

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES R. HENDERSON

FOR THE
VETERANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

INTERVIEWED BY
G. KURT PIEHLER
AND
KATHRYN MEUNIER

KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE
MARCH 29, 2002

TRANSCRIPT BY
KATHRYN MEUNIER

REVIEWED BY
PATRICK LEVERTON
MCCALL SIMON

KURT PIEHLER: This begins an interview with JAMES R. HENDERSON on March 29, 2002 in Knoxville, Tennessee with KURT PIEHLER and

KATHRYN MEUNIER: Kathryn Meunier.

PIEHLER: Let me thank you for coming in today on a holiday, and let me start out with some very basic questions. When were you born and where were you born?

HENDERSON: January 26, 1933 in Queens, New York.

PIEHLER: And your parents? Your mother was Margaret Reynolds Anthony (maiden name) and your father's name was James M. Henderson. Let me begin by just asking a general question. Tell me a little bit about your parents.

HENDERSON: Well, my natural Dad which I didn't really see too much of, he played a lot of pool -- professional pool. I've got a lot of pictures with Lee Moskony and so forth like that, but he left my mother at the age of around 15. And my step-dad, which basically raised me, Al Anthony, he was in the theater. And my mother got in the theater at an early age. And my mother's stage name was Margy Taylor and, of course, his remained at Al Anthony. My mother was a comedian and emcee, did a lot of the U.S.O. camp shows for all the veteran hospitals and so forth. I've even brought pictures and everything. My step-dad was with the Twelve Aristocrats, Olson and Johnson, on Broadway, even had the opportunity of going overseas and entertaining the King and Queen of England.

PIEHLER: So when you were growing up they had stage careers?

HENDERSON: Oh, tap-dancing lessons, piano lessons drove me crazy.

PIEHLER: Because they wanted you to follow in their footsteps?

HENDERSON: Oh definitely, of course. My mother passed away two years ago. She never, ever forgave me for being a cop.

PIEHLER: She did not want you to be a cop?

HENDERSON: No, definitely not. No, no.

PIEHLER: You had a working mother in an era when that was not as common particularly for a lot of households.

HENDERSON: True. I lived with my grandmother, aunt, and my grandfather. My grandfather was also in show business so there wasn't too much of the family around. I was mostly on my own. My grandmother of course she was fantastic. She did everything that mother was supposed to do—school and church and everything.

PIEHLER: Where did you live when you were growing up with your grandmother?

HENDERSON: In Elmhurst. Elmhurst, New York. 8835 Elmhurst Avenue.

PIEHLER: And how often would you see your mother and, say, natural father and your stepfather?

HENDERSON: When I was ... seven some odd years of age—eight—my mother and stepfather at that time had a pretty [steady] working job. I believe he went from his theatrical career to managing the Lexington Hotel in New York City. And my mother usually played one-night type stands and so forth unless it was she had to go to Baltimore. Then it was two or three nights or something of that nature there, but I saw a lot of them. Just enough that they demanded that I take my lessons and so forth.

MEUNIER: As a child growing up in Queens, seeing as how both of your parents were in the acting business, how much did they stress getting a good education as a younger child?

HENDERSON: My mother not too much. My stepfather, yes. He was fanatical, although he was only a college graduate, excuse me, high school. He took so many courses, he was knowledgeable in everything. So he was fantastic. And they got me in a show business career, too.

PIEHLER: You were very young, born in 1933, but it sounds like your family did very well during the Depression. Is that accurate?

HENDERSON: I think that's pretty accurate. We did better than average. We never lacked for anything.

PIEHLER: In other words they always had an income coming in, which was very... I mean lots of theater business can be really... entertainment can be tough... in any era.

HENDERSON: It can. We have two salaries coming in, though, it's not too bad. You know Vaudeville, of course, was always good at that time. And my mother was at the top of her career at that time. In fact, she was on TV and did a couple of movies. She was on with Milton Berle a few times.

PIEHLER: That's remarkable! What's the earliest time you saw your mother perform professionally? Do you have any memories of that?

HENDERSON: I guess I was probably around ten years of age, so forth, because she started me. In fact, she told me she said now you're going to appear on this stage someday right here. At that time that was the Rainbow Room in Asbury Park. And I was also at Rainbow Room in New York. Sure enough about twelve years of age or so I appeared in Asbury Park at that Rainbow Room on several occasions. One time I had the pleasure of working with Ray Heatherton. He was the bandleader there. Do you

remember Ray Heatherton? I think on TV he played the merry mailman or something like this. His daughter you couldn't forget—Joey Heatherton. Well, I held her hand as a little boy. I should have kept holding on to that hand. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Since your parents were in a show biz career, particularly in Broadway, New York, who else did you sort of encounter at an early age or any memories growing up?

HENDERSON: You mean around twelve-ish?

PIEHLER: Yeah, twelve, thirteen, fourteen—particularly people you didn't realize who they really...

HENDERSON: Oh gosh, no, I knew everybody. Atlantic City, I worked with Sophie Tucker. Oh, excuse me... I worked... she let me work, appear and sing a couple of songs, was a torch singer, Turf Club. 500 down at Atlantic City, John Merrill—wonderful, beautiful singer. My mother was a personal friend of Judy Garland, and I had the pleasure of watching Miss Garland from backstage on many times and her farewell party at the Palace. I was there and it was just absolutely wonderful.

PIEHLER: Those are great memories.

HENDERSON: Yeah. I mean here's a woman that did a show, and entertained so many people, and then closed the whole theater down and entertained for three or four more hours sitting on the piano singing songs. It's just ... a memory that I could never ever forget. In fact, I could never forget my mother getting sick in her dressing room, which was red carpet. Little things, you know? I had the pleasure of meeting Milton Berle and everything, talking with him.

PIEHLER: And your mother sort of made the transition to television, which was not easy for all performers to make.

HENDERSON: She was fantastic.

PIEHLER: How long did she keep performing? How long did her career run 'til?

HENDERSON: Let's see. I got on the police department when I was around twenty-four. They moved to Miami. I guess she was pretty active up until she was about fifty-ish or so.

PIEHLER: Started to dry out, I take it?

HENDERSON: They did. Miami Beach slowed down a lot and everything. Traveling... her health wasn't the best. Sophie Fields... I think she had a radio show down there. Unless she got a phone call, she'd be sick as a dog and she'd get a phone call. She'd be fine—out! (Laughter) And just, "I'm the star." I mean, gosh, God bless her. We talked about her last night.

PIEHLER: You've also mentioned a lot of places now and this is where I sort of know the New York area better because I grew up in New York and New Jersey. You've really seen some places in their heyday as resort communities with entertainment like Asbury Park and now Atlantic City has sort of come back a little bit with the casinos.

HENDERSON: Casinos, yeah. I mean, that's the ...

PIEHLER: That's the new ... But you saw it in its heyday of the 30's and 40's.

HENDERSON: Right. When it was just a wonderful time. Now if you walk one block past the casinos ...

PIEHLER: Oh, I know. It's a very different city. Your mother performed at Asbury Park and Atlantic City. Any other places along the sort of Jersey Shore or and she would go down to Miami Beach. Are there any other venues that she would perform?

HENDERSON: Well, Manhattan.

PIEHLER: Manhattan, of course.

HENDERSON: She was on the RKO Keys Circuit. I believe she was at the Palace one time. Paramount. I can remember she took me to a show when Frank Sinatra was a young fellow singing ... and Sammy Davis Jr. when he was about that high.

PIEHLER: When he was still basically a kid, huh?

HENDERSON: Right, right.

PIEHLER: Now I guess your mother was pushing you more than encouraging you to go into show biz?

HENDERSON: Demanding.

PIEHLER: Yeah, and what was that... did you think it was inevitable or did you resist it? Or did you like it?

HENDERSON: I enjoyed entertaining people. I always did something at parties and everything like that. I just enjoyed it. I didn't love it. Big difference. My mother lived, breathed. And my grandfather, too. I always got in trouble, because I thought my grandfather was a ... I laughed at his jokes. He did funny things. He was great—great, great man.

PIEHLER: Sounds like your mother couldn't imagine ... This was all she could imagine doing—show biz. She really had the bug.

HENDERSON: That was it. So I could ... I remember when she ... A couple of years ago we had her moved from Miami down here. We had a little home next to us. She says if you had continued you could have treated me like Milton Berle acknowledges his mother down in the audience. God, it's terrible. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I'm curious about the USO shows. You said you had brought some pictures.

HENDERSON: I did. They really mean a lot to me. In fact, what I did do... I can't think of the university now off hand. Probably have to call my wife. Boston University, I think, had a ... When my Mother passed away I found in her belongings a letter from the gentleman that was doing the program, you know, similar to yours, requesting anything that she had relative to Harry Richmond. They have a ... maybe something the same thing...

