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## Hopkins, Russell Oral History Interview: History of Law Enforcement in Holland

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Oral History Project 2002  
Joint Archives of Holland  
Holland Police

Interviewee:  
Russell Hopkins  
(Edited)

Conducted by:  
Matthew Nickel  
3 July 2002

**ABSTRACT:** (Topics Appear in similar order of Transcript)

How Russ became a police officer, nature of officers, the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), Equipment, Nature of crime in Holland, Resolving problems, Community Services Unit, Promotions, Education, Expectations of the officer, Breathalyzer, Education officer, Juvenile officer position, Application for promotion, VanBeveren, Juvenile Officer duties, Runaways and Problematic youth, Police photography, Story of pregnant woman, Abuse and neglect cases, Miranda Rights, Police/Community relations, Original Canine Unit, Good nature of Holland's police.

Oral History Interview  
Holland Police  
Interviewee: Russell Hopkins  
Interviewer: Matthew Nickel  
3 July 2002

[Interview took place in the basement office of Russell Hopkins' home]

RH: They gave us handcuffs, some extra bullets and you could buy a blackjack if you wanted it.

MN: What is a blackjack, a nightstick?

RH: It's a leather, do you want me to go get it?

MN: Sure.

[He shows about a five inch leather-bound item. It is a weight on the end of a coil that whips quickly]

RH: My buddy was into woodworking, they were breaking nightsticks in Grand Rapids, so he made that out of oak for me, with a leather strap. [Shows his stick]. But I am a talker; I am a non-violent person. What I was afraid of, especially with a big guy is you hit him, and I am not that big or strong, is that he would just get mad at you, so I frowned heavily on using force. I figure if he is coming at me with a knife or a gun, I will shoot him, so why should I try to beat him. So I would jump on them, I like wrestling, I am not a wrestler, those were about the only two things I have got.

MN: How did you become an officer on the Holland Police Department?

RH: Well it was probably in the sixties, I have been out of the Army since 1958, and after I had several jobs at the woodworking plants in Zeeland, Hubbell, Colonial, Modern Patricians which is not Haworth, and Chris Craft. Seven to three

everyday plus any overtime you sitting in the hot shop looking out the window, and I just decided that I like outside work, so there was Consumer's Power Company, Consumer Energy now. My brother worked there, and I went out with him one night, that is where I wanted to work, I thought, boy he would get me in there quick, Consumer's Power, and I went out with him one night during a rainstorm, my brother climbed up on a pole while it was lightning and thundering to change a blown out fuse on some pole out east of Holland, and I don't really want that job, get your head blown off by the lightning, and the other place, I had a good buddy working in the Michigan Bell Telephone Company and I like using my hands, I liked being outside, and then there was the police department. I thought my best chance was with my brother and Consumers, and or Michigan Bell, but neither one of them worked out, and I had been stopped by three times by radar, and in them days if you were stopped and didn't have a ticket within the last 12 months they warned and released you. Well then about a year later I got another ticket, but three months later I got another ticket and they were all warnings for me somehow. I think it was Jerry Lubbers, and I think he was the one who knew me through my brother. I applied for the police department, so basically I guess after being in the Army three years driving a tank and being outside all day long and all night long sometimes, I just wanted outside work. And I liked that type of work I guess, not knowing nothing about it.

MN: So when exactly did you join the force then?

RH: It was February 20, 1961. I started 8 o'clock Monday morning, and I had the interviews up in 1960, up till about Thanksgiving I got nervous working holidays

and nights and come November I just quit going in, and then in January 1961 I went in, and I got to see the Chief and they had an opening, and he said come back with my wife. At the interview, I don't recall what she said, but he said two things, "you know he is going to work nights all the time, and he could get shot." Whatever she said must have been right because he said, "you're hired." So he said come back February 20<sup>th</sup>, 8 o'clock in the morning to meet your training officer, so four and a half hours of typing, which I could not type anyway, and filling out two accident reports, one was a minor accident report, and one was the state. The training officer says you had better learn how to type. So then Friday and prior to that we were getting uniforms, which they were used, they were in good shape out of the closet, and they fit me and they gave me the gun and the handcuffs and 18 rounds of ammo and I started working radar which was days and evenings for the next nine months till I went to recruit school at the Grand Rapids Police Department December 1961, they trained their own officers in them days and we worked real close to Grand Rapids PD as all the other departments and they sent us there for ten weeks, and we did training in criminal investigation, crime scene investigation, laws of evidence, search and seizure, laws of arrests, right with the Grand Rapids officers I think there were 10 or 11 Grand Rapids Police and Ken Gebben and I and we started in January for 10 weeks and that is were I received my formal training, but I worked nine months before I went to that school.

MN: Did you have a mentor or anybody along the way, even when you joined the force, any individual you kind of looked up to as a role model as an officer?

RH: Well, there was a lot of them that after you got to know them they were great people, they were very tight lipped, to new people. If you didn't know anybody, basically I was told, keep your mouth shut, your eyes and ears open, and do your job. And that is what I did, but after you, six months I don't remember who they asked me to join the FOP (Fraternal Order of Police), but this was a good sign, because that means you were in with everybody, but at least they ask you to join the FOP which most of them were members. And you could join that after six months of service in the police department, you had to be a full time officer, so it was, oh they were all good people, I mean, what I like to say is that that police department, when I got in there they had probably been, well VanHoff had been there since 1927 to 1961, most of those officers then in 1961 probably were there in the '40s, '50s. '60s, they took care of it then, and adapted to situations and what training they had done an outstanding job, and I feel that our group '60 to '93 had done a good job and I know the officers who have come on since I had been on and after I have left about nine years ago, are doing the job and I think each period when somebody comes in the police department, they can adapt to that given situation and times, where if I got hired tomorrow, I might not be able to adapt to the attitude to these people today, so they were all good people, all good officers, and female officers that we have got now, they are just great.

MN: It sounds like there is a strong sense of community between officers, a lot of friendships and

RH: Oh sure. And there were a few shots fired, John VanIngen, was shot in the arm. There were some close calls where we are all family and you have got to have

people behind you and backing you up and not walking away or taking their time getting to where you have trouble. We had a two-man car at that time. The radar beat was two-man of course, they had the chase car and the radar car. Then I got signed as a regular to a two-man car. But they always felt that two guys could handle all situations, and that was bad because two guys could get in trouble into a hurry. So they eventually broke that up and figured having an extra car on and they would send the other car over if they felt we needed backup. So we were all big family. Working together.

MN: Did you all do a lot of things outside of work together?

RH: Oh, yeah, the Fraternal Order of Police, we had a FOP auxiliary. As far as I am concerned the Auxiliary was the backbone of the FOP because they did all the work in getting the programs together. We had dances, and Halloween parties, hayrides, potluck dinners, just to get together. Your wife and the officers went, and we had a great time, and everybody came to these different functions, and some of them were organized like the dance, we used to decorate the Civic Center the day before the dance, take care of all the ticket sales, and we had a promoter, but we helped him with whatever he needed and we all pitched in. Fifteen to 25 people, and now I am talking about Ottawa County Sheriff's Department and the Holland Police Department personnel. I mean we, Grand Rapids, Ottawa County, Kent County, and Allegan county we were just all one group, so to speak.

MN: You mentioned earlier when radar came into the cars, I understand that you used to have tubes that cars would run over to clock the speed.

RH: Prior to me getting there they had a hose set up to a box that, two of them I guess, rubber, like air hoses across the road. The officer would just step out and stop the speeding vehicle. They got rid of that. But they had an old Plymouth, I started in '61, the '59 Plymouth as a radar car, and I forgot what the chase car was. They put the two batteries in the trunk of the radar car and they cut the metal out and put fiberglass in and the idea is was the radar beam would go out through the fiberglass maybe 800, 1000 feet, hit the object, come back, record the speed and it would run through the wires up to a graph, it had oh, probably like toilette papers, two inch roll, and it had a needle and it would record that speed, and if he was going say 40, you would just say on the radio "a green '62 Plymouth" whatever year it was, four door, two people in the car, the chase car would pull out and pull that car over, read you a license number back, and then issue a ticket. We kept all those graphs in a box with the dates that they run and if we went to court we would just pull out that graph and say here is the evidence. That radar had to be calibrated with a tuning fork. So each shift you'd hit it on the metal somewhere and put that there and you would read the graph, and I forget whether it was a 30 mile-an-hour tuning fork or 40 mile-an-hour tuning fork. But it would register the speed of the graph. Of course it was simple to check that radar and then you would switch batteries if it was going down. Regular car batteries, you had two clamps on it, and if that battery did happen to go down, your reading, would show it if you did had a 40 mile-an-hour tuning fork on it and it only read thirty five, well obviously we were losing power, so now we would just switch batteries. Then they went to a longer computerized gun that you could aim, or have



mounted on the side of the vehicle, which we did. That was kind of a story because in fact it was Rich Bonge and the Chief, they were interested in buying the new radar. They took us out to demonstrated and we of course read the directions and got it working. That sucker would pick you up 1,200 1,800 feet down the road, well there is one disadvantage, if cars are going this way and that way, you have to know which one was it, the one going away? You had to learn. But they said that is a great radar, because we can split you guys up (we were a two man radar yet) and have an extra car on the road. Boy we both looked at each other, and we did not like that at all. So we started coming up with suggestions and reasons why it should remain a two-man car, even with this long-range radar. I don't know what happened but both Bonge and the Chief got out, it is just a friendly discussion, yet he is the chief and he could say we are going to get this radar and we can make this a one-man operation. The idea was that to catch them at twelve hundred feet and you just step out and go like this and you are supposed to stop. They slammed the door so hard [laughing] the car rocked, we looked at each other, my partner and I, I don't know what we said but I hope we have got a job here tomorrow. And we worked a two-man car with that new radar. Then it improved further, as the years went on we got out of that radar business, I did.

