

Matthew Reed
Oral History Interview
Interviewed by Sherman Tarr
September 18, 2015

TARR: **00:00:10** This is Sherman Tarr of the Wood Memorial Library Oral History Program. I am interviewing Matthew Reed at the South Windsor Police Department on September 18, 2015. Do I have your permission to record this interview?

REED: Yes, you do.

TARR: Okay. Well, tell me about your background—where you come from. How did you get to this point?

REED: I was born and raised in Springfield, Massachusetts. I was born in 1965, the youngest of seven children, to Lauren and Patricia Reed. I went through my entire elementary school, junior high school, high school time in Springfield, and shortly after graduating high school, I went to the technical high school in Springfield. It was one of five high schools at the time. It seemed to be the high school that our family—most of our family went to. I graduated in 1982 and enlisted in the Army, and by the end of 1983 was in the Army. My goal was to become a military police officer, so I enlisted and got a position in the MP corps, started basic training in October of 1983, and was assigned to Fort Hood, Texas, beginning February 1, 1984. And so my enlistment was a three-year enlistment. I stayed at Fort Hood the whole time as my duty station. I did a couple of summers in Arkansas, where we went to cover a post that was activated during summertime for reserve training, so they needed some full-time MPs to handle law enforcement duties. So I was fortunate. Two summers in a row, I got what's called TDY or Temporary Duty to Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, which doesn't sound real exciting, but it was a great place to be. I met a lot of great people and really enjoyed my summers in Arkansas.

I finished up in the Army at the end of 1986. My enlistment ended in October of 1986, and by that time, my folks had moved to Enfield, Connecticut. So when I got back, I moved to Crescent Lake in Enfield, which is where my dad—my folks were living at the time—and quickly started to seek out law enforcement jobs. And I remember reading the *Hartford Courant* on particular Sunday. I think it was one of the first weeks I was back, and the Connecticut State Police had an ad in there for trainees in the South Windsor Police Department.

00:03:16 I don't know that before that day I had ever been to South Windsor for any reason. I can remember coming to Railroad Salvage in East Windsor, which is not far from the line. And I remember coming over the Bissell Bridge and going through the tolls to come to South Windsor to pick up an application. Of course, that was—the end of '96 or perhaps early ninety—I'm sorry—the end of '86. So the Bissell Bridge and the tolls on the Bissell Bridge were still there. I think they were there for another year. I think they finally went out in '87 or '88.

And I came to the South Windsor Police Department. I think it was the first time ever in South Windsor— certainly the first time at the South Windsor Police Department—and picked up an application. And at the same time, I picked up an application for the state police somewhere in that same timeframe.

So the two selection processes were happening simultaneously. The state police got to a point where there was a long gap between sections of their testing. South Windsor continued to move along, so I progressed through the South Windsor process. There were a lot of people in the process. I seem to remember there being three or four hundred people in the testing process back then. It was a pretty highly sought after position, and so I stuck with the South Windsor process. You know, having grown up in Springfield but I was right on the East Longmeadow line—East Longmeadow, Longmeadow—very small communities. I liked the idea of small community policing, and so I was—although I applied for the state police, I was happy that the South Windsor process moved quicker in that I was ultimately successful. I never looked back. There was never another attempt to go to the state police or anything like that. I was very happy to have gotten a position here.

I was, I think, the twentieth South Windsor officer hired at that time. I got one of the old, small gold badges, I was badge number twenty, and I think that was the highest number at the time. So the department was relatively small.

TARR: Who was chief?

REED: The chief who hired me was Gary Tyler. Gary Tyler was hired on July 6, 1987, and I was one of his first hires. There was another female. There was a female in the process. Her name was Sherry Cowett. She was hired the same time I was. In fact, she was badge number 127. I was number—she was employee 127. I was employee 128. She stayed on the job for a few years, and then she left. She had a family, and so she made the decision to leave the department. But we were Gary Tyler's first two hires at that point. You know, the selection process ran through early '87, and it was shortly after he got here that I had an interview with him not far from where we're sitting today in the office that I ultimately occupied once I was chief, which was all—you know—all a very interesting set of circumstances.

00:06:34 I was hired and went to the police academy. Interestingly, I was hired, and because of my military background and the fact that I had performed police duties for a period of time, I was allowed to go through the field-training program before I went to the academy and was actually released from the field-training program in the later months of 1987, and I was allowed to work on my own as a member of the patrol force before I went to the academy. And I actually started the academy in—I think it was February of '88. February to June of '88 was my time at the academy. At that point, they had hired who, as we speak today, is the new chief. He replaced me once I retired. So Tim and I actually went to the academy together.

TARR: Oh, okay.

REED: The female who was hired, Sherry Cowett—she did not have any law enforcement experience, so they had one seat in the academy class for the end of 1983. I'm

sorry. I've got my dates messed up here, don't I? For the end of '86, so she went to the academy during those months when I was going through the field-training program, so she actually graduated from the academy probably a month before or two months before I did, and we kind of overlapped. But she had no training at all, so she went to the academy while I was going through field-training program here in South Windsor. Then I started working on my own. They hired Tim right in the beginning of January 1987—88. I'm sorry, January of '88—and then he and I went to the academy together from February to June of '88. Boy, it's hard to remember all those dates.

TARR: Where was your field training? What was that about?

REED: Yeah, so—so when Chief Tyler got here to South Windsor, he had already been chief. He had had a career in California with the Fremont Police Department, where he rose to the rank of captain. He had the position of operations commander. Fremont, California—large urban police department—which is where he originated. He's a California native via Oklahoma, but that's another story. (laughing) But his career was California. He left there after fifteen years and went to two other police departments, where he served as chief—one for about two years and another for five years—one was in Kansas, one was in Oregon—and then came out here to New England. So he had a lot of very modern policing experience, and when he got to South Windsor, his mission was to take South Windsor from a small, New England department to a more professional, modern policing organization, which was shocking for a lot of people and a lot of people that worked here. But I was fortunate that I was right on the tip of that spear, you know. So Sherry and I were the first—and Tim shortly thereafter—the first ones hired. He brought to South Windsor what's called the San Jose Field Training Model. The San Jose Field Training Officer Program—or FTO Program—is a regimented sixteen-week training program that supplements the police academy training program. So you go to the police academy to learn the academics of being a law enforcement officer, and there is some practical training also. But then generally you return to your department, and then you enter into this field training officer program.

00:10:17 This is where you are paired up with a series of officers who have experience and who have been certified as field training officers, and you actually get your on-the-job experience. So you go out on the road, and you respond to calls. You start out doing none of the work, and each week you take on more and more responsibilities. So at the end of the program, you're doing a hundred percent of the work. You're driving. You're taking the radio calls. You're talking to the complainants. You're writing the reports. In the final two-week evaluation phase, the field-training officer has no input. They just watch and evaluate what you're doing because after that two-week phase, if you pass, you're on your own. So their job as the field-training officer is to critique everything you do, and they do what's called a DOR or a Daily Observation Report. They complete that after every watch, and it highlights your good points, it highlights your challenges or your weak areas, and identifies training you may need to help you get better at doing the job.

So Sherry Cowett, Tim Edwards, and I were the first ones to go through that whole program. Traditionally, the way it works is you go to the academy and then you go through the FTO program. But because I came in with a certain amount of experience, I was allowed to go into the FTO program and then go to the academy, because you have to—the state requires that you have to do the academy, obviously. And so that's how it worked for me. Sherry came out of the academy and then went into the field training program, and the same with—everybody after that has done it where—the traditional method.

TARR: So you started as a regular patrol officer.

REED: Yep. Everybody comes in and starts at the same level. Although I had some experience that helped me personally, I don't know whether it helped me get hired. Maybe it did. Maybe it didn't. But I think it gave me a certain bearing and a certain maturity. I'd been away from home. I'd been in the service, and I think all of those things, along with my personality—you know, all the things they evaluate—I think assisted in getting me hired and gave me the experience to start to perform pretty quickly on patrol.

So everybody starts off as a patrol officer, which is what I did. I started working during the field-training program. You rotate to the different shifts—days, evenings, and mids—and then you're released to a—as the least senior person, you usually end up with what some may feel is the least desirable shift when you're young and you're dumb and you're ready to go.

TARR: The graveyard.

REED: **00:12:53** I didn't care when I was working, and I worked midnights and I loved it. To me, that was the greatest time to work. You got to sleep during the day. You could go to the beach during the day. You could do your Christmas shopping during the day. Right? You could do all this because everybody—nobody was around. Everybody was working, so I loved working midnights. And of course, we have a great group of people here in South Windsor.

TARR: Now, you were alone in the cruiser as a single person?