PIEHLER: They are very keen on collecting papers of contemporary figures.

HENDERSON: And I had a tremendous amount of letters and pictures that Harry Richmond and my mother, of course, were very... I think they were very good friends. (Laughs) And I had a record that he made and dedicated to her, so I thought they would be interested and we sent them an e-mail on it of what we found. And sure enough they came back. I got all the material together and mailed it to them and they sent back a big thank you letter and everything.

PIEHLER: That's very nice.

HENDERSON: What was I going to do with the record? I made copies of everything.

PIEHLER: Historians really like it when things end up in a good place.

HENDERSON: There's the young kid right there, myself.

PIEHLER: So this is you performing? We'll have to have you come back one time and scan this in.

HENDERSON: Of course, here's the little article that I had there. And this is my mom at the Veterans Hospitals with our USO Troop 39, and let's see ... Did they put a date on that?

PIEHLER: This is where she performed in South Carolina, in Charleston, South Carolina. Margy Taylor, June 4, 1943. Margy Taylor -- another scene in South Carolina. Your mother was very attractive.

HENDERSON: My mother's beautiful.

PIEHLER: Now who?

HENDERSON: At nineteen years of ... I have a picture, of course I didn't bring that.

PIEHLER: Is this part of the act? This figure, this person...

HENDERSON: No, she just grabbed a hold.

PIEHLER: He almost looks like part of the act.

HENDERSON: One of the veterans a big hug and God bless him and everything. And the commanding officers wrote a couple of letters and so forth thanking her. One thing amazing that I did notice though was between March and June of '43 she, if you look at these, she was known as Miss Margaret Reynolds and then she changed the name to Margy Taylor from there on. Gosh, I never noticed that you know. I guess it was because of coming here. I was reading these things over and I said, "Look at this honey," to my wife I says. I don't know whether you'll be...

PIEHLER: We'd love to make copies or take the original. Whenever you can make copies, you can donate the original or you can think about ... But that's exactly the stuff we'd love to have to add to our archives.

HENDERSON: No problem. As long as I ... In fact I would give you the originals.

PIEHLER: We can make copies for you. Whatever you would like to do.

HENDERSON: Yeah. That would be great. I would expect that.

PIEHLER: Kathryn do you ...

MEUNIER: I have a question. Being older and wiser now and seeing as how you basically grew up around all these entertaining people and being around it all the time, did you ever... were you ever a rowdy teenager? Did you ever just get that feeling to be rowdy?

HENDERSON: No, no. We were... we had... lived in neighborhood... we liked football and baseball and we had our teams and everything like this. Punchball and stickball. The big competition was against other schools. I think sometimes we put a nickel or a dime on a game each or something like that. (Laughter) Heavy betting, of course, you know. Never would tell the folks that, naturally.

PIEHLER: Could you describe Elmhurst growing up, your neighborhood growing up as a kid? You mentioned it already and started talking about sort of active sports. I take it you played a lot in the streets, or did you have a park you played in?

HENDERSON: We had access to everything. We had access to... right across the street from us was the, I think it was, the Democratic Club, and they had this tremendous field that we used. You walk out of the house and diagonally walk across the street and there

was home plate. There was just great lots where there was a lot of league football and everything. And then when you got into maybe the other type leagues you played over at the World's Fair Grounds that had grass.

PIEHLER: Yeah, the World's Fair Grounds I'm very familiar with. I lived in... my earliest memories are of growing up in Fresh Meadows and going to the World's Fair site—the World's Fair and then after the World's Fair was over. What did your neighbors do? You were living in Elmhurst—this was with your grandfather.

HENDERSON: There was a time during the war of course that we had—it was one large bedroom, and we had the large living room and a kitchen. It was a big place at that time.

PIEHLER: It was a single-family house?

HENDERSON: And we all stayed there.

PIEHLER: Your mother, your stepfather and your ...

HENDERSON: Aunt. We all were there.

PIEHLER: So, even though your mother and your stepfather were constantly on the move, still there was always a lot of people around it sounds like.

HENDERSON: True. Yeah. And the... all my friends, their folks, a lot of them were musicians—all good working people. I think I remember one funny thing. A fellow upstairs from me, not mentioning any names ... My mother had a joke. "Ah, your father takes numbers." Little did I know that he was a bookmaker. So his mother came down something like that and had a long talk with my mother. "Please don't have your son say things like that." Everything's fine.

PIEHLER: Your natural father really was a bookmaker?

HENDERSON: No. His father, upstairs.

PIEHLER: You lived in an apartment building?

HENDERSON: I did.

PIEHLER: Okay. During World War II?

HENDERSON: Right.

PIEHLER: Yeah, it's funny because we have a colleague in our department. I don't know how we got on this conversation. I asked her about her parents. She said, "Oh, my father was a bookie in the Depression." She always wondered why he didn't go to work like other people. (Laughs)

HENDERSON: And she in her apartment had a beauty parlor. It was fantastic. In fact his name was Gregory Trewen. Maybe he'll ever come across this and have to give me a call.

PIEHLER: Well, people have looked our interviews up on the Web when I was at Rutgers. In fact that does happen.

HENDERSON: I tried to get in touch with all my old friends, but it's like that old song—"All My ..." something about "All My Loves Changed Their Names" or something like this. Or they've changed their names.

PIEHLER: Your parents were Catholic. Were you raised in the church growing up or?

HENDERSON: It's amazing. My grandmother... my mother's mother... was Jewish and she married an Irishman, which technically made my mother Jewish and so forth. But my grandmother always brought me to Catholic Church and that was it. But I can remember all the Sundays my grandmother would have her relatives over and we had dinner there. They were all Jewish people and everything, drug store business and so forth like that.

PIEHLER: So they still maintained good relations... even though she became a convert to Catholicism, she maintained good relationships with her family it sounds.

HENDERSON: I don't think my grandmother ever converted to Catholicism.

PIEHLER: So she never converted?

HENDERSON: I don't think so. I don't know.

PIEHLER: But she took you to Mass regularly?

HENDERSON: Yeah. That's right. When you went to public school at that time, I think once a week was on a Wednesday afternoon they let you go early and you had to go over.

PIEHLER: So you went to CCD?

HENDERSON: St. Bartholomew's I went to. That was great. The nuns were very strict. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Growing up, I guess you were the same age when I went to the World's Fair in the 1960s. But did you go to the World's Fair of 1940 as a child? Do you remember that? You would have been about seven.

HENDERSON: I remember something ... vaguely on that. Let's see, how old would I be then?

PIEHLER: You would have been about seven, so I ...

HENDERSON: Yeah, I think so.

PIEHLER: Yeah I very vaguely—I have some distinct memories of going to the Worlds Fair at five, but that's because it was very new and very exciting.

HENDERSON: I'm pretty sure, because I know as a young fellow that I used to be taken to the Aquacade. Of course that was the big pool that they did all the contests at and everything.

PIEHLER: Do you remember, or do you remember Pearl Harbor? Does that stick in your mind or were you too young to remember the attack on Pearl Harbor?

HENDERSON: No, I remember it. I remember what had happened. You know at that time and age you weren't ... I remember Roosevelt on the air talking about it.

PIEHLER: So the next day, you do remember that?

HENDERSON: Right. And that was one of the main things when my wife and I went to Hawaii. We went down there.

PIEHLER: To the site? To the Pearl Harbor Memorial? How did it effect—as a kid what did you know was going on? I mean, you were in PS 89 in Queens. What did you, you know?

HENDERSON: Well, I know there was a cutback in a lot of things. My—I know my natural father he was in the service and so was my step-dad.

PIEHLER: So both of them went to the service?

HENDERSON: They were, yes. In fact, I found some pictures of them. I was aware that there was a different change of life, because I remember my grandmother going to the store with her little cart and you had to get the butter. You would break this little thing in the package there to make it the color the margarine the right color and you had stamps and I remember the stamps and so forth. You know you just didn't have the luxuries that you would have. I was aware of that. Maybe I was aware of that a little bit later on.

PIEHLER: But the rationing does stick with you?

HENDERSON: Yeah and once in a while a good steak would come along from my mother playing a certain show or anything like that. There were still goodies around.

PIEHLER: Yeah! And it sounds like your mother got rewarded for doing some favors.

HENDERSON: Oh, I say definitely, yeah. No doubt about it.

PIEHLER: Both your father and stepfather, what branches of the service did they go?

HENDERSON: Army.

PIEHLER: Army. Both?

HENDERSON: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And how long? Like when did they both go and how long were they gone? And did you see them during the war?

HENDERSON: For some reason I can't recall that. I think I ... I didn't see my father in uniform during the war. And I vaguely remember my stepfather going away.

PIEHLER: And didn't come back until the war was over?