MN: Were there any other kinds of changes in the equipment like that you remember?

RH: Oh sure, we had the old radios, you mentioned the lights in your article, I remember I worked all the beats. They called them beats in them days, and you had people that liked midnight to eight. You had a guy that liked alleys. Alleys was like walking and it started at 9 to 5 and you'd walk a few hours, check every

door front and back, and then he would drive around in the jeep and check the parking meters that said the flag would not go up, and were defective, so he would write all of them down so they could be repaired because people would know which flags were down all the time when they were broke, and they would whip in there, so we would try to keep them up. Then after, lets see, I think 12 to two AM they drove around the jeep and checking parking meters and then they went back on foot and checked the alley doors. I remember the light at 8<sup>th</sup> and Central, only one of them that any time you would cross 8<sup>th</sup> street or walk down 8<sup>th</sup> street you kept looking back to see if that light was on. Then you had to find a telephone. You always carried a couple dimes with you. That was when payphones were a dime. Also you would call in and they would turn that light off, and there were, well we had radios in the car, but no portables, so if you found a back door open, very quietly you would go in and the first thing you would do is find a phone and call the station and say 'hey I am in this building, call the cars and get them up here in case there is someone in here.' Being in the Army, I carried a .45, and that had seven shots in it. That was a semi-automatic and of course we had a six-shot revolver, .38 special. So I carried the .45 on alleys, and if I couldn't hit him with that 230-grain bullet, the concussion might daze him till I can get help on the way [laughter]. That was a big gun, it weighed two pounds, but that was all the equipment, the pistol, the bullets, the blackjack if you wanted to buy one, and the cuffs and no portable radio. And the radios we had weren't the best in them days, but later on we started getting portable radios which were big heavy duty radios weightwise. We had three old typewriters, and

you had to bang out your reports on about five by seven (inches) piece of scrap paper and all you would put on it, unit 14 and type your report. All reports ran for 24 hours and it was dated the day before. Then we got a LEIN machine, and then you started with dictaphones, then we got handheld recorders, and first they set up a system where they had boxes around the city where you could call on the telephone, push a certain code and you would go into the main computer, and you could start dictating your report. Then we got the breathalyzer, and slow but sure we modernized to what it is today and that is due to the chiefs, and that is Van Beveren that came in, then Ernie Bear who was under chief VanHoff, well I know he took over chief for a while (interim) and then Lindstrom came in. Lindstrom and Van Beveren really started uniform reports and getting forms that were uniform to match the state police record keeping system. And Van Beveren had ties with Lansing and he was under the grant programs and he knew how to write grants, so he started getting this money for this new equipment, and oh it just progressed rapidly after Van Beveren, and then more rapidly after Lindstrom, they were two good chiefs, but again they adapted to the times. It was running great under VanHoff.

MN: I am curious, what kinds of crimes were typical in Holland while you were on the force?

RH: Under VanHoff it was traffic. However, there was a knifing, a guy got, I am almost sure that he got killed in a knife fight. Detectives Denny and Gil found the knife on the roof somewhere. This was rare. You had fights, drunk and disorderly, but traffic in the eyes of VanHoff, it was number one, of course if you

had assaults or other stuff you would go there. Armed robberies were unheard of. I don't want to quote times, but boy when we had an armed robbery, it had to be after 61, that was news, we had an armed robbery in town. I mean where a guy actually took a gun, walked in and robbed a person. And then it progressed, armed robberies after I got in the detective bureau where about 1970 we got quite a few every year, where you are talking none for years, and then have one or more. So I think traffic, in fact working radar I remember we went over 13<sup>th</sup> and Fairbanks, and I was in the chase car, and my partner Fairbanks's son was at a picnic or something, this was in the afternoon. He went over to see his son, and we were also working the radar, and clocked a vehicle at 45 MPH. There were two guys in the car, well we called in that license plate right away because they wouldn't stop and then the radar car follows behind the chase car. The chase car has got red lights, it is a marked cruiser, the radar car is a plain car, of course you start yelling off the streets, during the chase we called in the license number, and probably ten minutes later, Ottawa County pipes in and says that is a stolen car out of Jackson, and that is probably the escapees that broke out of Jackson Prison. Well they hit a tricycle sitting in the street over behind Russ' over on East end somewhere, and they bailed out. Number one, you are right there so you go after the driver, so I chased him down, cuffed him and brought him back, and my partner and all of Ottawa County and all the city police, and probably the state if they were around. If they were around they all came and it was trouble. We chased the second guy down, and I went in to the station (HPD) and kind of said the wrong thing to whoever was on dispatch, at the Holland PD, why didn't you

tell us that car was stolen faster, we would have done things maybe a little different, and the chief had to hear that, and he said “your job was out there to write traffic tickets, not chase stolen cars.” Wow, oh, but we weren’t chasing stolen cars, he ran from us after he went through radar. If I remember right we didn’t get chewed out, but he kind of backed up the dispatcher because they have other duties besides keep track of all these stolen cars. I guess I got mad, and I didn’t keep my mouth shut, I wrote a traffic ticket out and I sent it to the guy in Jackson Prison. So I covered my base there. [Laughter] But we made, partner and I and half the law enforcement officers who were working that day made the arrest and I was happy, and you just learn, but that kind of thing happened now and then.

We had another guy who went to work, and he assaulted somebody, and took off. We chased him through the cornfield, east of the bypass was basically farmland in them days, in the ‘60s. We chased that guy through the corn, and again, we may only have three people on duty, so when you get something like that Ottawa County’s there, Allegan county is nearby, and they overhear that, and they just all come together to chase the guy for a couple of hours before he was finally caught. I am going to say traffic, reckless driving, chases were common, assaults, simple assaults, drunk and disorderly, family fights were a big thing, that is where you send your two man car. Those can be very rough, then it progressed to armed robberies, shootings, baseball bat beatings, and gangs started up, but of course that is later on, ‘70s, ‘80s, I don’t know.

MN: This is kind of a generalization, but were there any different kinds of people who were responsible for any particular kinds of crime?

RH: I don't think so. We didn't keep track of that kind of thing. We kept track of crimes like assault and battery, assault with a knife, break and entering, the people who committed them, it could have been anybody. If you have a population that are all white, obviously you are going to have a few more arrests of whites than of a lesser population of Latinos. I didn't keep track and I don't think the department or any department kept track of what group.

MN: How problems resolved, as an officer, how did you resolve problems differently, maybe at the start of your career than towards the end?