REED: So we were—yep. South Windsor runs single person cruisers, so in the early years, it would be a supervisor and two on the road. So you'd be—you on one side of town, somebody else on the other side of town, and the sergeant would roam. Plus they would handle all the administrative duties in the building. We were small, so we had twenty people. Plus there were—not plus. Twenty people total, but you also had detectives, and you had service officers. So there weren't a lot left to go out on patrol, so you maybe had a patrol force of—four times three—maybe you had twelve to fifteen people that were your actual patrol officers out there patrolling the town.

TARR: This was five days a week?

REED: Our schedule—when I first started, we were actually six and two, so you worked six days on, two days off. So it was a twenty-eight-day rotation, so every twenty-eight days, you changed shifts. So you'd work midnights for twenty-eight days, days for twenty-eight—it was interesting. It didn't bother me; again, I was young. I was—whatever you wanted me to do I would do. Now, along this time, they also started to work on the I-291 project. If you remember back this was the late '80s. They started doing the preparation for the new Bissell Bridge, and 291 used to just be the Bissell Bridge. It was nowhere else. Of course, we look today, and not only do we have the bridge—the Bissell Bridge proper but we have a bridge over Main Street. We have a bridge over Route 5. We have a bridge over Long Hill Road. All of those—they were getting ready to build all of those, which meant extra duty. So when I started in 1987, my salary was \$21,900, which was a million dollars in my mind. Right? And now with these extra jobs coming along, which is an opportunity, especially on midnights. I could get off work—back then, we got off at eight o'clock in the morning, and I could report down to the construction trailer—a company called Kiewit Eastern was responsible for the construction—and I could work another eight to ten hours making—I can't remember what the rate was. It wasn't an outrageous rate because it was 1988 and 1980s dollars, but I could essentially add another—I could almost double my income, which was two million dollars (laughs) in my mind. Right? So I worked a lot of extra duty. That's my point.

00:15:56 There was a core group of us that would work our shift and then immediately go to the construction site and do construction jobs. And so, it became very lucrative. I was single at the time. I lived in an apartment. I was living the good life.

TARR: Where were you living at that time?

REED: At that point, I was living on Martin Street in Enfield. I hadn't moved—I hadn't moved into town yet, so during those first few years I lived in a couple of apartments in Enfield. Now, if you look back at that time, there weren't a lot of housing opportunities in this area, and I didn't know this area. I mean I knew western Mass. And still, I know western Mass, and I still have trouble once you get south of South Windsor. People tease me often, and certainly back then they did. So I didn't know where all the housing opportunities were, so Enfield is where my folks lived at the time, and it was inexpensive, and so I had an apartment in Enfield on Martin Street and then moved over to Fox Hill Lane in Enfield. Coincidentally, it was an apartment that was lived in by another one of our officers here. He got married and bought a house, and when he moved out, I talked to the management company at the apartments and I said, "Can I just move in there? I work at the same place. I've got a good income." And they allowed me to do that, so I actually took over his—I moved into their apartment in Enfield. And that's where I stayed for a few years until I bought my first house, which I guess was in 1993. I bought a house on Rockville Road in East Windsor, just over the South Windsor line, and I stayed there for five years until I ultimately moved into town.

TARR: Were you still single? Or were you married at that time?

REED: My wife, whose name is Kathleen—had been Kathleen Grace, part of the Grace family here in South Windsor, born and raised. Her dad was Bill Grace, who was a local attorney, was elected probate judge here in South Windsor for the South Windsor/East Windsor probate district for about twenty years. And Kathy worked as a recreation supervisor here at the South Windsor rec department. In my early years in the police department, I was youth service officer. And so we had a lot of interaction because the rec department and the teen center were all programs that I helped promote, and the kids I would get involved with were kids that were also involved over there. So I worked closely with Dennis Sheridan, who was the director of youth services back then and youth services and recreation had a good partnership. And of course, my wife was the—oftentimes the recreation department representative. Back then, Jim Snow was the director of recreation. Ray Fabro, who's currently the director of recreation, was the assistant director. And then my wife was one of the rec supervisors.

00:19:09 So we spent—we found ourselves interacting, and then we found ourselves interacting more frequently. (laughs) And so we dated for about three years and then, in 1997, I guess—we started dating in '94—I think late '94— and then we ultimately got married in '97. And during that time, we moved into South Windsor. I moved into South Windsor and we purchased a house. It was shortly after we got married. We purchased a house here on Ellsworth Circle, which is where we live now. We've had five children, and we raised our children there. They're all part of the school system and active in the community. So that's how—I met my wife within the first ten years of being on the job here. I guess I started in '87, we met in '94 and then ultimately got married in '97. And during that time, I worked as a patrol officer. I worked as a youth service officer. So I was the law enforcement representative to the school system, and I started the DARE program, which is the Drug Abuse Resistance and Education program that moved out east from the West Coast. It started in Los Angeles and worked its way across the country. And so I proposed that to Dr. Wood and Laura Boutellier, who at the time was the principal of the middle school, and they agreed to allow me to go into the middle school and work with the sixth graders and present this drug education curriculum. It kind of fit into a slot that they needed to fill, and it worked out that Chief Tyler was very interested in having us getting it involved in the schools as much as possible. And so for two and a half years, I spent my time in youth services, where I was responsible for youth investigations dealing with neglect of children, mistreatment of children, child-related crimes, juvenile crimes—

TARR: So social service department as well as recreation.

REED: And part of that was also working with human services. Even back then, we were looking for alternatives for youth as opposed to just arresting them and sending them to court. They hadn't—you know, some sort of diversionary programs, so we did a lot of that through—with some treatment options—through human services. But I would also work with department—the state's department of children and families because sadly, as nice a community we have, we still had a population of juveniles that were mistreated at home, and there were prosecutions to be had for abuse of children. And those are the cases I got involved in, so in the morning I would be at the middle school with all these wonderful middle schoolers teaching the DARE program; and then in the afternoon, I would be sitting before a family in tears

interviewing a kid who was brutally—you know—treated at home or in some other environment. So it was an interesting job, and working with kids can be very rewarding but also very challenging and really pull at your heartstrings.

00:22:31 So here in South Windsor, one of the things Chief Tyler implemented was this rotation of positions. His goal was to have—to have the best-rounded officer was to give him opportunities to do different things, so generally, our assignments were two years. So my time in youth services came to an end pretty quickly, because it was time to rotate out and let somebody else have a chance so that I could take my knowledge back onto patrol. And we did that—we do that with all of our positions, and they continue to do it today, where we have officers who rotated to investigator positions, administrative service positions, traffic safety enforcement positions, youth service, and the officers are given the opportunity at certain intervals to test and rotate into these positions. And it gives you training and experience that you otherwise would never get for an entire career sometimes. I mean I can remember talking to people from other agencies after only five years and ten years on the job and telling them all the assignments I'd had and the experience of training, and they're like, "I would never get this in my entire career, not to mention you've had it in five- to ten-year blocks." So we always tout that to potential candidates and say, "We're going to give you some opportunities here that you wouldn't get in a lot of other places."

So I benefitted from that, so youth services—that's where I first met my wife because we had a lot of overlap in the programs that we offered and things we were involved in. But then when I was done with that, I rotated back to patrol. I worked evenings. I worked some midnights. I got promoted to a supervisory rank. We have a rank of agent, which is the first level of supervision. And then we have the rank of sergeant, which is the more traditional first-line supervisor.

TARR: When was that?

REED: So that was in—I think I made sergeant in '96. In April of '96, I was promoted to sergeant. And shortly thereafter, I tested for an opening in administrative services. That was a position in the administrative area of the department working directly for the police chief doing policies, doing some internal investigations, doing public information. And so I tested for that position. I seem to remember it was sometime in that fall of—I want to say that was—now, I'm going to mess my dates up because I think I got sergeant in '96, but I was already in the administrative service position, so I want to say in '93 because it was September of '93 that I ended up assigned to administrative services. So I held the rank of agent during that time, so after I finished the DARE program, I think that's when I got the rank of agent, which was two stripes. The first supervisory level, I worked on evening shift and midnight shift. When you're an agent, you aren't always in charge of the shift. But when the sergeant is not there, instead of them having to call in another sergeant, then you as the agent become the supervisor for the shift. So it's kind of a part-time supervision position. It's actually one of the best positions to have in the department, because you're not always the supervisor. But it gives you a taste of supervision, and some people don't like to do it. Right? So it gives you an opportunity.

Then in '93, they did the administrative services test. In September of '93, I was granted that position. I was selected, and that's when I—that's when my career on the road basically ended, and I came inside for what I thought would be a two- to five-year stint. At that point, the chief realized that two years was not really efficient to bring somebody in and get them all the training they needed for a position and then send them out after only two years. They don't really—you don't really get an opportunity to spread your wings and practice all that you've learned. So we started to modify assignments to make them between two and five years, so that if we sent a—brought in a detective or even a person in youth services—instead of having them in the position for only two years, maybe you'd keep them for three or four or five so you had some stability within that unit and also they became more experienced and a little better at what they were doing.