HENDERSON: Yeah, something of that nature there, yeah. I just... I don't have that clear in my mind -- a clear memory of that. But I know he was in the... in fact, I ran across his discharge. He was in the engineers and so forth. I don't believe that either one of them saw battle. They came in at the end, practically the end of the war really.

MEUNIER: I know many times growing up parents seem to force their political views on children. Seeing as how both of the male figures in your life were gone during the war and it was a very important time. Your mother, being a Democrat, did she ever try to gear you or sway you in a certain way during this time even as a young child?

HENDERSON: Not really. No. I believe my mother was a Democrat. My aunt on my grandmother's side, she was a big deal in the Republican or maybe it was the Democrat, I don't know. It didn't effect me as a child and it doesn't effect me to this date. I kind of more do research on the fellow that's running. I kind of loused up Clinton, though, but that's the way it goes.

PIEHLER: It sounds like your mother... How important was politics to your parents? Was that a subject of discussion much or?

HENDERSON: No. No it wasn't.

PIEHLER: It sounds like they talked a lot about the theater.

HENDERSON: The theater was real life. In fact, even my grandmother when she was growing up, she was a booking agent and she got out of that.

PIEHLER: So you really, you really had, your family had theater in the blood and entertainment in the blood from the sound.

HENDERSON: Yeah. That's why mother could never understand.

PIEHLER: How it didn't transfer to your generation?

HENDERSON: I told her. I said "Well, Mom it's just a matter of women and booze." Because she went the opposite way she would have gone back in show business, you know. Because being in the service and then having a little bit to do with the military police.

PIEHLER: The military police ... we'll get to that later, but that was pretty significant in changing your what you might want to do?

HENDERSON: Oh yes, yeah, sure.

PIEHLER: Did your school—did you do any sort of war drives? Did you do scrap drives? You remember any bomb drives? Or any special thing that you did as a school that sort of followed the war, helped the war effort?

HENDERSON: Oh, I remember the victory gardens. The victory gardens were a big thing. In school, itself, I don't recall that.

PIEHLER: It's a question I must ask any New Yorker. Any memories of LaGuardia. You were also very young, but I was just curious.

HENDERSON: I was very young, but I remember that we used to walk to LaGuardia Airport when it was new. Right, and maybe not him, himself, but I know we were involved in a little campaign of buttons and I had Dewey buttons with and things like that. I don't remember when that was.

PIEHLER: So you had Dewey buttons. I wonder if that was for Governor or for President—Dewey buttons.

HENDERSON: I can't say. I think it was for President. He ran for President.

PIEHLER: Yeah, he ran for President in '44.

HENDERSON: In '44?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

HENDERSON: '33, '43, I would have been '10—'11. Well. Ah, I think that was... Could be. Could be.

PIEHLER: Any memories of VJ Day?

HENDERSON: Yes, a little bit on that day. We were... I mean although I was pretty young at that, I remember it was happy times and we... something with a, like a lamp we took apart and turned on the light during the daytime or something like that you know just to tell those kids. Maybe that was a little devil worship if that's a devil thing.

PIEHLER: Now you didn't... I remember once having a teacher in high school and she said she always regrets the fact her mother wouldn't let her go down to Times Square during VJ Day. But you didn't make it over to Times Square?

HENDERSON: Oh no. I don't.

PIEHLER: You didn't make it out of the neighborhood?

HENDERSON: No. No. I was... at a young age I was in Times Square at New Years time.

PIEHLER: Oh, with the ball dropping.

HENDERSON: And that was wild. That was great. And then of course I was in Times Square a lot of times in uniform too when I was with the police department.

PIEHLER: What other memories do you have of New York growing up? What do you miss about New York, the New York you grew up with? Because you would stay in the city as a cop for a long time so.

HENDERSON: In growing up the area of Queens where I lived, uh, we had, I played a lot of golf and we had a lot of golf courses.

PIEHLER: Growing up?

HENDERSON: Growing up, yeah. Growing up I was on the golf team and captain of the golf team.

PIEHLER: And that was at your high school?

HENDERSON: In high school. Won our first golf tournament. Shot a seventy-seven. Now I wish I could shoot a seventy-seven now. (Laughter) Think I was just about fourteen or fifteen.

PIEHLER: You had your own set of clubs?

HENDERSON: Yeah. I started off with my grandfather's hickory sticks that he cut down. And my grandfather really was the reason when I that got me into golf. But see we had lots, like I was saying before, that you could get out and a 5-iron all you had and.

PIEHLER: And would you play at public golf courses?

HENDERSON: Oh yes, I would get up at 5 o'clock in the morning. This was on weekends though especially, at 5 o'clock in the morning, get on the bus, and get on the train, get on a bus and go over to Clearview, Forrest Hills, Cassina and get my name on the board. You know you had to get there early to get on the board so you got off. This was when I was single so I could sometimes get in and usually ended up teeing off by eight o'clock. Played sometimes thirty-six holes. Whew, boy.

MEUNIER: Seeing as how you shot a 77 when you were very young and that's very good, did you ever aspire to maybe go to college and play golf or maybe take that a little further?

HENDERSON: Yes. Yes, I had thoughts of being a maybe professional golfer, because I was playing well at that time. Not as well as these young kids are playing today, but college... I think high school and college has pushed the program so wonderfully that they just develop fantastic. I wish... college was never a thing on my mind, except when my aunt married a gentleman by the name of Joe Spicer. He was graduated from Bucknell University so he wanted me to attend Bucknell. And I think I had ideas that everything was going to be paid for, you know I was going to go into Bucknell, what the heck. And he said, "No, I worked my way through college, you're going to work your way through" You've gotta work? That's all.

PIEHLER: So really your mother particularly was preparing you for a career in education there was not an emphasis to prepare you or really push you to college? There wasn't an assumption you would be going to college? Even in New York there was City College then.

HENDERSON: No, it wasn't important to my family ... my personal family.

PIEHLER: What about in high school? What track were you on? Were you on a college prep track or were you on general or commercial? Do you remember?

HENDERSON: As far as academics are concerned?

PIEHLER: Yeah, in high school.

HENDERSON: I'm trying to think of what they called it. I did a lot of shop work and everything like that. Took Spanish for a week. *Uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco*. But got on the golf team, my golf teacher—English teacher—was Gene Thompson, who was a wonderful man.

PIEHLER: So that teacher really sticks out as?

HENDERSON: Oh, yeah, yeah. He was to me he was one of the biggest hustlers in the world. He had this absolutely terrible swing and he could hit the ball down about no further than 170-80 yards until he had a hit of about 225. Then all of a sudden his swing changed. But they were good memories, very good memories.

PIEHLER: You had a lot of friends growing up so you played a lot of sports and played a lot of golf. What other activities did you participate in as a kid do you remember?

HENDERSON: As growing up?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

HENDERSON: We had a baseball team. We had a football team. And I guess I was decent at ping-pong. We played a lot. I was exceptional in pool. [I] must have got that from my dad, I don't know.

PIEHLER: So sports was really central to what you really liked to do for fun?

HENDERSON: Yeah, sure.

PIEHLER: And then you had the lessons you had to take you mentioned.

HENDERSON: Yeah, piano lessons and Briget's Tap Dancing School. Oh, God!

PIEHLER: How long were you in tap dancing school for?

HENDERSON: I think a year.

PIEHLER: And how old were you?

HENDERSON: I think I was maybe eleven-ish or so—twelve.

PIEHLER: And you go how many days? Once a week?

HENDERSON: Yes, I think it was once a week and then my stepfather since he, of course, is a basic retired dancer—step, tap dance, and so forth—he'd have me work out timed steps, buffalo hops, jumps, everything.

PIEHLER: So you really learned how to tap dance?

HENDERSON: I was decent. I mean the timing was and, of course, the piano was for rhythm and being able to read music and everything. And there I am playing the piano and the scales while the fellows are out playing ball or punch ball right outside the window.

PIEHLER: You'd rather be with them?

HENDERSON: Of course.

PIEHLER: Did you ever entertain at all at your high school? Did you ever sing at a school dance or anything? Or music program in your high school? Did you participate in any of that or was that really a separate world? You were trained to be a professional.

HENDERSON: I don't think so. I don't think in high school I did that. I did it in my grammar school. I sang a lot there. I didn't, and ... I went to summer school. It was the biggest mistake of my life, because I ended up jumping almost a whole six months and I went out of the class that I was used to. Then I had an opportunity of singing at the graduation and so forth like that, but I didn't. I just... It's funny. I remember so well, too. The name of the song was "Ol' Man River," which was a song that I sang. They loved this guy and he was a good singer. Not me, I'm not going to do that.

PIEHLER: Which guy?

HENDERSON: This guy that was singing "Ol' Man River."

PIEHLER: Paul Robeson.