RH: Like I say, I was a talker, if there was a combative guy, drunk, I'll tell you drunk drivers or anyone who has been drinking, their attitude changes, I learned to try to talk them out, of the car. We usually separated the couples say in a family fight and tried to get one or the other to go someplace, basically, in my situation, it was talk. It was not easy to push somebody around cuff them and drag them off to jail, now if it come to a point where you knew, what you had to do. I remember one guy, he had broken the furniture in his house, I mean the kitchen table was flat on the floor, my partner and I went there, it looked like a tornado went through the house to make it short. This guy was very intoxicated, and obviously we weren't going to talk him into anything or going anywhere, and the wife had several small children, so we just kind of looked at each other, and we both knew the law and we knew that nothing could be done while he was in the house cause he would stay in your face and cuss you out, tell you to get out of here, which we

where there legally, and we are not going to leave her so she gets beat up or something. We noticed that as we stepped back he would take a couple of steps closer to us. He kept his face nose to nose, and I just looked at my partner and kind of shook my head, and pretty soon we ended up on the porch and he just reached out and grabbed his mailbox and tore that off and some more destruction. And I backed up and my gosh he came down the steps and my partner again, he didn't say a word and he got out on the sidewalk and wham, we grabbed him, cuffed him, your under arrest for Drunk and Disorderly in a public place, sidewalk is a public place, he didn't leave us any choice. If he shut his mouth, got someone to drive him somewhere. We'd throw them in the back seat, where do you want to go? Brothers house, cousins house, hotel, motel, we didn't care. In that incident, but then a couple of officers we worked with started a program called the Community Services Unit (CSU). They were getting tired of these weekend, getting the same drunk calls, locking them up for drunk driving, and mainly family fights, so they created a program, putting in a book all the social agencies who could get involved and do some follow up to prevent this from happening every week, because basically it was a small percentage of the same people that you would get called to the house or get called to a street fight. Then these police officers put together the social workers book. Basically it was all the social agencies within the community. So you if you had a problem, runaway, incorrigible drinking, whatever they told you was the problem you could call out these people, contact that agency, send them a report, they would send people out to the family and try to prevent that from happening the next weekend or two

weekends from now. It might go a month, but then he'd go out, take his paycheck, get on a binge, I am talking about family fights now, or they would both go out drinking, leave their kids at home. So then we had a book that was all put together and kept up to date by a couple of patrolmen. And they started a unit, called the Community Services Division. But they took these police reports, if there was something that could be done through this agency or that agency, they would refer, sometimes they would refer to two different agencies depending on what the problem was, but that was good progress, and yeah, that was 32 years that I worked there, but within that year, something new was added, equipment, training had become a big thing for all the officers involved. There was training in the '60s when I started, but you had, a department meeting, every month, and the chief would lead the department meeting and so and so is going to retire or he resigned, lets see who's next on the list to become Corporal. "Hey officer so-and-so, you're corporal!" And I started computing that and I figured it would be 44 years before I would even be looked at for a Corporal because I had all these people above me, and I was the last guy hired so to speak. But, to get back to the schooling, the chief would say well, the chief would announce, we have an opening for one or two guys that would like to go to accident investigation school at Michigan State University at Kellogg's center. That was were most of us went for our training in them days in Lansing. And they had some good professors there that would put on the training programs. So my partner and I we would go right down to the chief's office right after that business meeting, "put us on the list!" So that was how we'd go to school, and every school, criminal



investigations, accident, whatever school it was, we'd go down and say yeah, we'd like to go to that school. Well a couple of days later the chief would say "yeah you are going to go, now it is so and so date, a couple months away" and we would go to school. And there was a little friction there, you come back and there is an old guy who had been on there 15, 20 years, "yeah I never get to go to those schools." We'd say did you sign up. "No, I forgot." Well our theory was, if he announced it, there was a school next month, run down, sign up go home, tell your wife, look at the calendar, if you couldn't make it, go back and take your name off. But a lot of older guys just forgot about it and they were thinking, well maybe the chief will ask me, well, he didn't. So a couple of us, and there were a few of us that would actually do it, but a couple of us went to a lot of schools during that period. That was a big change. Then they started working with a training officer and the computers, and you had in service training courses so. Every year, the training for all the officers progressed. That was how we got our training then, yeah, I went to a lot of schools.

MN: Were there any expectations of the police officer on duty, were there any expectations of you or other officers as individuals to take any particular department. Where you expected to go to training schools or progress or were you expected to make any kinds of, step up in any way on duty or take leadership positions?

RH: Oh sure, but then again that was progress with the chief. I talked about VanHoff and he would announce a school and you signed up for it, VanBeveren was a Hope College graduate, he was more education orientated. When VanBeveren

came in he requested you to go to schools, because if you wanted to learn or wanted to progress, or wanted to get promotions, that is what you did, and one school was when the first breathalyzer came out, he had connections in Lansing and the state police, the class ratio was 26 state troopers to four either city or county deputies. Thirty would go to the school. The state police posts were the first to get the Breathalyzer. Once all the posts in the state of Michigan had the Breathalyzer to run the intoxicated drivers on, then the other sheriff departments and city police departments get a Breathalyzer. Well the chief told me to go to the breathalyzer school. Three city or county guys went, 26 state police went. Chief VanBeveren told me before I left, it was a Monday through Friday school in Lansing, said "You will be getting a Breathalyzer, and don't leave until you have that Breathalyzer in your possession." Okay. So I completed the school, and I got in line with the state trooper, and the other three guys went home, and I got up there, Hopkins, Breathalyzer Holland, MI. "You are from the police department?" Yeah. "You don't get one." Well, I got one, my name is on the list, and by gosh he looked, handed me that breathalyzer, I didn't ask any questions, I placed the breathalyzer in the trunk, went home, handed that breathalyzer to the chief. He says set it up. The legal limit back then was .15, and we had a lot of them over that. But you had to wait another 20 minutes, but the other reason is that you had to wait for the Breathalyzer to warm up. You had to plug it in turn it on and wait 20 minutes for it to get heated and test it out, and I'd run it, I was the only breathalyzer operator at that time, would run guys for the state police, when they would catch the intoxicated person instead of running 'em

up to Grand Haven, they come to Holland PD. So now I am running them for Zeeland, county, Allegan County, State Police, and our own, which was fine but about, within six months, the Breathalyzer was gone. Well, somehow they caught up to Van Beveren, said that the breathalyzer is going to a state police post, we are not ready to issue them to cities or counties. So now, here I end up driving with the drunk, just like the others, Zeeland and Ottawa County had to drive their own up to the Grand Haven State Police Post, so we drove our intoxicated persons over to the breathalyzer operator up in Grand Haven, and then run your drunk, it would take you two or three hours. Of course they couldn't start the 20 minutes till you got there, wait and warm it up, and eventually we got our Breathalyzer back. So the willingness to get training and say yes, oh yeah I will go to that school, I will go to this school, that helped. If you just laid back and just waited for somebody to come to you it might be a long time before you got to go. And then seniority did have some weight, I was fortunate I guess, and that helped, I made Corporal. And then I lost my stripes under VanBeveren. Safety education officer position came up, that was the same pay as a Corporal, but no stripes so now I was back to officer Hopkins. I went to the schools K through 6 and a few high school classes and taught all kinds of safety programs and first aid, traffic, we had a guy made up a "Safetyville City", where kids would drive around little cars in the first and second grade and it had a working traffic light. There were just so many safety programs and you could go to all the elementary school and you set up your own schedule, and that was a dandy job, of course it was days. So I put in for that, and oral interview and went for that, but the chief said, if you

get the job you know I cannot have a corporal in this job because it would set a precedence, well that is politic talk, chief talk, and I didn't argue, and it just happened that when I got the call that I got the job my wife was ironing my shirts, my uniform shirts that had Corporal stripes on it, for four or five years. She looked at me and she started ripping them off. It was kind of an, I don't know what you want to call it, but it was kind of an odd deal because I was known as Corporal Hopkins, and then all of a sudden, what do I call myself, patrolman. How are you going to write that up, that I got promoted, demoted. What's the deal here. Leave it to a chief, Corporal Hopkins has been elevated to the position of Safety Education Officer, so now I got elevated. Lindstrom came in and heard the deal and as I was going to staff meetings then as a corporal, but when I got the safety education job, same pay, but a corporal just couldn't be a safety education officer and couldn't go to staff meetings anymore. I used to go to staff meetings as a corporal, but when I lost the stripes, I couldn't go. Some of the older guys had been around here for a hundred years, and that isn't good, so I didn't go again. So I kind of, I got elevated but I lost some privileges, if you call that a privilege. Then Lindstrom came and he understood the situation, we will get you those stripes back, and then I went into Juvenile Officer and I worked there three years. You had to work three years in that position before you were eligible for sergeant. That would be interesting to you because the sergeant position was there, if the council okayed it, and that was a big thing to get that because council had to okay that, the chief could not make you sergeant till the council okayed the money for that position. I worked part time juvenile officer, during the summer,

first they were going to give me a plain car, and then they were going to give me a marked car with side shields and a light bar that could be removed so when the schools closed in September I could go to work as a juvenile officer. Well, when that opening came up I applied for Juvenile Officer position, which was a sergeant's rating, because VanBeveren had the education, and then Denny Caitlin was a Juvenile Officer, and he was a graduate of Hope College. So that is how they made the Juvenile Officer, but I wasn't a college graduate, so now, how am I going to get around that one? So I walked right in there to say I have been there three years, I want my raise. I was known as a Juvenile Detective, that was how they got around that. Not a Detective Sergeant, a Juvenile / Detective. And that is how you waited three years, because of the detective's position, that was just the way it was set up. If you were a detective for three years, and the funds were there then you could make it to sergeant. Well, Juvenile Detective, what I am going to be when I make Sergeant, well it was a Detective Sergeant, well I remained in the Detective Bureau, I did all the Juvenile complaints, and then they got busy they told me you should be taking general complaints too. I had Juveniles, bicycles, adult complaints, and then I got all the child abuse and neglect complaints.