00:27:09 And I explain that because when I came up to administrative services, I thought maybe I'll be here two years, maybe five years. I didn't think that it would be—I didn't think it would be twenty-two years, and that's what it turned into because I came up in '93, and I was—and then in '96 I got promoted to sergeant, still in that role of administrative services. We were—kept trying to do law enforcement accreditation, which is a very time-consuming job. We had just brought on computer technology, so '93-'94, we had dumb terminals in like three locations in the department. I mean that was it. There were no PCs. There were certainly no laptops. Bruno Gellini, who was the deputy chief at the time—that was one of his missions was to work on bringing South Windsor Police Department into that electronic age and to start doing word processing and electronic filing. So he worked on that, but he retired in July of 1997—so about four years after I came upstairs into administration.

At that point, I had bought my own personal computer at home. I don't know why. I never had any inclination, but it was new. PCs were new. Right? And I figured, well, the only way I'm every going to learn is if I get one. I learned how to type in the Army—in high school, so I was a very good keyboardist, and I found even when I was in the Army that if you knew how to type, you became a valuable resource. So I had some good positions in the Army because of that, and Chief Tyler felt the same way. When he saw that I could rattle things out on an IBM Selectric III—which I think we have one left here in the museum (laughs)—suddenly, when computers came about—well, you must know how to do computers, and I had no idea. Anything with a cord suddenly became my responsibility, so when Bruno Gellini, who was the deputy chief, retired in 1997, I suddenly had a new task, a new responsibility. So I suddenly became responsible for anything that ran on electricity or had a keyboard. (laughs)

So at that point, we did not yet have a computer-aided dispatch system or records—well, we did have a records management system. It was rudimentary. It was a green screen. It was a mainframe system, and the chief charged me with bringing us more of age—getting us more electronics, getting computers in the cars, getting a computer-aided dispatch system, and getting a more user friendly records management system—one that the officers could do queries from downstairs without having to learn a whole new software package. We had this other system that was somewhat cumbersome to use and was not conducive to teaching large groups of people to use.

So now, as you can imagine, my three-to-five-year assignment or two-to-five-year assignment has now grown because, as you know, as anyone who's worked in an office knows, there's usually only one—maybe two people if you're lucky—that have a lot of IT savvy and can get into a machine. And I didn't know any of this stuff then. I just learned over time how to manipulate DOS and then Windows and how to set up printers and do all these tasks that—there was a period when they were very complicated, and of course, Microsoft made it very easy for a novice to figure these things out. Well, at least it was—I figured it out and then it was on my shoulders to teach other people how to make it happen, which never really quite happens, does it. There's always still that one person. Till the day I left here, after twenty-seven years, there was still a question. How do we do this? Or where are these files located? You know. So I think that was the point where I secured my position inside the building (laughs) and would never have to go back out again, because of the technology. Of course, at that period of time, we went from PCs and Windows for workgroups to Windows—I can't remember the first number on Windows—but then we rapidly moved away from the mainframe world into the personal computer world, and then came tablet computing, and then came personal digital assistants for Blackberry. Right? What was the first one we had? It was the—oh, the first one that had the stylus and you had—the first personal digital assistant that was a big deal and everybody had to have one. And then the Blackberry followed that and then cellphones. So all of those things I found myself having to deal with, and they're all very different technologies, very different operating platforms. But nonetheless, I took that on.

00:32:21 Now, one of the things I also did when I started in the admin position in '93 is I started to—I talked to the chief about wanting to publicize what our officers were doing on a day-to-day basis. I wanted—I felt that we weren't using the media as much as we could use it. Or maybe using them is not the right word, but we could take advantage. We had a product that I know the newspaper wanted, and I knew TV wanted it because we investigate crime and fires and accidents—things that are very visible in the community and that the community wants to know about—and I didn't feel as though we were—that information was flowing out of here like I thought it could be. So I told him what I wanted to do. I told him that I would like—each morning when I come in, my goal is going to be to go through all of the reports that are on the desk in records, because back then reports had to be entered by the records personnel. Right? All the officers would do their reports in writing, put them on the desk in records, and then records would take certain fields of data and they would enter them into a database. It's not like today where the officer writes their report in the cruiser, and it's electronic, and I can bring it up from home now if I wanted to. Right?

So there was a process, so all these reports would build up, and then I would come in on a Monday morning or any morning, and I would go through the reports, and I would find things and say, "If I was a reporter or if I was a citizen, I'd want to know that this person got stopped for drunk driving. This person got stopped for reckless driving. We made an arrest for burglary. We made an arrest for larceny." So I would read the reports and I would write just a very small paragraph—a synopsis—who, what, where, when, why, how, and a brief description of the circumstances. And then I would fax that to our newspaper. I would create a press release and fax that to our newspaper reporters. We usually had a reporter from the *Courant* and a reporter from the *Journal Inquirer*. And they would—up till that point, they would come in at different

times of the day and ask to look at our reports, and it was always inconvenient. It wasn't that nobody wanted to give it out, but it was always like, okay, here's the stack of paper. So it wasn't efficient for the reporter. It wasn't efficient for our records personnel. And then if the reporter had questions, you know everyone's always hesitant to talk to the media. Well, we've got to find the right person. Let me talk to—find the captain, see if he can come talk to you. And so it was just a process that seemed to be bigger than it really had to be.

00:34:52 So my goal was if I could create these case briefs every morning and I could fax them to the reporters, then the reporters could show up prepared and say hey, I want to ask about this, or I want to look at this particular report or I have a specific question. And they did that. I mean for a little while, they would come in and still it was the same routine. Even though we were sending the fax—you know how popular fax machines then. I think people were just starting to get them or maybe it was the middle of the fax phenomenon back then. Who knows? But they still wanted to come in and see what was happening and go through the reports themselves. And that lasted probably six months, and then they realized why am I going and doing all this work if this thing is sitting on my desk on the fax machine. And so then, I started to just get phone calls. There was no e-mail yet. We didn't even have e-mail yet. That was a while before we got e-mail. Then I would just get phone calls. Hey, I'm looking at this. Can you tell me when this guy is supposed to be in court? And that's how I learned what information needed to be in the press release, so I would amend my releases to put—try to answer their questions before they even asked them. Because I figured if it makes it easy for them, they don't have to drive out here. They're not poking around (laughs) and I was always amazed to see that what I wrote in the morning is the same thing I read in the afternoon when I would get home and read the *JL*. I thought, "This works great."

In fact, I sometimes would think, "I'm going to throw in a stray odd word and see if they're even reading what they're putting in or if they're just cutting and pasting." Because that's how—what I wrote is what would show up in the paper. I think the media started to appreciate that. This was my first real foray into freedom of information and trying to open up our agency as a government agency, and transparency is a big word now. But I don't think I was thinking about transparency. I think I was just figuring you want this, so we're going to give it to you. I always had the feeling that our relationship with the media should start today. It shouldn't start at the next big event. The first time I meet the local reporter shouldn't be at the fatal car accident or at the car fire. I should know them long before that. And so the chief appreciated that, and he gave me the green light to do whatever I wanted to do. His big thing was don't make us look stupid. Don't make me look stupid. Make sure you represent the department well. And so I took that to heart. That remained with me for many years. I think for thirteen years I was responsible for the role of public information officer and getting print news out there daily—anything. I always joked. Feed the pig. Just get it out there, whether it's about a promotion or whether it's about something bad that happened in the department. Put it out there. No one can ever accuse you of hiding information, and there'll be another paper tomorrow. So even if it sounds terrible today, there's going to be another paper tomorrow, and it'll give people something else to buzz about.

00:38:05 And I also felt that—you know what? People said, “Oh, it’s little South Windsor. Nothing ever happens.” And day to day, things were happening, and I think the citizenry needed to know—still needs to know—that the officers go out every day, and they’re engaged in police work. It may not be dramatic. It may not be front-page news. But they’re out there having contact with citizens every day—sometimes for good reasons, sometimes for bad reasons. And I thought we needed to let people know that what they were getting for their money, and that’s why it was so—it was always so important to me to get the information out there. Because you can’t go before the town council at budget time and tell them how busy you are, and they’re going, “What are you talking about? I haven’t seen any articles in the paper.” But when they see things are happening and they read the news and they see South Windsor listed, I guess they could interpret that two different ways, and I’ve certainly—in talking to my law enforcement colleagues, there are some communities where they don’t want to see the police department listed. Right? The politicians say, “Oh, that makes it look like we have a dangerous community, and there’s crime.” But I think you have your head in the sand if you’re not thinking that your police are out there making arrests and doing police work every day. That’s why you have them. You spend millions of dollars on them. You need to know they’re out there doing something.