HENDERSON: No, the fellow that was singing it at the high school.

PIEHLER: Oh, at the high school.

HENDERSON: And there were tryouts for it. I didn't even try out.

PIEHLER: You didn't even try out?

HENDERSON: No, didn't. I think if I had to ... well, I feel ... I was pretty sure of myself at that time. Had I tried out, I would have gotten the spot.

PIEHLER: Sounds like you would much rather play sports.

HENDERSON: Well, I didn't want to take this away from this fellow when I've already had the opportunity of performing on stage and everything like this. It wasn't me. I was never that way.

PIEHLER: Growing up, how often did you see your natural father? And you said you were quite good at pool, so it sounds like that's ...

HENDERSON: I think I first met him when I was around thirteen or fourteen.

PIEHLER: So he left at fifteen months?

HENDERSON: I never saw him before that and I found out he was a pretty good guy.

PIEHLER: He really was? He wasn't just ...

HENDERSON: He was a good guy. He drank too much, but he was a good guy. He was a cab driver and we played pool. He used to spot me... he had to make a hundred and I had to make twenty-five. I never beat him. And he took me for the first time to McGurr's Pool Room where all the top-of-the-line fellows played. We'd watch those matches and they were just fantastic, you know. Pool tables you have around here you can hit the sides you know and it would still go in the corner pocket. You couldn't do that there you know so. But I played pool with him on several occasions. Drank a few beers with him later on in life, even when I—of course, I didn't see him for a couple of years in the service, but then when I became a police officer he made it a point to find out what post I had on and he drove up a couple of times. He was a good man. Then he got into training Dobermans in Madison Square Garden on the shows and everything. He started doing well. But I think the booze got to him. Later on in life it got to him.

PIEHLER: In high school, you came of age—as you were growing up it's World War II and then there's peace and then there's the Korean War breaks out. How aware were you on world affairs particularly as you get into high school?

HENDERSON: The Korean War ... I don't think I was really affected on that until my good friend had joined the Marines and he got right in on the beginning of that.

PIEHLER: Was he in high school when he joined?

HENDERSON: Barely out.

PIEHLER: Barely out. He had just graduated. Sounds like he graduated in 1950 then.

HENDERSON: Yeah, I would say so. And went right into the Marine Corps and came back a sergeant. Medal of Valor.

PIEHLER: What did he tell you about that?

HENDERSON: Not too much. His friend told me more about what he did. Blew up a bunker.

-----END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE-----

PIEHLER: And he was the only one to survive? Your friend?

HENDERSON: Apparently so.

PIEHLER: But he never talked. You learned this from another fellow?

HENDERSON: He never talked about it. No.

PIEHLER: I'm just curious, before we sort of ask about your involvement in the Army and the Korean War. I take it you love to play sports. I take it you probably followed some sports teams when you were growing up.

HENDERSON: Oh, yeah, sure.

PIEHLER: What were your favorite teams?

HENDERSON: There was only one baseball team. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Which team was that?

HENDERSON: New York Yankees.

PIEHLER: So you were a Yankee fan?

HENDERSON: Yankee. My friend lived upstairs. I think he was a Giant fan. At that time, you must remember we had the Dodgers, Giants and the Yankees. And our football teams, we even had the Yankees at that time and New York Giants.

PIEHLER: Which football? Did you follow football?

HENDERSON: Giants. Oh yeah. Now I'm Tennessee.

PIEHLER: Now you're a Vol fan, or do you still follow the Giants?

HENDERSON: No. I don't follow anybody except the Vols. I don't care for the men's basketball team, but I love the women's. I love the women's. I think Pat, she's doing ... I think maybe we need her doing the men's, taking care of the men. But I'm just a New Yorker saying that, you know. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I should even observe for the record, Kathryn is contemplating working for the men's team, so she's ...

MEUNIER: A supporter of both.

PIEHLER: That's why she's partly cringing.

HENDERSON: I'm just talking about watching them. Maybe because I like the women better.

PIEHLER: When you were in high school, what did—it's sort of your parents, particularly your mother, were pushing you in a sense, encouraging you strongly, preparing you for a career in show biz. What did you want to do in high school and did it ever change what you thought you'd like to do?

HENDERSON: My thoughts were that I would like to be a good golfer.

PIEHLER: You really... that would have been... say at fourteen or fifteen?

HENDERSON: I would have really like to be not great, but good. Enough to make a good living at it. But I liked show business. I loved entertaining. I just don't think that I really had that deep drive for it.

PIEHLER: And what about the military? Did you think, was the Army on the horizon when you were a kid that you would go into the Army?

HENDERSON: Oh, I wasn't going to join the Army.

PIEHLER: You were not going to volunteer?

HENDERSON: My folks would have killed me. (Laughs) No.

PIEHLER: Why would they have killed you?

HENDERSON: I've got this show business career that they want me to do and everything like this. Then I wanted to play golf and everything.

PIEHLER: So the Army was not on your ...

HENDERSON: I wasn't going to join and then I got this notice in the mail and it was wonderful. I thought it was wonderful.

PIEHLER: Why did you think it was wonderful?

HENDERSON: It made up my mind... solid. And I liked—I always liked the uniforms. Cop on the beat, nice neat uniform. Military, Marine uniform.

PIEHLER: So you actually, that part of the military life you really took to... some of the regimentation and uniform.

HENDERSON: Yeah, I liked that.

PIEHLER: It sounds like the very vivid memory to get this draft notice. Do you remember your reaction... when did you get it and your initial reaction? I mean were you waiting for it in the mail or did it one day?

HENDERSON: No, it just came there and it's, "Greetings!" (Laughter) I think I said, "Oh gosh, look what I got. Isn't this wonderful. Look, I'm going in the Army." And...

PIEHLER: What did the family say?

HENDERSON: Oh, my mother [said], “It’s a joke.” And my mother said, “You don’t have to worry about anything, because I’ll have it all taken care of.”

PIEHLER: So she was ready to pull strings?

HENDERSON: She did the best that she could do. Apparently it wasn’t good enough, though.

PIEHLER: But she was trying to get a deferment or ...

HENDERSON: Yeah. Some way, manner, or form ... I don’t know. I guess, I didn’t do anything to stop her from it. I just let the cards fall the way they fall. But I do remember getting on the boat—ship. I’m a Navy man, hear me say “boat.” Getting on the ship and we’re going overseas here, you know and my mom stepped out there and I said “Tell your Senator thanks a lot.” (Laughter) So that was... and everybody, my friends, they were all laughing. We just went through sixteen weeks of Basic Training.

PIEHLER: How many of your friends in the neighborhood also got draft notices and when? You mention your one friend in high school right after he graduated.

HENDERSON: I only really recall my friend Gregory Trewen . He went into the ... and for some reason or other I think a fellow by the name of Artie Craven that I used to play ball with, he went into the Navy or something like that.

PIEHLER: So there wasn’t a rush of people like your friend they didn’t rush to enlist?

HENDERSON: No. Wolfgang was the only one that did. He just...

PIEHLER: He just upped and enlisted?

HENDERSON: That’s it.

PIEHLER: So you were just—in some sense, you were waiting for the draft notice to come or not come?

HENDERSON: In some manner or form, yeah.

PIEHLER: Now you enlisted on March 9, 1953 in New York.

HENDERSON: Drafted.

PIEHLER: Drafted, I should say. Where were you sworn in and initially report to?

HENDERSON: Fort Dix, I believe. I went to Fort Dix for sixteen weeks—Basic Training there.

PIEHLER: What's your earliest memories of sort of arrival at Fort Dix and the early processing?

HENDERSON: It was ... what's the word, chaotic? When everything got settled down it was pretty good.

PIEHLER: How long did it take, how many days before it settled down?

HENDERSON: A couple of days. A couple of days and then you had the pleasure of scrubbing out the barracks and making it clean. You got settled in pretty quick. You bitched and moaned a lot and everything. But ... I loved it.

PIEHLER: Now you'd been a Boy Scout before?

HENDERSON: Yes, I was.

PIEHLER: For how long?

HENDERSON: I never made Eagle, though. For some reason I got screwed up in the woods. I got lost or something like that. I don't know.

PIEHLER: You made Life Scout? Or you don't know?

HENDERSON: I got some badges, but I don't remember. I remember having the little uniform and everything like that.

PIEHLER: And who in your Basic Training, in your barracks—where were they from, the people going through basic with you?

HENDERSON: All over. We had a lot of Panamanians, a lot of fellows from Harlem, southern countries, and everything like this. You know we got—it was amazing—we got along very well. Well, we, I guess we had a pretty good idea that we might end up in Korea, too.

PIEHLER: That was the expectation when you started Basic?

HENDERSON: Oh, it was everybody's ... knew that they were going to be ending up there. I mean this was '53. The war ended in '55... right?