Each chief had a different way, remember I told you that VanHoff, if you retired or resigned, the next guy that had seniority, welcome our new Corporal, VanBeveren would come in, and it was a written test, and an oral interview, a half a day with him, and half a day with Lt. Bear. Well, of course I took the tests. And this other guy wrote the top test for the Corporal, but my interview consisted of

taking Lt. Bear to coffee at Russ' right away at 9:30 and we drove around town and he would talk to me and I would talk to him, the next part, I don't remember whether it was that afternoon or the next afternoon, but I went out with VanBeveren. Well, he would drive around and talk, nothing about why do you want the job, nothing he'd say, look at that there is a car down there, illegally parked on the wrong side of the road, you better write him a ticket. Yes sir! So I would write him a parking ticket. Then he said, I shouldn't have done that, I should have let you decide whether he should have had a ticket or not. I said, "I go along with you, he can have the ticket." [Laughter] I wrote the ticket anyway. I got into that position, and then Lindstrom, he let the City Hall run the tests, I'm sorry, I think it was just a test and oral under VanBeveren. Then Lindstrom had policies and procedures set up for promotion policies and procedures set up for each individual thing for like a Detective Sergeant, Detective, oh I forget all those positions. Then you had to take a test, oral interview with three people. The City Hall and chief wrote the tests, and they just got harder and harder, and I just wasn't into book learning at this time, and these college graduates they have been doing it all their life, they could ace a test like nothing. Well, I knew what to do and how to do it, and knew the answers, but you hand the form in front of me and say "here is the question, now fill them out," oh gosh, I just couldn't think as fast as they could, and only five were eligible to take that test. Now wait a minute here, I have got the same qualifications and according to you policy and procedure, but you are saying if I don't write a good test I throw all my time served, all my schooling and everything else goes out the window. That ain't

right. Oh yeah, that's right, the chief says "I can't have everybody go running for it. We wouldn't have time to run the tests and the oral boards" and everything they had set up. Well, then the sergeants went in, or they had a Lieutenant's position available, but only sergeants were qualified to take it, and they had seven of them, and I said wait a minute, you have got five for detective and five corporal, but seven people can take the test for lieutenant, now how is that? The chief said, "Well I don't want to embarrass them, they are sergeants." Alright, embarrass the corporals etc. So, you know, I didn't ask questions. By the way, how I got around that, going back to the juvenile detective, I got appointed, nobody wanted the juvenile job. So I got appointed and I didn't have to take the test, and being Juvenile detective, that detective held up after three years, which, I should have had that when I started, and that was three years of sergeants wages down the tube. But then I got sergeant, detective sergeant, so I was happy.

MN: What was VanBeveren like, as an officer, as a person?

RH: Oh, he was a great guy. Like you say that social part and that was the same way with Lindstrom; they were chief, there was no doubt about it. When you are working, "You do what you are told." Yes sir. Go out, socialize a little bit, have a big party with your wives and stuff, they were just common people. Great People. It was good for the department and the city, whoever was responsible for hiring them. Now, when VanBeveren ran for chief. I applied for that job also, it was the chief's association that put on that test. [End Side A] I thought that would be a good experience. I applied, I think, just reading over the numbers who applied, Ike DeKraker, there were three or four of us who applied, so it was no

big deal. I was doing real good. The written test, I did alright. Maybe I didn't, but I didn't even care about that. I got on the oral board and that is where I shined because I can talk really well. I was doing good, one funny part was when one of the other sergeants was just in, I don't remember who that was, and I guess it doesn't matter and he was asked, "How many armed robberies did you have last year?" It was just at that point where we had our first one. He says none. They wrote that down of course. Here is this young officer come in there and "How many armed robberies did you have last year?" I said, "ONE!" I can tell you all about it, I was working. And everybody started, What did I say? They were going through their notes. "Are you sure?" Yeah, I was working that night, we had just drove by that gas station before it was robbed, and when we got the call, we went back there, of course we missed it, about twenty minutes later, a half hour later. I said, I know it was an armed robbery because we were all looking for the shotgun, and we caught somebody anyway we ended with the shotgun was thrown in the water by Windmill Island. We were dredging for that shotgun, I don't remember if we found it or not. What is your problem? That's what I am thinking, what is your problem? Well somebody just before had said that we didn't have any, they hadn't had any in 30 years, and probably weren't working that night, so they just didn't think of it. All I can say, I thought I was doing great, until they said, "Okay, you are chief today, and your first day of the job you have to prepare the budget for city council, what are you going to do. I never thought to look into how to prepare a budget. I didn't have one idea what to do to



prepare a budget, and I couldn't double talk them, and I knew they had me. I said something, of course VanBeveren was made chief.

MN: What was your role as a juvenile officer, what did you do?

RH: I got assigned all complaints dealing with juveniles from runaways, to fights. Sixteen and under was juvenile. Seventeen you were a minor, at 18, well it used to be 21, but at 18 you were a legal adult. At 17 you could still be arrested, but 16 and under was a juvenile. So you had to be familiar with all the juvenile court rules and regulations, you did the same with an adult complaint. For example, if a juvenile went out and stole a car, you would investigate that the same as you would an adult, the only thing is you would make a copy of the complaint, and fill out a formal referral, and it was up to the court to accept that or not, but you made an investigation into it. You didn't fingerprint them or mugshot them early on, but I fought for that because they didn't carry identification. Wasn't the principle, but if you did get hurt or something, at least you can identify the body. I was more interested in photograph because we didn't have them to use for identification. A juvenile, you had to be darn sure who you were talking to, take them home and make sure that they were the parents of this kid. They would lie. [pause] It was interesting. I guess you do the same type of investigation. You have the discrepancy or the dispositional power to warn and release them, refer them to juvenile court, and / or refer them to a social agency that we talked about earlier that may help him and the family. The emphasis is, "this thing is wrong, you can't steal cars, you can't steal money, you can't break into cars. Now I am going to give you a good deal here, I am going to warn and release you. If you

don't have any violations next year, it'll stay that way. If you get in trouble again, I am going to refer you to court, and you could go to the youth home." That's mostly blowing smoke in their face. Yeah, some of them did go to the youth home, until they continued on, some of them I had 30 to 40 contacts with as a juvenile. From age eleven right up to 16. Then they changed the law that really helped us, and that was that when you turned 17 and got arrested, the adult courts could use your juvenile record and you could go to jail for 30 days. Well that is one thing I added on when I got the person in there. I'd say, "you know you can't be stealing this car. I'll tell you what, the record you make today, is going to be used against you when you are 17." "Ha ha, you can't do that." Yes we can, and I had a little copy of the law to show them. That helped somewhat, one of the worst problems we had, prevention to me at that time was a big thing. When they run away, you can't be doing this, you are getting into more trouble. They stay over at a friend's house, they smoke, they drink, you get involved in sexual activity, you decide you are going to go out and break into cars. If you ain't going to stay home, we are going to run you up to the youth home. "Go ahead, you can't do that." Bang, we'd run them up to the youth home. Then the state got involved telling the counties, hey, you have got to cut down on these types of things or we will take your money away; youth homes are for serious crimes. Well, that is where I kind of disagreed. Sometimes you had to, not that that you locked up all the juveniles who ran away. Status offences, curfew violations, you didn't lock them up for that. Mainly runaways because parents can't control them and that was the little edge you had, okay you are staying one night. If you did

that again, you'd stay two nights. If you did that again, you'd stay three nights. And our runaways were high, but when the state told the county juvenile courts, 'no more you have got to cut that down, and reduce your lockups in youth homes 75% this year, and 100% next year.' Well now, I didn't have any alternative to take that juvenile home. What would happen, I say "here he is, you hold him till you get in court, and this agency will be contacting you tomorrow to help you with the problems." Because the parents said "I can't control my kid!" Of course they are out all night working, or all night drinking, or all night doing whatever they do, and they don't come home in the evening to watch their kids. No wonder they can't control them. So you have got the other agencies in, but the kids would walk out the back door but the time you got done talking to the parent, and they would be a runaway again. You would get down to the station, they would call up and they would say, "they've run away." Now you have got the patrol to deal with, because at least they had the satisfaction of knowing there is a good chance that things were right, they could arrest them, no, apprehend them (you never arrest a juvenile). Bring them in, they could go to the youth home. I would just pass the power on to them unless there was a specific problem. Rather than call me out, I'll deal with it in the morning. Because I got called out all the time. Take them home. "You mean I got to pick them up, they have been gone for three days, and I have got to take them back home." Yes, that it is the law, I don't have anything to do with that. So then the status offences started to go home. Well obviously, why should a patrol officer go down the road and chase juveniles if you are going to take them home and they are going to run away again. Not all

of them did that, they did their job. Some of them felt that way, so now we weren't picking them up and they could be gone for months so to speak. And that is just the way it was. So I kind of got use to it, we had this unit, and I cannot think of what that name is. But, they had officers that would take these types of complaints, status offences and try to find the right agency that could be of help to them, so we assigned all of our runaways over to them. Because I had the apprehension to go on for stealing bikes, cars, et cetera, et cetera. So that kind of split off all the curfew violations, status offences, skipping school, of course they had an officer to handle that. I am trying to think, runaway status offense, oh, not paying attention to the rules, not paying attention to the rules of the house, that was a status offence, there were some other ones that I just can't think of. That all went into the social unit. They handled that and I stuck to the criminal part of it.

