were taking care of our functions.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I was doing the community relations thing, doing speeches. Carl was in the schools. Those kinds of things.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

So it wasn't a big deal, you know, later years because -- the same thing. Repetition.

INTERVIEWER:

Right. And in 1990...

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

...you moved on now.

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

Was that your decision or was that the decision of a superior officer?

MR. VISH:

No. That was my decision. The reason was that I was contemplating retirement. Up until that point, being in special duty, you know, all those years, I was losing a lot of money. I never thought about it back then because this is what I wanted to

do. Yeah. I was losing the shift differential, the overtime that the other guys were getting, those kinds of things because I was steady daylight and that's what I wanted. I wanted to be home with my family. I wanted to be at every ballgame my son ever played. I wanted to be at every function my girls were ever involved in.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And thank God I was and that was my career. So the last two-and-a-half years, three years, I wanted to do something to try and make up that money. Now, you know, I don't know if I'm allowed to say this or not but I'm going to. You know, I put in for the organized crime unit because I thought that was the place for me to increase the overtime hours that I was working.

Organized crime we were on wiretaps. Again the overtime was there, you know, for those kinds of things. So I put in for the organized crime unit and I was accepted, so I left in '90 to when I retired in '92, and that's how I made the change. Nobody, you know, asked me to leave. No. It was totally my own will.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

MR. VISH:

I did -- there was another time -- if I can just go back.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

This was earlier now that I thought it was time for me to move on again out of the camp program, so I put in for the crime unit at troop level.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

At that time, Captain Earl P. Wright was in charge and I went to him and I said Captain, I'd like to give the crime unit, you know, a try. And an opening came in and he gave it to me, put me in there. I was there for a year. I was very unhappy. I went back to the captain at that time. Again, it was Captain Wright. And I explained -- he was just a wonderful person. Again, you know, I can't -- I just cannot help thinking how incredibly fortunate I was. I went to him, told him I was unhappy and he said well, what would you like to do, Al, and I said I'd like to go back to community relations. So he put me back, so I was there then until '90 when I left...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...for the three years that I was gone, organized crime.

INTERVIEWER:

What was wrong with crime?

MR. VISH:

Just wasn't me.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Again, you know, I wasn't -- things bothered me. You know, things -- some of the things that I saw, some of the things that I had to do just -- it just wasn't my kind -- it wasn't my idea of what I wanted to contribute to -- you know, to the police thing, to the police work. I felt more comfortable working with people. I was a -- I'm a people-oriented person. Always was. I enjoyed, you know, talking to the various groups out there. I was born to be a community relations officer.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, so that's what I wanted to do. I did not like, you see, being called out -- and it wasn't the fact, you know, that I was called out on my time off, you know, for a serious crime because that's what happened. You would work your cases in the crime unit. You'd go home. But then you were the man on call until the next day. So if anything happened that night and the troopers got into anything serious, they had to call out a crime man. You were the guy. That didn't bother me from the standpoint of being called out. It bothered me some of the things that I had to go out and see, you know, be they suicides, you know, some of those other things. I was never involved in a homicide, but...

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

...you know, I had some suicides that I was called out on and those kinds of things just bothered me, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So I knew I wasn't cut out for that kind of stuff.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

That's it. That was my crime work.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, you know, that first time that you decided to leave and try
crime...

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

...and then the second time in '90 when you went into organized
crime...

MR. VISH:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

...how did Camp Cadet react? How did -- what did they think
about you wanting to leave them?

MR. VISH:

Well...

INTERVIEWER:

You'd been there for so long.

MR. VISH:

Sure. They were -- you know, there were some doubts. There
were some fears, but Trooper Marty took over the program and I

knew that he could do the job, you know, because we did it together for 20 years. So it wasn't that big of a deal, you know, losing Al Vish. You know, somebody else could fill in for Al, you know, admirably and that's what they did. They never lost a beat. You know, there were some -- Nancy was more upset than anybody.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

You know, I was upset more than anybody and I asked for it myself, you know. Nobody kicked me out.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So it was fine. There was no -- absolutely no problem.

INTERVIEWER:

What I find a little bit curious is that you'd been community services officer for so long and that all of a sudden, you're interested in organized crime. Those -- the tie-in just seems...

MR. VISH:

Yeah. There was no...

INTERVIEWER:

...a little bit strange and how did you have that experience to be able to do that job...