PIEHLER: It ended later in '53, but when you enlisted they were still fighting.

HENDERSON: They were still fighting. And, in fact, we even from what I recall, cleanup which lasted until '55, there were still a lot of men that lost their lives.

PIEHLER: Oh yeah. It was not settled by any means.

HENDERSON: So you, but—I loved it.

PIEHLER: You really took to the Army?

HENDERSON: I did.

PIEHLER: Sounds like you didn't expect to take to the Army quite in the way ...

HENDERSON: No, I didn't really. It was just great.

PIEHLER: What about your drill instructor? Any memories of him?

HENDERSON: Yes! His name was Sergeant Boyton and he wanted to learn how to play golf. Boy, do I have it made, huh? (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So he wanted to learn how to play golf?

HENDERSON: Yeah. He played golf, but he wasn't that good. But he wanted some—he was a pretty good shooter, but he needed to fine-tune his game up. So I think boy this is great, I'll get out of the physical training and all this stuff here. [We] put the golf clubs in the Jeep, went out to the Fort Dix golf course. In fact, I found my pass for the Fort Dix golf course. Helped him out a lot, played well. Jeep came back to take us about five miles. Put the golf clubs on the Jeep there ready to get in. He said, "What are you doing?" I said, "What the hell you think I'm doing?" He said, "Take off, Corporal." I took off what I got clubs right and we ran back to the barracks. I never could forget that. You know it's amazing how vivid things are in your mind. I was doing pretty well. I was in really good shape at that time. Oh, I just passed him up about a mile before we got there, and then the last twenty, thirty yards this blur went by me. (Laughs) You know, you young whippersnappers, you think you have something going, right? And this fellow was in military action and everything, you know.

PIEHLER: So he was the real McCoy in terms of ...

HENDERSON: Yeah. But I beat him in push-ups. We got in the orderly room. I remember that there and there's nobody in there. He says, "All right, get down and give me twenty." I get down and give him twenty. He got down and he did forty. I get down and I did fifty.

PIEHLER: That's pretty good shape.

HENDERSON: Yeah, we were in good shape. He said, "We're even. Let's see how good a beer drinker you are afterward." (Laughter)

MEUNIER: Today, Fort Dix is a very highly competitive facility to train. As you recall, what was some of the things that you maybe liked to do as far as your training? Do you have a favorite or was it all just terrible and hard?

HENDERSON: Favorite? I liked the rifle range. That was my favorite. I was a pretty good shot. I liked the physical exercise. I enjoyed that. I liked everything.

PIEHLER: Even K.P.?

HENDERSON: Pardon me, I retract that statement. I didn't particularly care for that, no. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I remember you said also cleaning the latrines was not exactly the most...

HENDERSON: Yeah, but ... this was something that you knew you were going to be doing and everything. And you did it all together as a team. Now the K.P. you didn't do that. You know they might have picked one or two guys.

PIEHLER: I've got this sense from doing a lot of interviews and memoirs, it was also very erratic how they picked you and what you did for K.P. Is that ...

HENDERSON: Right. The first time I got K.P. I remember I was playing pool and I won about ten bucks, right, and the next day I got K.P.

PIEHLER: And who did you win this ten dollars from?

HENDERSON: Ah, ha. I don't know. Apparently it was the wrong guy, because they were laughing.

PIEHLER: Do you have a feeling there was a connection?

HENDERSON: I really feel there was a connection there. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What did they have you doing for the first time?

HENDERSON: The first time was peeling potatoes. I can never forget that. That was horrific.

PIEHLER: How long did they have you peel for?

HENDERSON: I think it was an hour or two.

PIEHLER: Oh really. Cause I've seen in some memoirs people spent the whole day peeling potatoes.

HENDERSON: Oh no. I don't think it was over two hours or something of that nature. They may have you cleaning out some pots or something like that. It wasn't that bad.

PIEHLER: You mention getting promoted to corporal. When did you get promoted to corporal?

HENDERSON: I was in Heilbronn, Germany.

PIEHLER: Okay. So your sergeant whom you taught golf that was still at Fort Dix.

HENDERSON: Yeah, that was right.

PIEHLER: And you were still going through Basic when you were sort of giving golf lessons?

HENDERSON: Well, you see sometimes, I guess there are some perks in everything, you know. But he still made me run. I thought I was getting a real good deal. He was a great fellow. He didn't have any family. When there was a leave I took him with me to home. He loved my grandmother. My grandmother would treat him like a son. But we separated the difference as far as this is what you have to do when you're ...

PIEHLER: Once you got back to the base it was back to the old ...

HENDERSON: Yeah, it was pretty good. Then he got transferred or something like that. I don't know. I lost contact.

PIEHLER: Did he stay in touch with the family at all after?

HENDERSON: A little bit. My grandmother got a couple of letters from him and then they stopped.

PIEHLER: It sounds like coming home with you really meant a lot to him—to your sergeant?

HENDERSON: Yeah. Yeah. I guess if you don't have anybody it means something.

PIEHLER: After your sixteen weeks of Basic Training, your expectation was you would go into the Infantry and go to Korea. When did you realize you weren't going to Korea? What happened after the sixteen weeks were up at Fort Dix?

HENDERSON: It seemed to me that some fellows went directly to Recon. I remember there was a fellow by the name of Henderickson, he went to Recon and I went to Germany. So there was probably a third of the company that went to Recon and two thirds went to Germany and the other fourth went to NCO school or something like that.

PIEHLER: So about a third roughly went to Korea?

HENDERSON: I'd say so... a third or a fourth.

PIEHLER: And then another fourth sort of went to other places, but then a good chunk went to Germany.

HENDERSON: Yes, a good chunk of us went to Germany.

PIEHLER: So you could have gone to Korea? I mean some did go to Korea from your ...

HENDERSON: I could have went directly there. Yes.

PIEHLER: And it sounds like people were being sent as individual replacements?

HENDERSON: I would say that's what it was, and I don't remember anybody from Germany going to Korea. I don't recall that. That could have happened, but I don't recall it.

PIEHLER: So when you were sent to Germany, you did your basic and then what happened. Did you go home for a leave or did you?

HENDERSON: Yeah. I went home for a leave and so forth.

PIEHLER: And then you had orders for Germany.

HENDERSON: For Germany.

PIEHLER: And that's when your mother—you went off on a boat and that's when you yelled to your mother, "Tell your Senator, 'Thank you.'"

HENDERSON: Yeah.

PIEHLER: If you enlisted in March of, were inducted, might be a more accurate term, in 1953, and sixteen weeks that would probably put it into let's say late summer, early fall that you left for Germany.

HENDERSON: Yeah. We went over on a troop ship.

PIEHLER: What was that troop ship journey like?

HENDERSON: Don't ... I don't really like to think about it. We hit a squall, and I remember going up on deck and it was ropes all around it. I looked up and there was this wave higher than the boat. It was coming up and going down. We are going to die—there was no question in my mind. Everybody was seasick on the boat. You couldn't go

to the latrine. I mean it just—excuse my language, there was crap all over the boat. I mean, it was terrible.

PIEHLER: And how crowded was the troop ship? What was the capacity?

HENDERSON: Pretty crowded.

PIEHLER: So this is—you had several bunks on top?

HENDERSON: Yeah. I don't know how I could ever sleep in one of those suckers today.

PIEHLER: Were you in the middle bunk, the bottom bunk, the top bunk?

HENDERSON: I don't remember.

PIEHLER: You don't remember that?

HENDERSON: I don't remember. Hopefully I was in the top, top bunk, because everybody below ...

PIEHLER: Were throwing up?

HENDERSON: Yeah. Yeah. That's why I went up... to get air, but then I know I was going to die. So it didn't make any difference anyway. What the hell? You couldn't even play dice down there.

PIEHLER: So there was a bit of card-playing and dice-playing though?

HENDERSON: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: When the weather wasn't as ...

HENDERSON: Oh yeah, definitely.

PIEHLER: Now how long was this squall? I mean how many hours or days?

HENDERSON: It was pretty bad. I think it was bad one day, and then the nighttime everything was fine. It calmed down and then the clean up. By the time we got to Bremerhaven or something like that, we were ready to go.

PIEHLER: Also people on troop ships will remember just standing in line a long time for meals. Do you have any memories of the food or were you able to eat anything on the journey over?

HENDERSON: I don't remember long lines.

PIEHLER: How much were you able to eat on the voyage over?

HENDERSON: I ate pretty well.

PIEHLER: So it was really just that squall that made things really ...

HENDERSON: I think it was a combination, too. Later somebody had told me that some of the pans weren't washed well and they were greasy. That caused diarrhea and everything. I was great with K-rations, though—little cans. I loved those things. Sausage and such ... we would trade back and forth.