We’ve always been fortunate in South Windsor that—whether it was—I think when I started, Dick Sarter was the town manager. John Mitchell was the mayor. After Dick Sarter left, Jean Zurbrigen was the town manager. And then we had an acting town manager for a little while, Dana Whitman, and then Matt Galligan came onboard. And all of the political people after that have always been very supportive. Well, we’ve never had a political body or a town manager who tried to restrain our release of information, so we’ve been very fortunate. And I know that there are other towns that don’t have that good relationship, and the chief is under the thumb of either the chief elected official or a town manager, who says, “You’re not going to put that in the newspaper. Nobody needs to know that.” So it’s too bad. I think it does a disservice more than help—the agency.

So that was a big—I took that as a very serious responsibility in those years in administration. And that, plus the technology, kept me quite busy on a day-to-day basis. And we so quickly evolved from desktop PCs—personal computers—to laptop computers to personal digital assistants—what we know now as an iPhone or a Galaxy or whatever you want to call it. Oh, of course, we did go through the beeper phase, right—pagers. Who didn’t have a pager? Then a flip phone, a bag phone—you know. But all that stuff, when you look back on it now, was boom, boom, boom, boom. Wasn’t it? It seemed like one was right on the heels of the other. So there was always something more to buy, and the money—you could just see that technology was just going to be such a money pit. And we weren’t on the cutting edge. We had an—our e-mail system finally came into play in the late ’90s, so we were hardly on the cutting edge. Even to this day, we’re operating on an old e-mail platform. It’s difficult for councils to approve the vast amounts of money that are needed to comply with all the licensing requirements, yet we are in such a technology-centric business—that being government in general—people expect you to have records online. They expect to be able to register for courses online. They expect to be able to pay for things online. They expect to be able to see your services in an online platform. So it’s a challenge, and it always has been a challenge. It seems like we’re always playing catchup,

trying to get up with the latest and greatest. Not that we have to have the absolute best or be the tip of the spear on some of these things; but we should at least be in the realm of the modern era. So that occupied a lot of my time with technology.

00:42:07 And meanwhile, from a personal perspective, I wanted some personal growth and development. My wife had her master's degree. When I—I started going to college in '96, because when I came here right out of the Army, I hadn't had any college education. In fact, out of seven kids in our family, nobody had ever gone to college. It just wasn't on the drawing board. It was just—we were a very blue-collar family. My mother raised the seven kids—did not have a job outside of the home, and my dad was a draftsman at Hamilton Standard for twenty-five years. So it wasn't like we had loads of money coming in. College was never on the table for any of the kids. It was finish high school, graduate, and figure out what you're going to do with your life.

TARR: And you didn't have the GI Bill?

REED: **00:42:57** It did exist. I was in under the program called VEAP, which is the Veterans Education Allowance Program, where the government put a certain amount of money away for you for schooling. So I got out of the Army in 1986, and I took my first college course in September of '96, so I got three checks. Because after ten years, the money goes away. So I got my December check, which was like—it was only like \$150 to help offset the cost of college. And after that, my balance reverted back to the government. So I did not take advantage. During those ten years, my early years, all I wanted to do was work and earn money.

TARR: Oh, I can understand. Yeah.

REED: And college—because I did not come from a college-oriented background, it was not something that was a priority for me. Once I started working here and started looking at promotion, Chief Tyler was very much an advocate for education and encouraged me. He said, "If you ever want to move up, you've got to do something else." But my wife was really the biggest push. She was getting her master's degree during the time—the years we were dating. She said, "You need to do something." (laughs) And so she really motivated me to move forward, so I went to Tunxis Community College out in Farmington from '96 to '98, and I got my associate's degree. The reason I ended up at Tunxis was because we were involved in the—well, Tunxis Community College was the home of the Connecticut Criminal Justice Command Institute, which was a fourteen-month program that was offered through the community college system. Gary Tyler was one of the founding directors. This was something that he really felt law enforcement needed to have some connection to the state college system—or at least the community college system—because that's the way they do it in other parts of the country, and they could provide training programs that would give officers college credit, thus encouraging officers to move on and get their degree. And that's exactly what it did. When I finished that program, I had quite a few credits after the fourteen months in the Criminal Justice Command Institute program, so I stayed at Tunxis and started working on the requirements for my associate's degree and was able—even going part time was able to finish that up in two years. In

fact, I was going to enroll in Central. They really overlapped. I was taking some courses at Central and some at Tunxis. So you can imagine working full time, newly married. There were weekends, vacations, summer time—my goal once I started was I'm going to do this. I'm going to get this done. So I went every opportunity I could and knocked out classes. So I finished up my associate's degree in '98. I finished up my bachelor's degree in criminology with a minor in communication at Central in December of 2001. And then—(phone ringing)

TARR: Good lord.

REED: **00:46:19** And then I finished my bachelor's degree, it was a matter of what was I going to do next. My wife—she had her master's at that point, and it was 2001, and I thought, "Well, I'm on the education move. I should really finish up and do something." And I thought maybe a master's degree in public administration—and so I enrolled in a newly formed MPA program at Western New England College up in Springfield. There were a number of reasons for that, but where I grew up was not far from there, so I thought it was a good opportunity to have a reason to go back there frequently. And it was a reasonably—the duration of that program wasn't like a six-year program. It was something that I could do in a reasonable amount of time—within a few years. And I enrolled and literally the night before my first class I got a phone call saying that the program—they didn't have enough people enrolled and they were going to pull the program. I couldn't believe that they sent my money back. I'd just gone up and gotten my ID picture taken. I had everything all—my cost for the first semester—I'd taken care of all of that. And I said, "Boy, I was just there. I wish you would have told me when I was there," because now it kind of screwed me up for that whole semester. Right? In the college world, you've got to be enrolled and ready to go. So we took a step back and we thought about what I would do. Would I—Yukon has a master's—a public administration program. It was relatively long. I wasn't sure, and my wife said, "You've always talked about going to law school. Why don't you just go to law school?" And at the time, John Bond, who was an officer here, was at Western New England going to law school, and I saw what he was going through. It looked rather tortuous, so I was not sure that's what I wanted to do. But I thought about it, and she really encouraged me and said, "Why don't you do it? You want to get a degree. You get a law degree—doesn't mean you have to practice law, but it opens up the doors for so many other things." And so I said okay.

And then she said, "Oh, by the way. I'm pregnant." (laughs) I said okay. So I won't start this year, so I actually waited until we had—we had just had our fourth child. This was our fifth child, and so Morgan was born. Oh, I take that back. This was just our fourth. This was—she was pregnant with our fourth, I think, so I ended up starting in 2003. Let me think. This was between our third and fourth, so we had Luke in July of 2002, so I waited a year. I did all the application process, the LSATs, got ready for—which is the law school aptitude test—and then did my application. That takes about a year to do, so I did that in 2002, got accepted at Western New England in March or April of 2003, and started law school in August of 2003. That's right, because we only had—we actually had three children at that point, because then my daughter, Grace, was born in 2004, and our final daughter, Morgan, was born in 2006. So law school was a busy time. Once I took that on, I was upstairs in working in administration.

TARR: **00:49:45** How old were you then?

REED: I was born in 1965, and I started law school in 2003.

TARR: So you were thirty—

REED: So I was in my late thirties or thirty-eight. Yeah. So I was a nontraditional student, as they call them. I went to night school. Law school started. I had to be there for six o'clock, and I started at six and ended a little after ten. And for the first semester, that was four nights a week. So Chief Tyler was very accommodating. To top it off, I got promoted in 2005 to operations commander, which was the number-two position in the department back then. So I took on some additional responsibilities, but it was still amid law school. He continued to allow—you know—to make it so that I could stick with law school and squeeze it in with everything else I had to do. So law school was challenging. I'm not a big reader. I've never—I'm more of a reader now than I ever was. But I would get home shortly before eleven p.m. Again, I was traveling up to Springfield and back, and I lived here in South Windsor. I would get home shortly after eleven p.m. and then read till two or two-thirty. And this is not a—I mean you tell people, "Oh, you're making it overdramatic." No, I really did. And then I would go to bed, and I would get up by six, six-thirty and try to be in here for the office for seven in the morning. My goal was always to be here at seven, because I had to be out of here in order to get back to school the following evening.