MR. VISH:

Well...

INTERVIEWER:

...Or...

MR. VISH:

...there is no tie-in. I want you -- you're right. There's none. I went from community services, you know, into organized crime. But organized crime is different than working crime, crime.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I mean, organized crime, we were undercover. I had a full beard, you know, big head of hair. Nobody knew who -- I had an afro. You know, it was my job to go out and place sports bets, play numbers, you know, those kinds of things. I enjoyed that at first, see. You know, it was really great. You know, I got to run around in old jeans and old clothes looking scruffy, you know, with a big beard, you know, a head of hair. It was cool, you know, and I did a nice job. I did a decent job at it. But I certainly

didn't do it because that was my life's ambition to do. I did it, Shel, for the money.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

And the money wasn't there, you see.

INTERVIEWER:

Didn't pay off?

MR. VISH:

No. Did not pay off.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

So, you know, I had to stay there. Actually, you know, I did not -- I didn't have to stay there, but I thought that, you know, I've taken advantage of these people enough, so I ended my career there because I was asked by another, you know, fantastic man by the name of Lieutenant Jungling (ph), David Jungling, who has since retired also. But he was the staff services lieutenant at that time who approached me. He knew I was unhappy because we were friends and we talked. He said Al, you know, if you want to come back here, I'll get you back here. You want to

come in and be my community relations officer, come back, and I said, you know, David, no. You know, I've asked enough.

Everything I ever asked this organization for, Shel, I received.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

Nobody ever, ever said no to me ever in 25 years. Here we go again. You know, this organization is second to my wife and my children.

INTERVIEWER:

One last thing...

MR. VISH:

All right.

INTERVIEWER:

...just about your retirement when you decided to retire. I believe it was in '93. Is that correct? '92. Okay. That was after 25 years on the job.

MR. VISH:

Right.

INTERVIEWER:

And I'm just wondering if you can describe the retirement (inaudible). Did they give you a party or what...

MR. VISH:

Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

...happened?

MR. VISH:

Yeah. You know, they had the usual parties.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

We all do, but it wasn't strictly a party for Al Vish. It was a party for all of those particular people who were retiring at that time.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

They did -- we did have -- the unit from Finley did throw a party for me.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

They had a big one, you know, where several of us were retiring. It was very emotional for me naturally. It still is today. I had a tough time adjusting to retirement because it was -- you know, it meant so much to me.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I'd go back tomorrow if I could, you know, but I'm over the age, so they wouldn't want me back anyway. As a matter of fact, I'd probably go back for free. So that's what retirement was to me. I -- you know, I retired from there and I knew I just couldn't sit around doing nothing, so it wasn't two or three months -- let's see. It was April. I retired in April. May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December -- January of '93, I went back to work. I went to work for the Butler County Sheriff's Department. I was assigned to domestic relations tracking down deadbeat dads. So I put 12 years in with the Butler County Sheriff's Department and retired from there in 2004. I didn't have as much trouble leaving there as I did the State Police.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I want you to know that. But I just -- I still just couldn't sit around doing nothing, so what I'm doing now is I'm doing background investigations for the federal government on kids, college kids

who have applied for jobs where they're going to be dealing with classified information, et cetera.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

MR. VISH:

It's on a part-time basis. It keeps me, you know, a little active and I enjoy doing them. So that's what I'm doing now. Don't ask me anymore questions.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, we...

MR. VISH:

One...

INTERVIEWER:

...very much appreciate you being here and taking the time to spend with us and share your life with us and your career in the State Police. So our organization and the Academy and everyone here just extends our appreciation to you.

MR. VISH:

Well, I appreciate...

INTERVIEWER:

You did a good job (inaudible)...

MR. VISH:

...you...

INTERVIEWER:

...many years.

MR. VISH:

I appreciate you asking me to come down and do it, Shel, and I can't think of anybody, you know, nicer than I would've done it for. I'm glad I got to do it with you before you left. Thank you so very much.

INTERVIEWER:

Thank you.

MR. VISH:

I have some fond memories here and some very, very close friends and, you know, I -- they mean so very much to me and your uncle is one of them.

INTERVIEWER:

Um-hum.

MR. VISH:

I appreciate that. Joe is another. Thank you.

INTERVIEWER:

Thank you, sir.

MR. VISH:

Tim, thank you.