MEUNIER: Once you had survived the squall going to Germany and you arrived, what was your feelings about being on foreign soil? Had you ever traveled abroad before or was this your first time?

HENDERSON: No, that was my first time. After everything was going, the cruise was going pretty good—it was fine. During that time you could spend time on deck. You know you weren't trapped. It wasn't ice cold weather and everything. So it wasn't bad. I like the cruise ships better, though. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You were assigned to the 7th Army in Germany.

HENDERSON: At first I was. 7th Army.

PIEHLER: And where were you assigned to first? What unit were you assigned to? Do you remember?

HENDERSON: I don't remember that. It was the 7th Army and it was in Olm. I worked on the self-propelled howitzers. I think at first I was in communications and I didn't like that. I found that boring. So they un-bored me. (Laughter) But I felt that that wasn't my thing. I know it might be kind of stupid, but hell, I had gone in the Infantry I was thinking of the Paratroopers, but then that was an extra year you had to do. And I said, "Nah, to hell with that, I'm not going to do it." But I wanted the Infantry and I got it. One of those who gave it to me ... I had just won the 7th Army golf tournament, too. Maybe that helped. I don't know. And before I knew it within a month or something like that I was off on a train to Heilbronn where I got into a service company—the 60th Infantry.

PIEHLER: You were an infantryman.

HENDERSON: Yeah. I liked it.

PIEHLER: What was the company like and what was the daily life like in the infantry company in Germany?

HENDERSON: It was good. I enjoyed the fellows. I got transferred. First I was driving some trucks and so forth like that. I'm not too much of a truck—large truck—driver. I got transferred to the arms room, and I really enjoyed that. Loved taking all these guns apart and putting them back together. Teamed up with a fellow—trying to recall his name—and we did some partying together. He had a car. You had to pick the right person, you know.

PIEHLER: He had a car in Germany at that time, which is ...

HENDERSON: Yeah. He had come back from Korea. Good guy.

MEUNIER: Did you feel once you arrived that your sixteen week training at Fort Dix had prepared you sufficiently for being in Germany—your duties in Germany?

HENDERSON: I believe the way that they did our sixteen weeks of Basic Training prepared us for anything. Yeah. Solid—great.

PIEHLER: What did you think—in a sense you are still something of an army of occupation in Germany. What did you think of Germany and the Germans? We had just fought a world war with them.

HENDERSON: As far as the people are concerned, I loved them. I got along with them very well. I was absolutely astonished at how the town was destroyed, but the cathedrals ... they would light the cathedral up at nighttime. And practically everything around it was demolished.

PIEHLER: So your memories of going to Germany was of a lot of things destroyed and rubble?

HENDERSON: Yes. Heilbronn was bad. Stuttgart was in bad shape.

PIEHLER: Did you date any German women while you were overseas?

HENDERSON: Mostly one- or two-nighters. That was about it. I think I, yeah... the rest was just drink, party, have lots of loving. They were neat women.

PIEHLER: Did you travel on leave much in Germany or Europe? How often would you get leave and how much travel?

HENDERSON: Well, that was what I was trying to find. I won a shooting match, and I got a three-day pass to a little town called Garmisch. That was Olm ... and I traveled to France—Switzerland. I would get these passes, and I would jump on these trains. I couldn't believe this castle was built on top of a mountain. (Shows a photograph) "I wish you were with me folks. Love, your son, Jimmy."

PIEHLER: I like what you wrote on this one of Olm the photograph of the Cathedral. It says, "Here's one for the book. The people of Olm used to light up the whole church so that the Air Force would make sure they wouldn't drop their bombs and destroy it." On another postcard of a larger city you said, "This is all of Olm. It is a small, but very beautiful town. It was hit very hard during the war. That is all except the monastery."

HENDERSON: Right.

PIEHLER: So you were also a good shot? You won a shooting contest in addition to the golf?

HENDERSON: I was. I don't consider myself—although I still practice, but I don't practice as much as I—I went from expert to marksman or something like that.

PIEHLER: You were, in some ways, in Germany as a garrison soldier in the 7th [Army]. What would a typical day be like in terms of how much training, how much refresher?

HENDERSON: In Heilbronn we just did our job in the arms room as we were supposed to. Then after that it was let's go down for a couple of beers or something like that—a wiener schnitzel sandwich or something like that.

PIEHLER: How many times did you do any maneuvers or any field training, particularly with the infantry?

HENDERSON: Several times, but I think only one time really stood out in my mind. We were on a maneuver and something went wrong with the communications. So I had to run back with a personal message... "Tighten the left flank or something like this, something at 0900." It was some message. I was almost afraid I was getting lost in the woods, you know? I remember the direction. I came out all right. I think that was luck, though. I think the guardian angel was on me then.

PIEHLER: It sounds like life in Germany was very routine.

HENDERSON: It was good. And when you got your vacation. You know I had this buddy and I went over to France and he could speak French. Yes, I always tried to pick somebody that could ... and we had a magnificent time in France.

PIEHLER: Where did you go in France?

HENDERSON: Moulin Rouge, Pigalle. I was looking at the movie, *Moulin Rouge*, and I was looking at it and it was very, very close to what I have here. Except I couldn't... in fact, you saw it. There was a hotel beside it in the film. I guess that was, could be what we were looking at. I'm not sure.

PIEHLER: You got to see Paris?

HENDERSON: Yes, I did. Eiffel Tower... up on the Eiffel Tower when you could go up to the top. When I brought my wife there, they had it closed down. You only could go up half way.

PIEHLER: You could go all the way up to the top.

HENDERSON: Right. We ended up going to a lot of the places. My daughter was with the airlines so we were able to travel.

PIEHLER: The price was right?

HENDERSON: Yeah. We nearly missed Münster. Nearly missed that. She says, "You better look out the door." We looked out the door and there it was lit up. Of course, the bushes had grown up a little bit. Went to Munich—everywhere.

PIEHLER: You mentioned you ended up in military police. When did that occur?

HENDERSON: You know, I think ... Yes, I'll tell you about that. I went to NCL School.

PIEHLER: In Germany?

HENDERSON: That's in Germany—Munich. And I think that's when I came back and I ended up getting my corporal stripe, but I did a TDY and it was in Stuttgart and there was a jail there. I worked with the military police and CIA—or CID, not CIA—and a lot of times I had to take prisoners out and bring them in where they would interrogate them and so forth. I was very intrigued with that. I also had a fellow that was from New York. His name was Jack Mahoney. There was two Jack Mahoney's, but this Jack Mahoney had a dad that was with the police department. He says you know when you get out maybe you ought to join. Take the test. You've got nothing to lose by taking a test. So I did.

PIEHLER: So, that's how you heard about the New York Police Exam? And somebody told you quite a bit about the department?

HENDERSON: Oh yeah. Oh God, you'll love it.

PIEHLER: And you liked this duty?

HENDERSON: I did. I really...

PIEHLER: And it was centered in sort of running this prison for American ...?

HENDERSON: Yes. The prison was located at Zwanzig and Weiner Straße.

PIEHLER: How long were you with the prison?

HENDERSON: I think it was maybe three months or something like that.

PIEHLER: What were your duties?

HENDERSON: Well, you had to ... Not any as far as setting up a guard duty on the jail. But you had to take them for breakfast, for lunch. Well, no, wait. Breakfast ... I'm not sure for lunch, dinner.

PIEHLER: In many ways the routine of a prison?

HENDERSON: Yeah. You had two guys, we had shotguns, and a special door that they would go into. Some of them were lifers—in for homicide and so.

PIEHLER: And everybody would eventually go to Leavenworth it sounds like. These were Americans?

HENDERSON: Yes, oh, I definitely would say when the time came for them. I'm sure that wasn't a permanent residence for them there.

PIEHLER: Now they knew they were going to be there for a while at least?

HENDERSON: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Now you didn't do—as a military police, you didn't do any patrolling?

HENDERSON: No, I wasn't, per se, a military police.

PIEHLER: You weren't with them for—sounds like it was a temporary assignment.

HENDERSON: Right.

PIEHLER: But that exposure sounds like it was great.

HENDERSON: That exposure made it a solid decision with the police department.

PIEHLER: Now if you hadn't done this duty in the prison, what were you thinking in the Army of what you would do, because you were doing quite well at golf?

HENDERSON: I don't know.

PIEHLER: You didn't have any plans?

HENDERSON: I didn't, no, not necessarily. I kind of knew I wouldn't go into show business.

PIEHLER: The Army had really convinced you?

HENDERSON: That's true. Although, let me see. They had a service club type area, and they were looking for people – entertaining. So I thought I would do that and I was interviewed. I told them I'm a singer and so forth, and they said we don't need any singers, we have a singer. I asked what his name was and they said Eddie Fisher. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Yeah, they did have a singer. (Laughs)

HENDERSON: I wasn't a personal friend of Arthur Godfrey or something . (Laughs) I think he just about came in around the same time. He had more of a lively life.