MN: You mentioned about the photography earlier. I remember yesterday on the telephone you were telling me about some kind of deal you worked out with the [Holland] Sentinel? Could you explain that again?

RH: I was, well I was doing photography in the army, just taking pictures, they were black and white and I learned how to develop them. Of course we didn't have a dark room, and taking photos was part of the job as a police officer, so I carried a little box camera around, but they had a nice, I think it was a 5x7 graphics camera with the slide film, it was 4x5 or some sheet film. A nice camera, but only a few guys would use that. Well, I said, I would like to learn how, and they taught me. If they let too many people use it, people would start changing the settings or taking parts off that weren't supposed to be off. I said, "I'll be very careful with

it.” We would always send our film out, and it would take a long time. We had a couple of local photographers, one especially who was really interested in helping us, and professional photographers. I met the guy and he like cops I guess, and we would drop the film off to him, and he would do the 4x5 sheets of film and the roll film we would take to a regular drug store. That went fine for a while, then we had to start taking the mug shots and having them developed and they weren't coming out right, and so I finally went to the Sentinel and said, “hey you like accident pictures, we'll give you an accident picture or whatever picture we can of a crime scene if you will let me work in your dark room.” So their photographers, one especially taught me how to use the Sentinel's dark room, what I could do and what I couldn't do. And I got a key to the Sentinel, and for two years I developed all the police department's film and then when '72 came I was in charge of getting our dark room together for our police department. But for that two years I did all the police film over there, but then they started hiring me for assignments, fashion shows, cutting ribbons, what ever they did. And I got pictures in my scrapbook of all the Russ Hopkins photos for the Sentinel. Then if it was a Holland Police Department photo I had to stamp for Holland Police Department photos. When I was working it was a Holland Police Department photo, when I got called out, Ottawa county or Allegan County would call me, , they would have a fatal accident or something, well here's a guy who is working for the Sentinel, he could take the pictures. Then the insurance company would say, who is the guy taking pictures? And I was in business! The would call me up and would say, “what do you want for them pictures?” Of course 8x10 black

and white glossy went for like 25 bucks. Well, of course I am not in business and making money, I was not really thinking then and I said seven bucks. He said, "Do you want us to send you the money?" I said, "How many pictures?" Oh I don't know, 25 or 30. "Do you want us to send you the money or do you want to wait till we get the pictures?" Oh you can send me the money! Gee, this is new to me! So here are all these checks, off duty now, would coming in. If I was on duty and I took pictures, they would have to buy them through the city. [Tape paused for phone call]

MN: You were talking about working with the Sentinel and doing photos for insurance companies.

RH: That worked well, they got their pictures, and I got the use of their dark room, in fact, after we got ours, I could still use theirs if we had a need for it, because they had more room. When they designed the HPD's, I told them exactly, I had a dark room in my own basement, and I knew exactly what we needed what we needed for the dark room, and I tried to tell that to the chief, and he told it to the people building the new station and I walked in there and they had a little bitty sink. You could hardly get your hands in there. I said no, I need a big sink for all these trays, and all these chemicals and I need drain board for the water to run off and the chemicals to run off, and well that was half the size, I could hardly stretch my arms out. Just a little tiny thing. Then they got a processor, with two chemicals that you could run the paper through, and that worked really well. I had a lot of private investigators I did work for. I had a Hope College student who apparently had a photography class at Hope. She could take the pictures, but she could not

roll that film on the spool to put it on the chemical to develop it. She would crink it. When I first started in '56 when I was overseas for something to do, I wrecked two rolls. It is hard, you just need to take a blank roll of film or place it in that spool and you got to wind that film up so it doesn't touch. It is a spiral wheel, you have a wire through it, and then you dip that in your chemical. She asked me to develop her film and make negatives, and she would do the darkroom part. Oh sure. She came over with three or four rolls of 36 exposure. She would put three or four rolls of film, I would develop them for her, put them in sleeves. Next day I would put them in the mailbox with my bill, she would put the money in and take the bill and here negatives. I did that for her whole photography course. [laughs] But that was kind of fun. I did all kinds of thing. People would bring their collections over. Then I did the police work for the Sentinel, and then we got our own dark room, and that was fun.

MN: Did you have any unusual learning experiences?

RH: They are all unusual, they are all learning experiences. What do you mean, do you have any specifics?

MN: What there any, maybe a particular even that effected you, or made you think differently, or see your position in a new way?

RH: One call that was interesting. My partner and I, when we had a two man car, it was a call that came in about four or five in the morning, from Muskegon to our dispatch. The caller simply said, "My sister is having a baby in Holland and she need to get to the hospital right now! She is in a green house, on the corner, near the railroad tracks. Well, you have to shine your spotlight, and your flashlight on

the house, first thing, to see the color. And then it has to be on the corner, and it has to be near the railroad tracks. Well, that railroad track runs from 8<sup>th</sup> street all the way up to 32<sup>nd</sup> street, but she thought it was near downtown, because her sister or relative was. Here we are driving around like mad, shining our spotlights, and if we see a green house on the corner, you knocked on the door and said, "hi, we were wondering if there was any trouble here or specifically, is anyone having a baby?" No, no, no. But we found it. It was, I think like 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> and Lincoln, across from the railroad tracks. The railroad tracks were about a half a block west of the house. We could hear her yelling when we went on the porch. She was upstairs, by herself. She was definitely pregnant, and definitely having a baby, and she was having it now. Well, we had, going back to Grand Rapids for training school, we had training on how to deliver a baby. And they basically told us it is as shelling peas in the pod, but there are certain procedures. Now you have to remember all this. We said we are going to get you to the Hospital. I said lets put her in this chair, bend the chair back over, it was a straight chair. We can carry her down, call the ambulance. We'll get her down there and the ambulance will take her to the hospital. Well, I had a little more seniority than my partner, and there was a really narrow staircase in that house and that was how we were going to do it. I said, you stay here and I will see if the ambulance is coming. The first thing we did right away was call the ambulance. So I run down and here comes the ambulance, they are just turning off Columbia and red lights and sirens and oh man, about that time the flashers came on at the tracks and a stupid train comes through. Here comes the train and here are the red



lights of the ambulance on the other side. There is no sense in going this way or that way because it is a long train usually at night. So I yell up the stairway, "do what you have got to do! I have got the good news and bad news, the ambulance is just about here, but there is a train that blocked it. I will wait down here and if you need any help call. And she was yelling. Well, the train went through, and the ambulance got there, and we carried her down and we got her in the ambulance, and she had the baby in the elevator of Holland Hospital.

MN: Wow. Any sort of other experiences you remember?

RH: The abuse and neglect cases were the worst, especially sexual abuse. I have seen too many dead kids and the sexual abuse is just the worst of the worst. [Tells about two sexual abuse cases in Holland. One about a family, and another about a single incident with a boy]. That will take it out of you after a few years. That should be changed as far as investigating those types of cases. I think, just like drug cases, you work two or three years in the drugs, they are usually replaced. They get out of there, they just kept assigning them complaints to me, and that got me down after a while. [Tape pause for phone call] I really didn't like them. They are bad. They are really lasting mentally. [Tells about case involving elderly woman]

MN: What were some of the rewards of being an officer in Holland? What was really good about working in Holland, what made it all worthwhile?