John Bond used to sleep here. I used to come in in the morning, and he would be in his office. His office was right across from mine, and he'd be sound asleep. I didn't go to that extent. I didn't sleep here and study overnight. But then again, John's much smarter than I am. Maybe that's why. (laughs) I don't know. But I became very comfortable sleeping four hours a night. I mean that was my routine. We had very young children at the time—infants and toddlers. All our kids were—they're two years apart. So my study time was when they were in bed because I still—you know. My wife and I co-parented very much through that period, and if there was an opportunity to go away on the weekends, perhaps they would go and I would stay home and study. But yeah, those overnight hours were the time to do it and still squeeze in some sleep. And it was fine with me. I never complained about it and—you know. It was a lot. When I look back on it now I think, "Holy mackerel!" When people ask me, "Should I go to law school?" I said, "You know what? You can do it. You just have to dedicate yourself to it." So I did it, and I finished up. It took—it was four years. It was a four-year program. I finished up, and that was if you wanted to be done in four years, you had to go both summers. You had to do some inter-session, so you needed to—they tout it as a four-year program, but if you don't go during the summers, it's actually a four-and-a-half-year program, which surprised a lot of students. But it needed to be done, and every day was a day closer to being finished.

00:52:53 I distinctly remember my last day of law school and my last day during my bachelor's program. I mean you know they stick out in your mind. Now, the thing with law school is when you're done with law school you've accomplished nothing other than you bought a very expensive piece of paper because you can't practice law until you pass the bar exam. And

you will never know more in the world of law than you know when you graduate law school. So the next logical step was to prepare for the bar exam and take the bar exam. And so the summer of 2007, I graduated law school in May of 2007, and I had accrued a bunch of vacation time, and I told the chief that I needed to take off for like five or six weeks. And he said, “You’ve come this far. Go ahead. We’ll have someone fill your spot temporarily.” I had the time to use, and so I walked away from the department. My in-laws, the Graces, sold their house. They were just getting ready to sell their house here in South Windsor, and so they had rented an apartment at the newly built Deer Valley apartments out in Ellington—brand-new apartment. But they couldn’t move in for a couple of months because of the timing of the closing and having to clean all of their life’s goods out of their house here. And I was about to study for six weeks for the bar exam. So guess what. I had a place to study. It worked out great.

So I did just what they recommended. I treated it like a job. I got up at seven in the morning. I did a few weeks of bar prep, so I would go to bar prep in the morning, and then I would go to the apartment in the afternoon and study until dinnertime. Then I would go home and have dinner and that was it. But I spent my days, and that was the way I was told to do it. Don’t study all night. Don’t get—get into a routine and just be religious about it. Do it every day. Take your weekends off because you still need to relax, and it’s a marathon as opposed to a sprint. And that’s what I did. So I had a great opportunity with that apartment being available. I spent a lot of time in the South Windsor Library also, but it was very conducive to what I needed to do at the time. I wanted to pass it the first time out because it’s quite a challenge to buckle down. And with all the studying I was doing, I could not imagine that if I didn’t know enough to pass it that I would ever know enough to pass it.

So I took the bar exam in October of 2007. No, I took it in—I’m sorry. I took it just before midsummer 2007. I think it was the last week of July in 2007. Yeah, because I had taken the six weeks off before that. And of course, there were no electronic—well, the results didn’t come out till October. I have no idea what they do during that period of time. So you kind of—you know. You’re trying to plan life after that. I was done. I mean there was never a day more. I can still remember—imagine that feeling when I walked out of that room when they said, “Put your pens down. You have completed. Congratulations, you have completed the 2007 Connecticut Bar Examination.” And you’re just elated. It’s a feeling unlike any other. Not even—I don’t know whether I passed or failed. You really have no idea. It was just that it was done. It was such a huge emotional drain.

So the day they were going to release the results, they tell you when they’re going to release the results. They’ll be out at noon on—I don’t know—the tenth of October. Right? So you know it’s coming. It’s not like check every day. Don’t bother checking. Noon on this particular day. And I was working. It was a regular day, and I said, “I’ve got to do something to fill my time.” So I was out driving around. I remember. I took my cruiser and I just went out driving around. I went and got a coffee and drove around town. And oddly enough about—I think it was about ten o’clock or ten-fifteen. I was actually in the Wapping Cemetery. I can remember this very clearly. Then I got a phone call, and it was from one of my classmates from law school. He lives up in Maine. And he said, “Congratulations, counselor.” I said, “I can’t wait till those results come out.” And he goes, “What do you mean?” I said, “Well, noontime, right?” He goes, “Oh, no. They’re out now.” I said, “You’re kidding me!” And he said, “You’re on the

list. You passed!” And I was like—he said, “You mean you didn’t know?” I said, “No!” And I told him the whole story, how I was out driving around trying to make—and I was like—he says, “Well, I guess I know where you’re going now.” He wasn’t kidding. So I came back here and I got a—went to my desk. I had to see it for myself, and so that was a pretty good feeling, too.

00:57:46 So that’s a long story about law school, but it was very trying to do that. The kids were young. My wife was a saint. She found ways to get things done day to day, night to night. My sister would come down a night a week and hang out. We had a neighbor—a teenage-girl neighbor—who would come over as like a mother’s helper a couple of nights a week and would just help with dinner and getting the kids to bed and getting tubs—bath time done. So it was—they had a good routine.

So then I was done, and then it was a matter of now what am I going to do. But I continued on as the operations commander at work and working with Chief Tyler. A lot of things happened in town during those years. The town went from really a small, quiet farming community—you think of all the things that happened. I-291 cut through the Route 5 corridor of town and cut across up to Long Hill and connected 84 to 91. That was a big deal. It really changed the landscape down in that part of town. Five Corners went from five corners to four corners. That was another series—long period of time where we were working extra jobs at night while they closed Buckland Road. I mean Buckland Road was one lane coming in. Cars at the rush hour would back up all the way up the hill past Sam’s to Carmen, up to Denning. Of course, that was all farm area out there. And then they changed—again, it changed that whole area when they eliminated that Route 74 leg of the five corners, and Five Corners became Four Corners. And modern traffic lights and two lanes every direction and turning lanes and suddenly, you could get through Five Corners in three minutes in the evening instead of fifteen minutes. So it really made a difference to traffic flow. Of course, Evergreen Walk was on the edge of development.

Earlier, prior to that, of course, the Buckland Mall was originally proposed to be at the end of Pleasant Valley Road in South Windsor. It was a lot of opposition to that, and so it went to Manchester. So we got the traffic—

TARR: And the sewer.

REED: —perhaps not the—and the sewer and perhaps not the revenue, although I talk to people that live in Manchester and they don’t feel like they’ve ever gotten the revenue either, because their taxes have continued to climb. But we ended up with Evergreen Walk, so you talk about some landmark development that took place. Evergreen Walk really transformed that whole—into Buckland Road, and that will continue to blossom as there’s a number of different projects on the drawing boards—on the drawing board for that area. Of course, the whole complexion of Route 5 at Sullivan Avenue—just as I left here. In early 2015, it’s started to change now with the occupation—occupying that corner where Torza’s Golf Center was.

01:00:40 So there have been a lot of changes through the years. We certainly had—the department has grown. You know, I talked about how when I got here there were twenty of us, and when I left the department was at a total strength of fifty-seven. That includes our civilian

people and our dispatchers, but there are forty-three officers. So the department for officers, of course, doubled in size during the twenty-seven years that I was here.

And like any community, we have our notable events. Very sadly, in 1993 we had a quadruple homicide that made news all over the world. We had a family down on King Street slaughtered by another—by a cousin—another family member. A six-year-old girl, a fourteen-year-old boy, and mom and dad gunned down and tied up and brought to New York City. So that was a very notable case. That was the Marquez family—very tragic, but a South Windsor case nonetheless. We got a call. Somebody—it started out as a suspicious call, I think. I don't know if it was a delivery person or what. I can't remember. And Rich Dusto, who was one of our officers, went up to the garage door and looked in and saw puddles of fluid or something in the garage that looked peculiar, but he didn't really know that it was blood, but nobody was answering, but the shades were drawn. It just was very—it didn't seem right. And so they started making some phone calls—couldn't find anyone from the family and ultimate—oh, and you know what. You know what started it is that I think we got the call from New York because the family car was found in New York. It was either the family car or one of the bodies. And that sent detectives from New York that notified our people, and we started to check the house. And then one thing led to another.

01:02:45 Sadly, the father was there in the basement dead. But the two children and the mother had been transported from South Windsor to New York City and dumped by the East River, I believe. An amazing—an incredibly tragic case, but we were very involved in regional cooperation. Chief Tyler had started the CRIST investigation, the Capital Region Investigative Services Team, which started in probably the late '80s. It was early '90s actually. And this was one of their first big, big cases, and this team brought together experienced criminal investigators from regional police departments, and they would have regional training so that they were all on basically the same sheet of music when it came to reports and investigation techniques. And so when this happened, they put the call out, and they all came in, and they did a lot of great police work. They worked very closely with the NYPD and the precinct where the bodies were found. And within, I think, two weeks, they had arrested two people. One car was—the family car—it was dumped on a street somewhere in New York City. That must not have been the clue they found first because they never did recover that car. They think it was towed and was destroyed eventually. But they found the suspects and made an arrest, and our detectives were going back and forth to New York City. I mean it was—really, it was an incredible case that came together quickly and was executed very well, and both offenders are in prison. The primary offender is in prison for life and won't get out ever.