PIEHLER: Had you thought of staying in the Army? You mentioned flirting with Paratroopers and you didn't want to stay in an extra year. Had you toyed about re-enlisting?

HENDERSON: I did. That was on my mind. I think it was about two months, three months before I was going to get out. I was in this arms area and I remember the sergeant coming in, and I was with another fellow, and he was drunk and abusive and for some reason just wanted a piece of me, started pushing me. I decked him, and the only blessing was that the witness was a Catholic altar boy who I was working with, because he stood right up and said, yeah, he hit Jim a couple of times and that was it. I helped him to his feet and everything like this, and he just staggering and drunk and he went out of there. But that resulted in me getting transferred out of my service company until this one company decided I was a ex-paratrooper and a lot of the fellows were paratroopers in there and they ran every morning. I had to get my haircut, and I had beautiful long hair at the time. I had to get a crew haircut, so I was one of the boys back again. I thought if it can happen this easy, going to prison, losing stripes and things like this...

PIEHLER: For a fight you didn't start?

HENDERSON: Oh, no. It didn't make any difference, though. I still struck a superior officer. I said to hell with it. I got out.

PIEHLER: So you didn't re-enlist. Your term ended?

HENDERSON: That's it. I got out.

PIEHLER: Had you thought of using your GI Bill benefits to go to college?

HENDERSON: I did. I used my GI Bill for the New York Institute of Criminology. And to make up a few extra bucks I worked the bottom half of private investigating. That's repossessing cars.

PIEHLER: The New York Institute of Criminology—where was that? Was it a private or public?

HENDERSON: It was private.

PIEHLER: I guess John Jay didn't exist then?

HENDERSON: I don't think so. I don't think so. I forget. I guess it was up in the '50's off Madison or 3rd Avenue or something like that.

PIEHLER: How long were you enrolled in that program?

HENDERSON: October 17, 1955 to March 26, '56.

PIEHLER: And what did you learn?

HENDERSON: We did just about everything as far as fingerprinting—forensic type of work. It was real interesting. They had you do field type work. Pick up a fellow, follow him, try to get his name, his job, so forth. I guess it's very funny, too.

PIEHLER: Sounds like you have a story of trying to follow someone.

HENDERSON: Yeah, couple of fellows got taken into custody you know.

PIEHLER: So you were following—this was for real?

HENDERSON: This was your assignment like Kathryn's assignment is this [interview].

PIEHLER: It wasn't just a test. This was someone the police were actually looking for?

HENDERSON: No. This was something that you were to do to find out about. Just pick somebody on the street and follow them and try to find out as much as you can.

PIEHLER: So who was the first person you followed? What do you remember?

HENDERSON: I picked a very well dressed fellow. He had an attaché case and I think it was—I can't remember exactly, like it had "JS" on it or something like that. I followed him for maybe three quarters of an hour. He did a lot of walking. Then he went into this building, and I got on the elevator with him. I got into the back of the elevator. The floor he got off on I got off on, and there happened to be a lot of people still around, right. He went into this office—Stosher Company, James Stosher Company something—got to be him, right.

PIEHLER: And what did you find out what he did?

HENDERSON: It was an accounting type firm. I didn't follow it any further. I felt like I got lucky. (Laughter) I said that's it. I'm gone.

PIEHLER: You just took the elevator back down? (Chuckles)

HENDERSON: Took it back, went home. Next day turned the report in. And you had a little identification with you which I don't have anymore. Some of the fellows got grabbed by security. "What are you doing?" "Well, we're on assignment." They called the school up there and Jim McNamara, I think he had been with the police department.

PIEHLER: So your faculty were old New York City retired police?

HENDERSON: Well, I knew one of them was, but the one fellow was a retired investigator, criminal investigator and he was fantastic.

PIEHLER: It also sounds like this was actually valuable, this school?

HENDERSON: I thought it was.

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with James R. Henderson on March 29, 2002 in Knoxville, Tennessee, with Kurt Piehler and ...

MEUNIER: Kathryn Meunier.

PIEHLER: And you were saying...

HENDERSON: Somebody took a picture of me sleeping in class.

PIEHLER: But that's not a reflection ...

HENDERSON: No.

PIEHLER: You said you actually found it very useful.

HENDERSON: I thought it was great.

PIEHLER: It sounds like they taught you some very practical skills. The tape cut off—but taking a photograph of a crime scene.

HENDERSON: Yeah. We set up crime scenes, or they would set them up and we would take pictures of them. Always take pictures, right? No matter what.

PIEHLER: How many people were enrolled in this school and how many of them were former GIs?

HENDERSON: All ten were.

PIEHLER: You were all on the G. I. Bill?

HENDERSON: Right.

PIEHLER: And all wanted to be in the New York City Police Department or some wanted to be private investigators?

HENDERSON: Some wanted to go into government – thinking of going with the government and just adding that to their list of strange things—maybe passing the test. That was it.

PIEHLER: And you were, in some sense, waiting to take the New York City police exam. Why this school instead of trying to get into the police department?

HENDERSON: I was kind of thinking about that this morning, and I can't push the time. I think there was something like a year or so before the test ...

PIEHLER: Would be offered.

HENDERSON: And this fell into everything. I think it was a couple of months there when I got out of the service, before I went to the school there, I had my Harley and did all kinds of crazy things. Then got with Barnes Detective Agency like I was telling you.

PIEHLER: That was my next question. What was that like to repossess cars?

HENDERSON: It was ...

PIEHLER: You must have stories from that. I can't imagine particularly doing that for the first time or two.

HENDERSON: At first they worked us with two fellows that were experts opening up a car. Then they split us up. My bike-riding partner, he went with this one fellow, and I went with another guy. We would start work at maybe 11-ish at night, 12. And we would have a pick-up order for the car. You wouldn't pay your ... Some banks were great. They had the key, but most didn't. I had about forty-some odd keys that would open the door and the ignition you know and had all the jimmy equipment. One, two, three—it took us maybe ten seconds or so to get into the car—just as fast with the opening device as it is with the key. Starting the ignition, jumping the distributor to the solenoid and so forth. Now a story, and I will only give you one story, too. Now we are experienced so they put the two hotshots together, me and Ronnie. We had this job, but the car was always locked in the garage. Every time we came there the door was locked and we could see [with] flashlights, that's the car, everything. We took a little file and broke it off in the lock when we came here one time when there was no car in there.

Apparently they were out. Broke it off in there so when we got back there—we would do different jobs in between. So we went over there. There was the car in the garage and that door was open. So we set the whole car up. Ronnie to start it using an automatic starter on that cause he was behind the wheel. When he started the car up, as soon as it started, I would push the doors open and he would back right out the aisle. He would take off, and I would jump in our car and follow. I pushed the doors too hard and as he gunned it and came back it knocked one of the doors right off. Just knocked it down. Crash! Destroyed it! They called over to Barnes Detective Agency and asked about this and, of course, Mr. Barnes being a good detective said “Never cared for those fellows. They don’t work with us anymore. All the information they gave us was absolutely bad.” That was just about the end of our ...

PIEHLER: That was your last job with them?

HENDERSON: Just about. I think it was just about. Maybe a couple of easy ones. About that time we just decided to get a regular job, and I went with Household Finance.

PIEHLER: Now, I’m just curious. It sounds like this was pretty clean. You just got in the car quickly and were able to drive away. No confrontations with anyone. Doing it from—no run-ins with the police mistaking you for car thieves.

HENDERSON: Never had any problems with the police. If we saw a police car parked somewhere, we would go over to them and say we work with Barnes Detective Agency and we have a repossession over here. In fact we did that one time and that was up in Harlem. It’s lucky we did do that, because we just got the car open and all of a sudden we heard this guy behind us and he says, “What are you doing?” And I said “Why don’t you just go over there and ask the police officers—right over there. We’re repossessing the car. Do you have any objections? Do you have anything here that you want to take out of the car?” He says, “Well, I got my jack,” and the guy gave us the keys and we took off. He was like eight months behind. He said, “I knew you’d get me someday.” (Laughs)

PIEHLER: And then you got a job at Household Finance? What were you doing for Household Finance?

HENDERSON: Field investigator.

PIEHLER: Your training did come in handy? What would you investigate for them?

HENDERSON: Well, aside from giving out loans, deadbeats.

PIEHLER: So investigate loans, would you actually verify the information?

HENDERSON: Verify all the information there. That’s about it.

PIEHLER: Deadbeat loans? Would you pay a visit to someone?

HENDERSON: That was in the days when you just knocked at the door there and said “Mr. Henderson, Household Finance.” You were hoping that what you were trying to do would be get them to come to the office and consolidate their loans, something to that nature. And if that didn’t work, last but not least, you would hope for a payment right there.

