

Tim: Part of our problem is that we're in a different building, we're setting our own hours.

OITM: So you Community Based Police are also an outcast subculture?

Dave: Yes. Very much so. And that's normal for the transformation between typical patrol scenarios to community based policing scenarios. All over the country this has happened and it's been 5 to 10 years until the community based policing philosophy is incorporated into everyday life.

Sonny: It's only been going on in Burlington for 2 years.

Greg: If you're not working the line then a lot of the thought is that you're not a cop.

Dave: Cops are a culture that's very resistant to change.

Tim: They're very conservative, and I say that as a conservative.

OITM: It's a para-military culture.

Greg: Yeah, that's where it stems from.

Tim: It's got lots of the problems but not the benefits of a para-military culture, and I went to a military school. There are some benefits to that system. There are also some big problems. I'm not trying to give a whitewash. I can be a little bit critical.

Some laughter.

OITM: And you, Tim, are moving out of Community Based Police?

Tim: Yes, and that hopefully is part of it. The theory is that now I'll go back and take this with me.

OITM: You'll go back on the line?

Tim: Yes. When I go to calls I'll be able to be a better police officer. I believe I will. I think there's a lot of resistance.

Some people are distrustful of it. I think the chief's 100% behind it. I'm not so sure about some of the middle managers, who became cops 20 years ago. It was a very different job then. 30 years ago the criteria was that you had to be the biggest guy, you had to be able to boot people around. That was what they wanted, they didn't care what was up here. [Tapping his head] Now your first defense and your best tool for doing the job are your personal skills.

Greg: I think this is what policing needs to get back to. Knowing the community, the cops on the beat.

Tim: I think what you see in bigger cities where the police become almost an army brings valid criticism. I'm a Republican, and I'm not trying to hide it, but things do get out of touch, like in LA where they hire people from all over the country and they get in there and they don't know the community. That has got to change. There can be a difference here. There's been a lot of distrust. I've been stopped by police in other places where I was treated very poorly. I'm sure people in the gay community have seen things happen on TV and such and think that's what's going to happen.

OITM: Part of where that comes from is that being gay or lesbian was, for a long time, criminalized in our country and is criminalized in other countries, so there's still the perception that we are going to be regarded as criminals just for being who we are, and therefore as law enforcement officials you will see us inevitably as criminals and treat us that way.

Sonny: I think what has happened is that the degree of education with cops today is different. They have more life experience and don't have any prejudices. Today it's an issue that we go over in the hiring process, about prejudice, so we're hiring cops who are more able to deal with the person as a person, and not what he is.

OITM: If someone had a negative experience with an officer do you think they

could come to the department and it would get looked at in a serious way, that the officer would get to deal with it, not necessarily to create trouble for anyone but that it would be handled in a constructive way? Do you think that in this department there's a climate that would foster that?

Dave: Yes and no. We're no different from any other workplace. We've got our movers and our shakers and we've got our lazy slugs. We've got people that are prejudiced, we have leaders that know nothing and practice poor management and unfortunately you pretty much get the luck of the draw. I wish we could say that everybody here was committed to professional enforcement of the city and state laws but that's not so.

OITM: So it sounds like what you're saying is that it's really important for people to get to know you guys (Community Based Police).

Greg: Yes. Suppose you came to me and told me you'd dealt with an officer and it wasn't favorable, than I would be able to go in and talk with that officer and have him go back and make it right.

Sonny: We have a certain responsibility. We are obligated to police ourselves as to what is acceptable in our line of duty and what is not acceptable. I think that any complaint would be looked at with a lot of intensity to see if there is a problem. With us as facilitators to bring another point of view, you have other people aware, to help do what's right rather than to have a prejudiced person say "He's a fuckin' fag, don't worry about it." Now you have other people involved. I think that we are good cops, and we want to see good cops, and that's a good place to start.

OITM: So people can go to you with policing issues, and if they have issues with the police.

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