01:04:41 So that was '93. That was—you know—an awful, awful case, and gosh, late '80s—maybe it was '98—I can't think of the exact date. It was a little bit later. We had the infamous Bridezilla case with the bride who went storming from the Mill on the River, storming down the side of Ellington Road, and she was taken into custody and tried to kick out the window of the police car and got back here to the police station and got into a confrontation with the officer and threw her ring on the ground. And of course, it was all on video, and it ended up in *People* magazine. It was quite a thing. That was a story that lived nine lives, and to this day, you will see it show up on television through some syndicated show. It may have been one of the early uses of the phrase, "Bridezilla." But again, it was a simple thing that just got really—again,

that was our media release information—had it out there and I think in one of the descriptions I wrote, I described her as a bride in her wedding dress, and that came—can we have a picture of—copy of the mug shot? Then the mug shot came out, and then someone asked if there was video, and we said, “Yep, there’s video.” And there was no reason to exempt it from disclosure, and once that got out, that became a very, very popular—a very popular video. I mean I was on the—I was on the phone with an overseas production company several times to get that. It was very interesting—a lot of exposure there.

There was a basketball player—a professional basketball player that lived in town by the name of Marcus Camby, who’d been a star at UMass and went on to play for the Raptors and was a successful basketball star. And we had a tragic incident occur at his home, which drew national media attention, particularly New York media. So it made news, and then we had an incident back in 2007 on Tumblebrook Drive where a gentleman took his wife hostage at the courthouse in Hartford during a court appearance for a divorce that was pending. He brought her back to the family home here in South Windsor and held her hostage for a little over twelve hours and burned the house down, and that brought the attention of national media to South Windsor once again. So it’s just interesting. A small town like this, and yet we had some very notable national and, in some situations, worldwide media coverage that, to this day—again, the Tumblebrook Drive situation—I just got a call last week. Somebody saw it on TV again. It gets replayed.

As far as other notable events, in 2011 we had the peculiar October snowstorm that knocked out power for, I think, ten days to many here in South Windsor. We activated the emergency operations and had the shelter open at the high school. It was interesting because the timing on some of these things—when I moved into the operations commander position and ultimately chief, I had a—I had always been a very strong proponent of having a separate emergency management organization for South Windsor. I just felt that we should have that. It was kind of the—it’s in vogue. We should have an emergency operations center outside of the police department. We should have a group of people who are available as a resource in the event of some sort of a large-scale incident that can help the town recover. Because the police are always going to have police things to do. Fire people are always going to have fire things to do. So who’s going to take care of the shelter? Who’s going to help people? Who’s going to help get the town restored and get people back—you know—make the streets safe for people to get back to school and all of that kind of stuff? And people back to work. And so we had started this sort of emergency operations planning. We’ve always had an emergency operation plan, but I try to dedicate more and more time to it.

01:09:01 And lo and behold, we have this big storm in 2011. It caused us to open up an emergency shelter, something that had never been done at the scale that it was done for that. We had a lot of cooperation from a lot of volunteers in the community. We had Boy Scouts. We had town council members. We had people that were off duty from their paid positions helping out so people could have a place to shower and dry their hair and get ready for work during that period of time where we had no electricity. Fortunately, the weather—after the freak October snowstorm, the weather stabilized, so it was not uncomfortable during that period of time. But it was trying nonetheless, particularly if you were without power, which means for many people

without hot water and without heat in the house and without refrigeration and restaurants—I mean it was really—it was quite a—it was really quite an eye opener for everybody here.

And then a year later to have Hurricane Sandy threaten the community and come through and not do as much damage as the October snowstorm did. But I mean if you think back, we sat at an emergency council meeting around a table like this to allocate \$6 million to do cleanup. Remember that? An emergency allocation or a bonding or whatever it was—that was huge. I mean you couldn't get from one street to another in some parts of town. That was quite an event, but we came together as an emergency operations team, and we worked out of the PD. Public works was fabulous. The fire department, health people—everybody as a whole. The town came together, and I think the planning we had done helped facilitate some of that. And we're moving—at the time I left in July of 2015, they were still—we had hired a—by that point a part-time emergency operations manager, Jay Gonzalez, and we have a CERT team—Community Emergency Response Team—so the town is positioned very well for what we hope never happens, which is some sort of widespread disaster. We're right in the flight path of Bradley, so I've always been concerned about a large aircraft going down somewhere in the area. So I think the town is in a good position. Hopefully, they continue to support those programs.

TARR: When did you become chief? How did that happen?

REED: **01:11:16** Gary Tyler was the chief from 1987 and for the next twenty-three years. It's a long reign for a police chief and he—sadly, in the waning years of his career—although they wouldn't have been the waning years of his career if he hadn't gotten sick—but sadly, he was diagnosed with cancer. And at the time they found it, it was on one of his kidneys, and they did—he was out for a period of time, and it had very quickly metastasized into other parts of his body, including his lungs and his brain. So he fought very hard. Spent a lot of time in the hospital. Was being treated up at one of the cancer hospitals up in Boston, so he would commute back and forth frequently there. Went through some experimental treatments in an effort to help the study of the disease. Couldn't beat it. It came back in—let me think of what year here. In the beginning of 2010. It was January of 2010. He was in Boston for one of his treatments, and it was his second course of this particular treatment. But while he was in the hospital, he contracted some other infection which—we all know that hospitals can be very helpful, but they can also be very hurtful. And his body had a very difficult time, and so he was unconscious and near death for about four days. Every day we thought he was going to die. I went back and forth every day.

At that point, I was in charge here at the police department. I was the number-two guy, and Tom Hart, who was here for nearly forty years—he was here also. He and I were both commanders at the time. He was the support services commander. I was the operations commander, so that's the only reason why I was number two and he was number three. It just happened to be how those positions came out when it came time to responsibility for just this type of a situation, because somebody has to be in charge. And so I would go up there every day and spend time with Chief Tyler and his wife. He was unresponsive and on life support, and we thought for sure that by the time January 2010 was out that he would have passed. But remarkably, one day he opened his eyes and he recovered from that, which really surprised a lot

of folks. I mean we had funeral plans made. The doctors said this is not good. Gather your family. I mean it was dire. And he came back to work in April. (laughs) Remarkably.

He worked for about a month, but he wasn't himself. I could see it in his writing. I could see it in his commitment. He knew that his time was a bit numbered. I just have to pause here momentarily—very momentarily.

[01:14:47 end audio 1; 00:00:07 (begin audio 2)]

TARR: Okay. So we were talking about your—

REED: So Chief Tyler came back to work in April, but I think he knew he was not himself, and that was evident in just our conversations. He and I were very close, and he would tell me a lot of things. So he was—although he was my boss, we certainly were also very good friends. But I could just—so you could just tell that he wasn't quite himself. He didn't have quite the same zip that he always had. And sure enough, within a month, he called me and Tom Hart and his secretary, Merlyn Guild, and said, "I'm going to wrap it up. I'm going to pick a date. I'm going to retire and I'm going to buy a motor home and travel the country and enjoy my time." His goal was to travel the country and go through—he's a big history buff—and go through Civil War country and go to where his roots of his ancestors were down in the South, and then go out to the West Coast. And that's really what he wanted to do. And I was fine with that.

00:01:15 So in that period of time, it was decided that I would succeed him as chief—that I had the qualifications to do that. The town manager agreed—didn't see there being a reason to go out and engage in a nationwide search or all the money that it takes to go through a selection process like that. So it worked out well for me. I didn't aspire to be chief of police when I started off in law enforcement, but as the years went on and I got my education—one of the big hurdles was my education—and I spent a lot of time interacting with other chiefs, it became more and more of something that I was likely to accept if the opportunity was ever there. In fact, I had applied for a couple of other positions not long before this all happened. And so his departure was bittersweet. Clearly, it was tough to lose him as a friend on a day-to-day basis—to not have him here—because we enjoyed each other's company. We would go out—he never drank coffee but he would always find a way to get out with me. He discovered Starbucks. He would always take me out. Almost daily, we would find a reason to take a trip and go to Starbucks and grab a coffee quick and just have a conversation about life. He was very good that way. He's very personable, easy to be around, and always had new ideas. He never was the kind of person that came to work just for the sake of coming to work. He came to work, and every day he would come in my office with some new idea or wanting an update on last week's idea. He never stopped working and never stopped thinking about making the police department better and making sure we had the right equipment and the right people and make sure we had the right relationship with the community.