RH: I think the people you work with, the friends, the co-workers are terrific, of course family is number one. They are on the firing line, they fix the meal, your wife, and you get that phone call, and you have to go if you were on call. You had a

pager later on, they used telephone first, then they had a pager, and then you carried a portable radio, and it was just a burden, but it is a good community, and then we try to do our job the best we can and I think the community appreciates that. It is just a good place to work. It had been. Like I say, if I went back to work tomorrow, I don't know, the attitudes have changed. They were changing just before '93 when I got out and the example of that is that you apprehend a 12-year-old, a serious, he had beaten up a kid with a baseball bat. You ask, "Why did you do this, causing this injury?" "Yeah, so what?" "But for over a girlfriend and you don't even know what was said in the first place you just heard that this kid was saying so you go and beat him to a pulp? Where are you going with this?" I said, "You are going to the youth home obviously." Nothing would hurt this kid, but the attitude of what I was trying to say is I was taking him down the stairs, he said, "Hopkins. You belong to me. As soon as I get out, you won't be alive very long." He was going to kill me. Gee, you better get in line, what else do you have to say, get in line with the rest of them, brush it off. A couple of other incidences, you get 12, 13 year old kids in there and say hey, I would like to talk to you, and your parents here, and you had to advise them of the rights, the Miranda Rights, you had to advise the parents of the Miranda Rights, and they had to be present during the interview which made it double hard. "I won't talk to you." And they would use a four-letter word, I want my lawyer present. That is what I mean by attitude change. Usually it was, hey you, come here! And the kids would run right over, and now you have to chase them down. Just back talk, and how they will take care of you, so things were changing in '93, or a few years

before, where you never had that. You could work with them, and sit down “yeah, I did that.” Like I say, we were just trying to clear up whatever crime incident they were involved in. But the change, I still think we have the public support, and it is good working, place the old guys, the young guys, the secretaries are A number 1, because if you didn’t have them, you wouldn’t get your job done. Everybody pitched in, and if you needed help, they were all working, but if I really needed help I’d make a little fuss and we would all pitch in. The Holland PD worked on every homicide, at least part of us did for a while, and Ottawa Court would call us up to help with the homocides, State Police homicides for the first month or so up to Brinks. There are quite a few of them unsolved. For some reason we just kind of got out of that. We used to have large task forces with the state, Ottawa County police department, Zeeland would offer what they could, they didn’t have the manpower. I remember time, the first part of the investigation like that, the whole DB would be helping out. You would pair up, you would go with a state trooper, or you would go with an Ottawa County Deputy. You would have a hundred tips, maybe 50 for each crew, every day. You would start going around and checking out them tips. Interviewing people and driving all over with this partner. After a few weeks if they didn’t get anywhere they kind of dwindled down. Somebody once told me, I went to more death calls and worked more homocide investigations than anybody in the whole DB. I really don’t like that one. I worked on a lot of them. In fact, one day I had three suicide calls that I went to. The all have to be investigated till you say they are proved not to be a homicide. [Story of Dumpster Dan]

[End Tape One]

MN: When you started with the Holland Police, what was the relationship with the police and community like? Cooperative?

RH: Oh, I think so. They were more cooperative than they weren't. A certain element, the group when the suspect was involved in something. Those people around him/her weren't that cooperative. They didn't know nothing. But the general public, they were great, I thought we had a great relationship. We would always have a little rub, like when we worked radar we stopped a lot of cars for speeding. "Why don't you guys do something else other than stop us, I have got to go to work." Well, it is so you don't get in an accident. It is how you approached it. I just figured I had my job to do, and I probably did a good one. I would just go over there and say "Good morning ma'am, you just ran through radar at 35 miles per hour in a 25 mile an hour zone, may I see your drivers license please? It is all in how you handle it. Why you stopped them, then what you are going to about it. I am going to issue you a ticket. Take it into the Holland Police Department within the next ten days, if you have not had a ticket in the last year that is a warning, otherwise you will go to court. You made that very clear because they like to take the ticket "Oh, I have never been stopped" and last week they were stopped. Then they take it in and say "the officer said he was going to warn me. Well, you stuck to the same lingo every time. I thought it was great. When somebody goofs up the law enforcement gets involved in the criminal act, or does something he shouldn't. I think we've been very fortunate. We had a good place to work, the city, I thought was a very good place to work, a

good community to work in. A very good community. I wouldn't go to Detroit, I wouldn't go to Chicago. We knew the people and they knew us and we took time even when we were in the cruiser if somebody wanted to stop and talk about something, we'd stop and talk a little while. Free coffee in them days. In fact, Tulip Time, I worked every Tulip Time until 1993, well, I worked every Tulip Time but not on traffic is what I am going to say. I had 8<sup>th</sup> and Pine and that is a very busy corner, lots of traffic. I really liked that corner because you had two bathrooms, Herbs Golf, and Jackie's Restaurant that used to be a little hamburger stand. In them days, when you got relieved you went over to Jackie's, a couple of hamburgers and a pop, and you could use their bathroom, you went into a restaurant, you got free coffee. Right around, I don't know again when Van Beveren came, that kind of changed a little bit. Pay for your coffee. What do you do? If I handed you a dollar and you won't take it and say "you're not paying!" I am not going to stand there in uniform and argue with him. You walk out. Then Lindstrom, he really clamped down on it. But when you go there at Christmas time at the station and you get a couple boxes of big apples and get boxes of candy and fruit and all that stuff sitting on the table, you gain five pounds, it was all right, as long as the department got it, but if you try to give me a couple of apples and they found out, that was against policy and procedure. Free coffee, it think that was still given, they claimed they stopped that, that included that with Lindstrom. So, yes, training, the caliber of the officers, the education of all the officers, the education of the officers went up, maybe not every month, but every year. I have seen it go from here to top notch. Best equipment, and one of the

best departments around, if not the best department because we had chiefs who knew what they were doing and got those grants to give us money, the programs, that evidence technician program just touched on it. I'll tell you that is the best thing, these guys went through the state police lab that was in Grand Rapids. The state police lab wouldn't come out one time because they said "you guys are trained well enough to do any type of investigation that we can do, lift prints, do complete examination of a crime scene. Microscopic evidence to taping the car, they were trained by the Michigan State Police, and these guys, they were good. When you had a crime, we used to do the fingerprinting, I mean make it to the investigation, throw some dust around, try to lift up prints, hair, and what ever I could. These guys take the worst of the worst crime scenes and they were the boss, and we stressed that. You went in there without the permission of the tech. Kept you hands in your pocket, didn't touch anything, better to let them do the scene, just leave them alone to do their job. [Sigh] You don't know how much evidence that they obtained that helped us build our case and make it stronger. That was one program, there was many, there's guys who put those programs together, everything blossomed into a good working police department. Now they have a full time training officer the way I understand it, schedule all kinds of training. All the time. They make it on a routine basis. But evidence technician, I thought that was the best for them to help us and the department and the community, and then the state police crime lab, they have a mobile unit and they would come out, and we would come out for a while and then they kind of backed

off. If you really needed them for a major thing they would come out, but our guys and gals were good. Good program.

MN: I am curious also about the canine program, I understand you were one of the original Canine Officers?

RH: Yes, I got into that too. I started that in '65.

MN: It was you and, officer Ryzanca?

RH: Yes. That is kind of a story there.

MN: He had a pretty mean dog from what I understand.

RH: Very mean. We could look up the dates for that later. It was back in the mid '60s. They had a demonstration, a guy had come from Moline Kansas with his dog and the City Manager and the city officials and chief and people who wanted to come out met at Riverview Park. And I like dogs anyway, any animal. Man I was really impressed how they demonstrated that dog, and I started talking to the chief and he says yeah. He says, "you look into it." In them days you could talk to City Counsel, now I don't think that is a good thing to do, but we had, they were friends and they did the job and that would really benefit tracking, lost children, and drugs were here, but the dogs, and I am sure in bigger cities the dogs did drugs but we were concerned mainly with lost children, checking out buildings etc. Anyway, the chief says, yeah, "of course you are going to work nights, and you will have to work that alley beat all by your self." Whew. The gears in my head, I just felt them burning and changing, and so I said, "oh well, well really we should get three dogs, one for each shift so one guy doesn't get burned out working nights, and what if one dog gets sick?" And he bought it, all

within three minutes. We didn't get three, but we got two! He says, well if you find another guy, we'll go for two, we'll try and get that in the budget and all that, and that was later approved, but now I got to go out and find a guy who will get into the program like I am. So Bob Ryzanca. "Yeah, I'll try it." Oh good. It was all set up. They were pre-trained dogs and then we had to drive down to Moline Kansas, which was 900 miles from here and we did that in a couple of days. An old borrowed station wagon, you talk about cooperation and community involvement, we went to some local car lot, "here, take the car, you buy the gas." Yeah, we didn't have station wagons, I mean, we got to bring them two dogs back in some way. You talk about cooperation, we had good people in this community that would do that. So we drove our car down there and we started our training. We started right away in the classroom. They had a lot of dogs down there. We went through the kennels and they had some mangy old dog, three and a half, four years old. Looked like it had been through World War III, IV and V. And mean. Talk about mean, well what they said was you start feeding them and they will calm down. They are already trained and you just have to start giving them their commands. Right next door was King. He was 18 months old, and that tail was wagging and that dog was barking. I looked at him and I said, I'd like that one. "Oh that one is not ready, you will have to do a lot of work." I said, I am used to work, where he is short I will fix him up. I want that one is what I said. Ryzanca, that dog was just like that, three years old, yeah, you have got to start feeding and bond with them. For the first three days they tell you "Do not run." And sometimes them dogs will get loose out of their kennel, if you are approached, do



not run. The kennel about 200 yards from our house, a big old house with a lot of rooms in it. So I think there were about 12 guys going to this school for about 10 days. One morning, very shortly after we got there we were walking down with out meat pans to feed them, you feed them a couple of times a day then so they would bond with you and pretty soon I would start petting mine. Anyway I said Bob, don't get excited now, but here comes a dog. German Shepherd running straight for us full blast. I said, "Now Bob just relax, stand still, if you run they are going to chase you. Now Bob," and I looked and he was 50 yards going back to the house as fast as he could run.