But I was certainly happy to be appointed as his successor, and I took a lot of pride in that. I was pleased that the council accepted that and that the manager had that type of confidence in my abilities. And so mid-May of 2010, he said, "I'm here if you need me." He stayed on the payroll for a couple more weeks, but he said, "There can only be one chief. So after

they swear you in, I'll disappear, and if you need me call me." And that's exactly what he did. So I was sworn in, I think, on the seventeenth—sixteenth or seventeenth of May 2010 at a council meeting—and that was it. He was gone. About a week later, two weeks later, which was his last time on the payroll—his last as he was—I shouldn't say on the payroll, but he was going to get ready to take his trip and leave the area. I hosted a breakfast for him here at the PD. His office was actually—in his last few years, his office was actually in this room. He moved from the office I was in and where he started as chief. He moved into this room, and his desk was right where I'm sitting in this very moment, as a matter of fact. So we hosted a breakfast right here in the hallway. We had a local company bring breakfast in in the hallway. We had everybody in the department come in. It was a nice—you know, he wasn't a real emotional or touchy-feely kind of guy. But it was a good opportunity for everybody to show their appreciation for all he'd done through the years. It was just the PD. It wasn't a big outside thing. It was just all of us, and that's how we said farewell to him from the police department. We certainly saw him from time to time after that as he was around town with his big RV. He had this big RV that he purchased. He went away for several months—for a few months, came back, was here for a little while because he had some medial issues to take care of, and then headed off on his cross-country trek for the winter. And he had hoped to return in the spring of, I think, 2011, but his health deteriorated out there, and he was never able to make the return trip. So they took up residence at the Las Vegas RV Park, which I went out and visited, and it was a very nice place. It was not a trailer park or anything—none of those images you would conjure up. It was a very nice place, right on the outskirts of Las Vegas—beautiful spot near Red Rock Canyon and beautiful desert—a place he loved. His wife loved it there.

00:05:33 So he had a tough—he had good times and bad times. You know, his health fluctuated a bit, but by August, he deteriorated and sadly passed away. I think it was August 2011—twelve, thirteen, fourteen—my years get a little mixed up. It was '11 or '12. But sadly, we lost him then. It was tough for me because he was a good friend. But he never got to enjoy retirement that he really deserved after all those years of police service. And not that I wanted to burden him with any of the problems here, but it was good to have a conversation with him once in a while about what was happening. And maybe get some reflection from him as to—well, I wouldn't do that, or maybe you should try doing this. I never had that opportunity. It would have been nice to have some conversations with him, but we did have a few conversations after he left where we talked about a lot of things. He was a great guy. It was tough to lose him. I had scheduled with Rich Riggs, who at that point was my deputy chief. He and I were—are best of friends. We continue to be, and of course, he was very close to Chief Tyler also. We had planned to go out. We were at the airport ready to get on the plane to go out and visit him not long before his death, and all the flights got cancelled. Some odd storm came through—thunderstorms and stuff—and our flight—we ended up getting cancelled, and we kept saying, "Okay, we'll reschedule. We'll reschedule," and we didn't. We kept putting it off, and sadly, he passed before we got out there. We ended up going out, I think, in October of that year to visit his wife, Virginia. She was still out there at the RV place living in their RV. So we did get to go out there. That was unfortunate because he wasn't there, but we spent some great time with Virginia and let her know that we were still thinking of her, and I think that was important to her, too.

After he passed, he was cremated, but they brought him—he came back here. His remains were brought back here. We dedicated a tree to him out front. We had the memorial service here in South Windsor. And then a couple of years later when we opened up the animal shelter—of course, being a regional animal shelter and him being such an advocate for regional services—he had started that project years before, and his wife came out and had a portion of his remains with her. And we buried him on the site—a portion of those remains on the site down there at the animal shelter.

TARR: Which is named for—

REED: Which is in his name—the Tyler Regional Animal Care Shelter. And few people know that that's actually there, but there is a plaque buried and some of his remains are buried there on the site. So it's a touching tribute. I know where it's at. There are three of us that know where it's at, and so rumor of that will get out in years ahead, I'm sure, and people will say, "Oh, that's not true. That's not true." But I was there when it happened, and it's true. And so—you know. I like that. I think that was good, and I thought that was very sweet of his wife to do that. He wasn't sentimental that way. He would be like, "I don't want you doing anything like that. The person doesn't know." He was always very matter-of-fact about those kinds of issues. And his wife knew that, too, so we both kind of—it was sad and funny at the same time in a weird way. (laughs)

TARR: **00:09:26** So how was the transition to being police chief?

REED: It was—it went well. We have a good group of people here, and at the time I became chief, there was only maybe two—maybe three people with more seniority than me here. Even though to the day I left, I still felt as though I was the new guy. There were only a few people who'd been here longer than me, and at that point, I had been involved in the hiring process for a lot of the people—a lot of the newer people. So the next people in line—you had people like Rich Riggs. You had Rich Bond, who sadly died a couple of years ago. He also contracted—ended up with cancer, and he was one of our top lieutenants. I had three lieutenants: Tim Edwards, Rich Bond, and later Rich Watrous. And Rich Riggs was the deputy chief, so he was one of the top people in the department, and Rich Bond had been one of my training officers when I got here. So he was a good guy and I'm good friends with his family. And so to watch him deteriorate and die—again, another guy who should have had years of great retirement—passed away way too young. So that was—that was difficult. But he was there for the transition. I can't remember if he was a lieutenant yet or not, because we went through—we created some new ranks and got rid of the commanders, and we had then moved to a deputy chief and lieutenants as the kind of support command staff. But we had a good team of people, and Rich Riggs was a great guy—knows police work—the technical pieces of police work—in and out, so I was very comfortable with him as my number-two guy.

00:11:26 And I've always been the kind of person who never felt as though I was the smartest guy in the room. I surrounded myself with the people that I thought were the smartest people to have in the room, and their job was to make sure the department ran right and that it

looked like we were doing the right things and ultimately, I guess, make me look good. And so to the extent that there was success during those five years I was chief, I attribute that to the people that were with me—our officers on the road, our first-line supervisors, and certainly our command staff. The lieutenants and the deputy chief were all people that were in those positions because they were competent and very able. So that helped the transition. I was fortunate that I was in a department that I had “grown up in” as opposed to going into a department where you don’t know where any of the skeletons are buried. You don’t know who you can rely on. I knew everybody here, and I knew their strengths, and I tried to assign them tasks based on those strengths so that they would be as successful as they could be.

So the transition was good. It is different going from a number-two position to the number-one position because it’s easy, as the number-two guy, to talk. We should be doing this. We should be doing that. This is wrong. This is—and then when you’re the number-one guy, you suddenly appreciate the fact that you have to be very careful and deliberative in the decisions that you make, and you have to think through the impact of those decisions. You have to remove emotion from your process as much as possible, because that’s when you’re going to do things that are going to get you in trouble. And so you definitely—you—it’s an experience that is tough to prepare for because until you’re in that role as the number—you know, they always say it’s lonely at the top. And it truly is because there’s not really anyone else you can call other than another chief somewhere and say, “What do I do in this situation?” Because you don’t always want even your top commanders—as much as I kept them in the loop with everything that was going on, you don’t always want them to know your thought process, and you don’t always want them to know that you’re uncertain about certain things.

00:13:43 Although I certainly appreciate synergy. I have no problem throwing a problem out on the table and saying, “Hey, what’s the best way we should approach this?” But then when you’re deciding who should be moved into what positions and how you should handle a particular matter, sometimes you need to make those decisions yourself, and sometimes you need the counsel of another chief—someone else who’s been in those shoes. So it’s different. It’s different, but I have a—I definitely have an appreciation for what the boss has to go through, having lived that for five years as the ultimate boss. I’m glad we have a town manager who is really the boss. But he’s been very hands off, and he was always very respectful of the department and whoever led the department. And his philosophy has been there’s a reason why you’re the number-one guy in the police department. Do what you’re supposed to do. And so he would basically give you the room to do whatever you needed to do without a lot of extra management or micromanagement, as some would call it. He always avoided that. He always let you know he was there if you needed something but no need to give him daily or weekly reports of everything that’s happening. It’s your department. Run it.

So that was—it was good to have that kind of support, so it was a great experience. South Windsor is a super community. The police department’s had a tremendous amount of support from the community through the years. Again, I talked about it before. Politically, we’ve had a tremendous amount of support, and from a management perspective, the town manager’s been very supportive. So I attribute a lot of that to my predecessors, certainly Gary Tyler with a twenty-three-year reign that was never really in question when he was chief. He understood the importance of building those relationships. And before him, Bill Ryan was certainly a very

popular guy in town. He was chief for, I think, five or maybe seven years. And before that, John Kerrigan, who was the first chief—

TARR: Yeah, who I knew in Hartford.