MN: Oh no.

RH: Bob you aren't supposed to be running! I stood there and that dog came right for me and then he veered off, it was a female dog and she was heading for her pups. Ryzanca was up on the second floor looking out. He ran so fast. I didn't think he could run that fast. And that was quite a thing. Well, eventually he would tell his dog heel, and we went through there and he would almost say, "heel please." He wasn't scared, but he was scared and the dog sensed it. In a building search you go over there and each guy would have to go through this routine. You open the door and you say "Police officer we have a police dog here, come out with your hands up or we will send the dog in and he will bite." Ryzanca would go over there, open the door and he'd say, "Police officer, we have a police dog here, come out before he bites me." [Laughter] Oh we laughed. Then we had these army type bunks, they were quite close, but they had a ring on the floor, and to bond with the dog faster they made you tie your dog up to that ring and sleep with

them. Because it was obvious his dog would bite him if he made any fast moves, he was mean. Well, the problem was, I was sleeping in the bunk next to him, if I had to go to the bathroom, I couldn't just wheel around and get up and go. That darn dog there, he would take my leg off, so I had to shimmy off the end of the bunk. The dog would be up no matter what time I got up. Go off the end of the bunk and go around, go to the bathroom, come back and get way up by the wall and crawl in that bunk. He was sitting right there and he wouldn't get in bed with me, and he was far enough away that if you stepped in between those bunks. Well, we didn't think ahead too far, and we got those dogs ready to go, gee, they are going to fight. How are we going to keep them separated all the way back to Holland 900 and some miles. "Well we got some plywood." So they made a partition length wise of the station wagon, and when you shut the door they could get in throughout there and we propped it up somehow. The first stop for coffee or whatever, we stopped and it was a gas station and there was a German Shepherd there. Normally we just hooked on our own dog one at a time. He grabs his leash and holds him, and I'd take mine out or he would take his out first and we would let them go do their thing and here is that big old German Shepherd at the gas station. Dog, you stay in there, you are not getting out fighting with this guy. Well, then our first night, what are we going to do for a motel. We got to have two separate rooms now. We just pulled them right out. "We have dogs, is that going to be a problem." "Oh no" she said "we would rather have dogs in there than humans sometimes." [Laughter] Wow, we lucked out the next two nights. It was not long and then Ryzanca's dog bit one of the officers in the

shoulder, he let the leash out too far. My dog was alright except for one guy. He would sit under the seat, under the chair during coffee breaks, take him in restaurants and he sobered up a log of drunks. We worked nine to five individually, and I remember the Old Star restaurant and we have them in there, and a drunk would come in and say "Those dang cops all they do is... hey is that your dog." Turned right around and walked away.

A big fight was going on and I'll bet that there were 60 to 100 people standing around there. They knew you, and I started walking over there and it was just like I took my hand and divided the crowd. They all backed off and all of a sudden there were only two guys fighting there and the others were like 50 yards away. They broke up and they were going to run, and I said, "Okay you can, but I don't know which one the dog is going to go after first and I am going to go after the one he doesn't. Put your hands up and hit the wall. By then we had portables and I called for a car. It was beautiful down there for walking. But Ryzanca's dog bit another officer, and then a guy from Dykstra's funeral home, he went down to pet him and he tore his nice new suit coat all apart. Ryzanca got to know him very well and got better at, and the dog didn't bite him. I had to go out and feed him when Ryzanca went on vacation, and he was just carrying on a storm, and I though he was going to chew that fence right apart but, after I feed him he'd let me scratch him, I never let him out, I always got it through there somewhere, I never opened that door. He got to know me, he was alright, he just, he knew I was not scared. Later, Ryzanca's dog died, we really don't know what of, but he got up and found him dead one morning. Well, we don't know, I don't

know, Ryzanca would probably know, so I started to teach my dog when I put food in front of him not to eat until I said okay. And that worked nice because maybe the neighbor put some poison in the meat and threw it in there and the dog ate and died. So we worked him pretty good, I got in trouble at the Windmill when they were building the Windmill Island, putting that Windmill up. When that was all up, we had to guard that, that was part of our job, so we would go down there and let the dog out and he could check the buildings faster than I could, and he would let you know if there was somebody around. I got called in by the chief. The manager running the island told of a problem. I have got a complaint, well, tell me about it, what did I do wrong? "Well, it ain't you, it's your dog. He is pooping in the tulips." Oh. "Well, the gardeners are getting tired of the two pounds of crap in the tulips, you gotta quit that." I said, "Look, that dog is pretty sharp and well trained but I cannot tell him when to go and when not to go. That's the idea of me letting the dog go so he can go get his exercise." "Well, try to keep him out of the tulip beds." Well the tulip beds are all around the building, and you walk around the building with the dog... anyway, he still pooped in the tulips. We were tracking lost kids, a couple of them, but they were found before the dog found them. They were worth the money invested, and one time I was walking down 6<sup>th</sup> street, just off River on the south side of the road checking out the Old North Inn Tavern area. Just went around there and then I started walking east and across the street was B&J Bodyshop, and it had a fenced in area where all the wrecked cars were. I am just walking along and that dog heels all the time and all of a sudden he jerked me to the left. He was heading

straight across the street north over to that parking lot. I yank him back, what's wrong with you dog, he'd never done that before. Take a couple of steps. He barked again. I opened up the leash, I think it was a six foot leash doubled up and you opened it up for tracking and working. You had a working harness on them. And it was hooked in the back , you never had the collar hooked up unless he was off duty. That darn dog. I opened him up, squeezed through the fence there, it was padlocked and he walked down about three cars and put his paws up in the back window. I shine the light and there is a 14-year-old kid in there.

“What are you doing in there?”

“Oh, I am just sleeping.”

I said, “Oh well how did you get there?”

“On my bike, it is parked down the road a little bit.”

“What are you doing here, it is three o'clock in the morning?”

“Well, I had some trouble at home and I need a place to sleep. They kicked me out.”

“Oh. Get out here.”

So he got out. Clunk. A big old twelve-inch crescent wrench fell out of his pant leg. Well I looked, and the bolts to the seatbelts were loose. He was stealing the seatbelts. In them days you got two to three bucks for them. We did make an apprehension, we took him into HPD. My dog was friendly, we could take him to like Boy Scout meetings and Cub Scout meetings and do this stuff. I would say to one of the kids go hide and the dog will track you, but leave your hat here, because then he can get the scent off, there are only eight or nine of them, but

they all run together, here are all these people here, moms and dads and that little meeting having a potluck, just on the safe side I want to see where the kid hides. I wasn't going to look out the door or shut my eyes but I lost him got them mixed up. One kid hid and the other one just went off, I didn't know which kid was hiding or where he was hiding or what. So I let him smell the hat, and the first thing he did, he went right under one of the tables into one of the picnic baskets, he was smelling the food. Well I never thought about that and I jerk him out and I said "no, go find" and I gave him that hat again, and the kid was squeezed in between the mats that they use for gym at the other end of the gym. And he found him, and oh gosh was I happy, I mean they were very impressed. But you could take them on the stage in front of a group of people and run tell him "set over there," "stay," "walk through the crowd", "leave him on the stage." A good PR dog. Then I gave him to Glenn Geerts. And that, the guy he hated the most, he chased that guy, we'd run for training, but I was afraid he'd bite him if he caught him. So we run them through the station midnight to 8 and Geerts would be there and he would go hid in a room in the station and the dog would find him but I could never let him get too close, except when I had him off that leash. If he'd be under a chair, Geerts could walk by and he wouldn't bother him. But when we were training, he meant business. In them days they had it petitioned off up front for when the person walked in. He would talk to him, they had a little window there. And then over here they had another little window, just a small area where they had the radio and telephones. Geerts was monkeying around and he would go out the door to go out the front door and the dog got the door slammed in his

face and he came right around to the dispatch room and he jumped on the counter and there is our complaint book and in them days you wrote the name and everything out in ink. This was a big book like a registrar for a hotel but you would write all of your complaints in there. Two great big paw prints, or foot prints across that book. It was forever record. Out through that little window. Well, luckily, Geerts made it out the front door, so I went open up the front door and he would run around the side door and run up the stairs and got away from him and I chased him up there. We tried to get those paw prints off, so we just flipped the page and started right over again. So he was a good dog. And Ryzanca's was a good dog, he had a lot of building to check and all that. He went in with him.

MN: Was there a reason why the Canine program was ended then?

RH: Yeah, probably, I think other priorities just came up and other programs and then county, they had bloodhounds I think, then they got a dog for drugs. I was corporal and I didn't want it, and it was just, probably nobody wanted to do until now. They had been working on it several years, I knew that, and I said gee, if I can help you, let me know. But they did their homework and I started training, came to find marijuana, that was, you took some, well you have got these burlap bags, small ones that you had shot in for shogun shot, and I filled them up with some different spices and then I got some marijuana and I tied them up and I had the tags on them and I think I had a different color tag for marijuana, and you had six of those. Just started out, find the grass, whatever command they use. You let him smell it and then you would mix it up with all these other spice bags and just

throw them across the basement floor. That dog would start bringing the bag back with marijuana. Just marijuana. He had done good for a couple of months, and then I started, well I have got to get him to find it in a closet or in a bedroom and get through the door, so I started hiding it in different parts of the house and shut the door. Well now I got to make him bark or scratch the door, and that was a new program. I think I got him to sit down and scratch the door, and he was coming good, but that was when I got promoted and had to give the dog away. I think, probably, 1) Money. Because there was some training involved in that. But I got paid to take him out and do practice runs. And they had to buy station wagons with an air blower in them. We had cruisers and four-door sedans, but then I could only have one other person in the car. If we got station wagons, we could put them in the back. If we go to an accident, have two people sit in the back, we just told the dog to lie down and there was a screen there, so it would not bother them. Probably, lack of interest, and the chief just didn't think there was money for them, Chief Van Beveren. They talked about it, and of course now we, mainly I think they use them for drugs and I am not sure about explosives but they still track people and drugs and stuff like that.

MN: From what might have been covered or what might have not been covered, what would you think it is really important to know about the Holland Police. If somebody were searching, trying to find out about the Holland PD, what would you tell them?

RH: I would say today's officers, female or male, and the other staff, are good people. I still go down there for coffee now and then. I think the community ought to be



proud of the people that are involved. It is a dirty thankless job, but you got people who are willing to take it on and do it. Sure the benefits are better, the pay is probably better, I don't know what it is compared to. Would I have made more if I stayed at Chris-Craft or not? They have a good department, they are well equipped, they are well trained and you have a chief that keeps working for that goal. Like I say, from day one when I walked in there, things progressed to where they are. I think we are one of the finest departments in the state. They all got their job to do, and I think they are doing. From what I hear, and what I see of you talking with them, I don't know, I have an older picture up there, and that has been up there six months now, and I don't know, Charley Caulkins is going to retire. He is one of the old guys that was there. Came after I did, but July 30<sup>th</sup> he's retiring. Oh there is a lot of them that came in when I was there, and been there for 15 to 20 years, but they are slowly depleting and there are a lot of them I don't know. But I think, again, I don't know how else to say that, what I am saying is, you hire a guy now, today, he is comfortable with the way the general public is operating, right now attitude wise, and he will not have a problem unless he goes out and tries to get picky or. You know there is an old saying that they told us, number one, your peace can never be broken, or shouldn't be broken, so you have got to remember no matter what problems that guy or gal has that you have to go in and investigate. They are very serious to him. You might look at him and say "What? He is throwing what on your yard?" A neighbor dispute or something. You don't look at it that way. "How can I help you?" And you have to be sincere and convey that to him. And I think that is part of the ball game and

your peace cannot be broken. If they are going to cuss you out. No you don't have to take that because you are a police officer. You can do one of two things. If you have got something on that person, you take it just to help you get a little more ump into the charge, so you can testify in court what he had done. Like say leave the scene or you will be arrested. You can say that three or four times. If you have got something on him, you don't take the crap, you arrest him and get him out of there because he is either showing off for himself or his brother or relatives or the crowd. The other way, if you don't have nothing on him, you can't arrest him and you don't want to take that, turn around and get in your white chariot (police car) and take off. That is the way I looked at it and I got along fine. I worked on a guy one night going back to the road, he was intoxicated, drunk driving, pulled him over. He was probably sixty years old, but he grabbed onto that steering wheel, well you can rub you knuckles across his hands and it is supposed to release, or you can go for his neck and he will move over and you grab his feet. I mean one way or another, he can't pick up your feet and you head and get away from you so, you go for his feet, and he would lean this way and he would lean right over. I could not get him loose. We started laughing. I said, "you have got to get out of this car." He said, "I ain't getting out of this car." So I said we'll go around and I had the other guy go around to the other side and I stood on this side, and we couldn't get him out, I had him around the neck, I had his foot and I could not get him out. He was strong and steadfast. I used every trick in the book that they taught up on how to eject a person from a car, and I couldn't let him out and I was way younger than he was. I am getting out of

breath and I am getting mad now and finally I just reached in there, and I got a headlock on him and I kind of twisted him and the other guy pried his fingers loose and we got him out on the ground and got him cuffed. I don't know why he did not want to get out. Never had anything like that. Normally they want to get out and walk around and show me that they were not drinking. Got him out, locked him up, going through his billfold to inventory everything in it and I pulled out this paper and he is out of work because of a back injury. Oh my God, I am going to jail forever. He never said a word, he sobered up and it didn't hurt him and he had his back injury and he was out of work and recuperating from whatever that back injury was. And I thought, with all that pulling and tugging, he would sue us, but he never said a word. But you see, when they sober up, they are just as nice people. I met people right after I throw them in. I never bring that up in their face, they know they did wrong and I have had more people in the last nine years, meet them in Thrifty, meet them on the street, you don't remember me do you Hopkins. I say, "No, I don't. What did you do?" Well, I broke into that house remember when I took all that money. "Oh yeah I remember, I still don't know his name. What was your name?" He'd tell me. We'd get along fine. You just treat him with respect, and I learned that in the army. If you get prisoner, there is no sense in beating him to a pulp or shooting him. He is not going to give you any information. I am exaggerating a little bit. If they are shooting at you, you have to shoot back but you treat them with respect, and that is what I did and look, he did this, and what is going to happen now? You are going to jail. Majority of them, some of them you chase down and you fight, but you just did

your job and didn't go over the line and you get along with these people. And I think these people today know that, they should know that and then they will be all right. I think we have a great department. Law Enforcement, as far as I am concerned, Allegan, Kent County, Ottawa County, state, Federal, what an improvement as far as that was as far as cooperation. I mean. Feds used to come over here and say "We need this and that" you go get what they need. You didn't care, you handed it to him, copy whatever information he wanted, you never asked why. They would never tell me because that is their business. Now they come over and this is in the last 10, 15, 20 years. Well, we got this kid, they would not go into all the details, but we got this going and we need that, "oh, that's nice." What do I care, I have my own work to do. That was when I was in the DB. [Discussion of Secret Service in Holland during Campaigns etc.] Good experience, had a lot of fun. For a tank driver I did well. If anyone wants to write that book for me, I have all that stuff and they can take it and write me a proper book.

[End Tape]



Off. Russ Hopkins

## Hopkins Named Juvenile Officer For City Police

Russ Hopkins, 33, School Safety Education Officer of the Holland Police Department since March, 1970, has been named Juvenile Officer, it was announced today by police chief Charles Lindstrom.

Hopkins succeeds Marty Hardenberg who was elevated to lieutenant.

Hopkins lives with his wife and two children at 236 West 21st St. He will be responsible for investigating complaints involving juveniles and will work

in crime prevention with youths.

Hopkins joined the department in 1961 and was named corporal in 1967.

Lindstrom said the Safety Education Officer's position, now under the detective bureau, will be transferred to the Community Relations program where an officer now is establishing liason with junior and senior high students. The school safety officer had concentrated in the elementary schools but under the new arrangement would conduct programs in the junior high as well.