REED: Right, who was the chief in Hartford.

TARR: He was a very, very nice—

REED: So I think there was a good foundation there. Gary's twenty-three-year run was remarkable. But to this day, people talk about him very fondly, and he did not burn bridges. He was a good guy. He knew how to give people what they want, make them happy. He made it very clear. This isn't a democracy. I'm still in charge. I'll ask for your input, but I am the boss when it comes to police work. But people lived with that because you knew where you stood with him. So I think I took a lot of my leadership traits and qualities from him, and I hope that—Chief Edwards certainly was in that whole regime. He came through the same time I did, and he got to see the way Chief Tyler did things. He got to see the way I did things, and he will take bits and pieces of that that he can use and mix it with a bit of his own style and hopefully things will continue on. Hopefully we'll continue to be engaged in regional activities. We'll continue to have a very strong connection with the media and with the community.

TARR: What's the thing you're most proud of, if you will? If that's the word to use in your reign as chief.

REED: You know, for so many years, we worked on—from a regional perspective—to have regional teams, a regional jail facility, a regional animal facility, a regional communications facility. And we've been very successful, of course, with the teams. We have Metro Traffic Services We have the Capital Region Investigative Support Team. We have the Capital Region Emergency Services Team, which is both a SWAT team and a crisis negotiation team. And we have the Capital Region Dive Team, so we have always been involved in the regionalization of police services. But when it comes time to regionalization of facilities, we've always stumbled there because other communities have been hesitant to come in on board, which is why we don't yet have a regional communications center, something that Gary Tyler worked on for twenty years. We do not yet have a regional jail facility. Each department—think of all the money that is spent on radio equipment, computer software in jail tracking, not to mention the hard facilities. Right? That every community has to pay for. Why can't these things be regional and we all contribute?

But one thing we were able to do—and I was able to see it through—was the regional animal control shelter. I was very happy that we were able to get the firehouse on Sullivan Avenue with that great Sullivan Ave. frontage where everybody can see it, and we were able to move our dog pound from the sewer treatment plant to a respectable location where the animals are comfortable, the facility is clean. If you want to adopt an animal, you feel very comfortable going there. It's got great visibility so people know that we have a concern about animals.

Statutorily, we're required—the police department is required to provide shelter for dogs, which is why we do it. But of course, we hold all sorts of animals there, and Manchester participates with us, and East Hartford participates with us. And so I was very pleased when we were able to make that happen, and I'm proud of that.

00:19:19 But I'm also proud of the fact that the reputation of our department, I think, has survived through the years. There are times when bad things happen, unfortunately. We've certainly been involved in litigation through the years, because you can't always make people happy. And sometimes, things just go wrong because sometimes that's just the circumstance. But overall, I think if you stop somebody on the street who has any real involvement with town activity, I would think you'd get a positive reflection on the police department, and I'm proud of that—that when we're in the paper, it tends to be for good things. And I'm also proud of the reputation we have with the media. I received the Bice Clemow Award last year from the Connecticut Council on Freedom of Information, and that meant a lot to me, and that was a recognition that when media reaches out to the South Windsor Police Department, they get what they're looking for without any grief. And I'm proud of that.

I'm proud of the fact that Scott Custer, who's now the deputy chief but was PIO—has been PIO for several years—has continued with what we started back in 1993 and sees the value of getting information out there through our Facebook page, through our Twitter feed, and the Internet in general and just through his engagement through e-mail with the reporters, both print reporters and television reporters. So it's—I'm proud of that, too, and I think we've led the way on a statewide basis for a lot of that that has happened. A lot of departments are a lot more open than they ever have been, and I like to think that maybe we have a little piece of that, because that was certainly a platform that I was very involved in pushing during my time with the Connecticut Police Chief's Association, whether it was during my representation of that organization at the capital or just at meetings with other chiefs saying, "You need to use the media to get your message out. You have what they want."

So I take a lot of pride in a lot of those things, and our relationship with the school system. I mean in 2005, we started the Safe Schools Initiative, which we really—the opportunity to work with the superintendent and work with the principals and look at our school facilities and start taking steps to secure them, to make sure the staff had IDs so in the event of a critical incident, you know who the safe people are versus who the students are, because in some of the—you know. You go to the high school, and even in some situations in the middle school, you can't tell the kids from the teachers. Right? Not to mention an intruder from someone who's supposed to be there. So we worked early on with Dr. Kazoska, who was here for a period of time. Then Dr. Carter continued it—continues to embrace that as we started to put cameras in the schools and started to get our officers into the schools more often from a tactical standpoint so they could understand the layout of all the different school buildings, and we never really focused on that before, and I tried to put an emphasis on that and say, "Listen, if we have a critical incident in the school, if you've never gone through Pleasant Valley School before or Eli Terry, you have no idea where the nooks and crannies are." So we started this whole system of what we call School-Directed Patrols, which gets a patrol officer up to the school, he becomes familiar with the staff in the school, walk through the school, and take note of where the nooks and crannies are. Where are the vulnerable areas in the school? And then of course, that was

highlighted no better than when the Newtown tragedy took place. It really shined a light on that and the importance of understanding all of your facilities.

00:23:24 I mean we had done drills in the schools before that, and not everybody agreed with it. But certainly now, what is everybody doing? Right? They're hardening the target. They're putting in cameras. They're locking doors, all but one door. The students have IDs. The teachers have IDs. They have armed guards in some schools. Understanding that these—it wasn't news. We knew these were vulnerable places. So I'm proud of that, too, that we've tried to and maintained a great relationship with the school system.

And we have a great relationship with our fire department. So many communities you go into, the police and fire don't talk to each other, and we have a great relationship. So all good stuff. All good stuff. So there are a lot of things that I'm proud of. Obviously, the animal shelter's a big one for me. Gary also did the bark park—the South Windsor Bark Park at the end of Abbe Road Extension. It was somewhat controversial, but that was his dedication. He wanted to see that happen. So I wish he could have been here to see the animal shelter when we opened the doors there.

TARR: Well, any final summation, feelings, or thought that—?

REED: You know, I never—there was never a time when I didn't like my job and I didn't like being in South Windsor. I was thrilled when I was able to buy a house in the community and to be a part of the community. I raised my children here. Some people don't want to be a police officer and live in the same—in a community where they reside. But I never considered moving out of town. I think we have a great community. We have—the town staff—people always have something to say about municipal workers, but I truly think we have a town staff that is here to do the job that they're supposed to do, and they want to help people. If you engage them, they'll do whatever they can to help you, I think. And I think our police officers are that way, too. And so I never regretted my decision to come and work here. I never tried to go anywhere else until I was getting to the end of my career and I realized that it was time to do something different. And it was always—it's always been a welcoming place, and I'll stay here. Our kids are still young. Our youngest is a fourth grader. Our oldest is just a junior in high school, so we will be here for the duration, I think, in the same spot, and continue to watch the town grow and mature. Not that you want to leave your agrarian roots and not be a small farming community, but the reality is we're not a small farming community. And if we want to have a tax base that's going to relieve homeowners of the burden of high taxes, we're going to have to have new industry, new business move into town. And I think that's exciting. I think you embrace that and try to move forward with it. So maybe this is a place that, after our kids go to college, they'll say, "Hey, I'm going to go back to South Windsor and raise my family there and live there."

TARR: **00:26:20** That would be nice. I hope you get that. (laughs)

REED: We will see what happens.

TARR: What about your new career?

REED: You know, I left—

TARR: Are you going into court now?

REED: I am. Yeah, I was in court twice this week, as a matter of fact. So yeah, I jumped right from—I left the job here on July 1 and started my new job on the July 6 working for Metzger Lazarek & Plumb, which is a law firm in Hartford. We practice labor and employment law exclusively, representing management, and that's the area of law that I had the most experience with just because of what I had done here in the police department. And I'm learning new things every day, and I love going to work every day. I work with a great group of people. The hours are good, but there's plenty of work to be done. But I can work from anywhere, which is nice—to be able to work in your basement or work there or go to the library and work or wherever you need to be—if you need to go see a client or whatever it is. So it's been a great transition. I miss South Windsor in that I like dealing with all of the people, but it was time to move on. It was time to do something different after twenty-seven years. So I am happy to still be in the community but to be working at a different career with a different set of tasks every day and an opportunity to learn all over again.

TARR: Oh, boy. Two hours. (laughs) Very good.

REED: Well, feel free to edit. (laughs)

[00:27:58 End audio 2; End of Interview]

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