PIEHLER: When you visited, the knock on the door, they might give you the cash.

HENDERSON: And they would change jobs on you and one young lady I recall, we followed her. She was almost in East Elmhurst. I don’t know whether you’re familiar with that. She took the bus to the train station. I sat behind her on the bus. Then my buddy picked her up on the train. Then I got behind her in the elevator. Then she went into work and everything like this. Then we got on the phone. “Ann? Jim Henderson, Household Finance.”

PIEHLER: She was behind on her debts and not ...

HENDERSON: “How did you find this out? I thought somebody was following me.” And Ann was good enough to finish out paying the loan. I remember paying her a visit. My boss, Bill Rooney, he said, “You’re going to find out a lot of things. You’re going to find out we have loans with a lot of airline stewardesses.” So he says “If they invite you in and want to do a little favor with you, just look at the balance and remember that balance is yours.” So you had a choice, right? Ann’s was \$350, and at that time I thought \$350 was too much.

PIEHLER: That was a lot of money. I mean that was real money.

HENDERSON: Yeah, you’re making a hundred some-odd dollars a week, for God’s sake.

PIEHLER: How long did you stay with Household Finance?

HENDERSON: Just a month before I went on the police department.

PIEHLER: But good stories ...

HENDERSON: Yeah. Oh yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: And you took the police exam and passed the first time around?

HENDERSON: Right. I went to Delahanty’s, prepared for the test.

PIEHLER: Delahanty’s is the...

HENDERSON: Delahanty’s ... would prepare you for the civil service test.

PIEHLER: Not just the police exam, but a whole range of exams?

HENDERSON: I think they had different things that you would go to them for. Aside from that they had a gym workout program.

PIEHLER: To get you physically...

HENDERSON: And get you back into what you're going to be required to do. So this is what we did and we were in excellent shape for passing the physical part. All of us passed the written test. If you were lacking a few points and wanted to use your GI preference you could do that too. That would give you an extra five points. That was where I made my mistake in the police department. I passed the test, but they said if you wanted to get on in this next class you would have to use your GI preference because the marks were very high. I elected to do that.

PIEHLER: Why was that a mistake? Because that would seem like the obvious thing to do.

HENDERSON: It was a mistake because I had passed the sergeant's exam, and if I had to use those points on the sergeant's exam ...

PIEHLER: That's where it would have really ... because then you were just waiting to be called up.

HENDERSON: I would have been way off, because they give you points for your commendations and so forth and I had a couple of big medals at that time.

PIEHLER: But you should have saved them to really add up for the...

HENDERSON: Yeah. If I had stayed on maybe another six months or so, I would have probably been promoted. I let it go. I had a good job waiting for me down here in Tennessee. I thought it was a good job, anyway.

MEUNIER: I have another question. As far as the training goes, which one did you like the best your military training or your police training?

HENDERSON: That's a tough question. I have mixed emotions on it, but I enjoyed the workout that you got with the police department. That was good. It was very thorough, every aspect about it. The police department when you went to school, the police academy, they had you set academically pretty well too as far as rules, regulations, everything. They had you in good shape. Well, you had to be good in shape to get on it. The Delahanty workout was great. We actually prepared ourselves for the fire department. Running with that, I don't know, seventy-five pound bag or something like this that you had to do.

PIEHLER: They were in a sense preparing you for both exams.

HENDERSON: Physically, I would say.

PIEHLER: Physically, yeah.

HENDERSON: Physically, yeah. The fire department was never something for me. I just think they're the greatest—the greatest in the world. Boy, I have had a few firemen that through stupidity they pulled me out and helped me. You know when you're a young thing you run up twelve stories because some kid is left in a burning apartment. Fire department, they can have it. That's another thing—you have to love it.

PIEHLER: ... I've often been struck, and one of the reasons I really encourage students to do interviews with me, not only for the sort of documenting the history, but also the stuff they don't write down or teach you but what you really need to learn. How much of what you learn in the police academy—what was very useful and very accurate and what when you actually started in police work they said this way in the manual, but I quickly learned from my partner or I quickly learned from the sergeant—you never know—this is the way it's really done. I'm curious of this sort of the academy versus the reality.

HENDERSON: I think, first of all, I feel that the police officers that we got that were in the service understood people better in my time. In my time, definitely.

PIEHLER: Why do you feel that?

HENDERSON: They had experience in the military service and maybe a better understanding of people and their faults and mistakes and so forth. I've always put myself in a position where you try to understand the predicament of a person. I've been punched and knocked down by accident and I didn't lock the guy up. Domestic fights, which are the worst things in the world.

PIEHLER: So it sounds like you were very conscious and it was important to understand even people you were trying to arrest what they're thinking and what they're ...

HENDERSON: Oh yeah, yeah. I was just thinking of things. You know the police department is something after twenty-some odd years through conversation things go through your mind that remind you of something.

PIEHLER: You were never in combat, but somebody said a very applicable question and I was even encouraged when I first started out. I always ask people, what's your most vivid memories of being a cop? Is there any particular? Particularly in terms of where you felt your life might have been threatened. You mentioned at one point, when you were very young as a cop running into a burning building when you probably should have waited for the firemen to come. But any vivid memories?

HENDERSON: I have a very vivid memory that I can see today. We were after an individual—in the car, too. We had a tight squeeze through the garbage truck and the parked cars, but we made it. But he turned around and fired a couple of shots at us, blew the spotlight off the car and shot up the car a little bit. And shooting point blank at the driver practically, I don't know how I missed him—must have jerked it. And then we had a crash and he turned around about twenty feet and emptied a .45 at me. Very vivid memory of that.

PIEHLER: Did he hit you?

HENDERSON: He knocked my hat off. Creased my head just slightly. And that was his mistake, because I didn't miss him. Got the Medal of Valor for it. The funny part about it, though, is during the excitement I had the mic keyed saying, "The mother ..."
(Laughs) One of the hospital ambulance drivers was telling me, he said everybody on 7th Avenue and 125th Street, I think it was, was all lying down. He said, "You people were lying down all over the area," because he didn't see that, right. Excuse me, I think it was 116th Street. That was it and ended up becoming a detective after that.

PIEHLER: When was that? What year do you remember roughly? How soon after you left the academy?

HENDERSON: I was in the 23rd Precinct at the time. I think I had been in there for about four years.

PIEHLER: This is relatively early in your career.

HENDERSON: Yeah, three, three and a half, four years I was with the 23rd Precinct.

PIEHLER: And is this the first time you had to draw your gun?

HENDERSON: No, I drew my gun many, many times.

PIEHLER: So that was not unusual. Was this the first time someone fired at you or had that happened before?

HENDERSON: No. I think this is the first time. Yeah, the first time anybody fired at me like that. I've fired several times at perpetrators.

PIEHLER: But not quite this sort of—basically a gun fight?

HENDERSON: No, this was twenty-three shots. So it was an exchange of twenty-three shots, so it was quite exciting.

PIEHLER: You were in a radio car right after the academy? Or did you do any foot patrol?

HENDERSON: No, you did foot patrol.

PIEHLER: You did foot patrol?

HENDERSON: It's a privilege to be in a car. It just so happened that I happened to be in a car that night with the right fellow as a partner, Phil Gerrard. And he reacted the same way I did and things just worked out.

PIEHLER: So your first after the academy you started out as foot patrol. What precinct were you assigned to?

HENDERSON: 23rd

PIEHLER: 23rd

HENDERSON: That was East 104th Street.

PIEHLER: So it was East Harlem?

HENDERSON: Yeah. It was a mixture.

PIEHLER: Because Mount Sinai is there, I know.

HENDERSON: Mount Sinai is a fairly decent area. Right up to 96th Street or so was pretty good. And, of course, from 96th to 86th, which is a foot post that I ended up with, 86 to maybe 91st Street.

PIEHLER: That's a very nice foot post.

HENDERSON: Excellent.

PIEHLER: That's a very nice neighborhood to walk around in. (Laughs)

HENDERSON: That was show biz neighborhood. That was right up my line.

PIEHLER: And you mentioned your mother was not happy you were a cop.

HENDERSON: Oh no.

PIEHLER: Did she go to your swearing in?

HENDERSON: My grandmother liked it.

PIEHLER: Your grandmother did?

HENDERSON: My grandmother thought that was pretty good. Yeah, my grandmother—just a quick story. While I was a patrolman on Madison Avenue, and I think on 88th Street, Bess Myerson lived. So I was getting married at the time—engaged, excuse me. My grandmother wrote a letter in to the, I forget what the name of it was, *The Price is Right* or something like that. And Bess Myerson was the host, so I've seen her several times. I would always say, "Good morning Miss Myerson," and she would say, "Officer, how are you?" And my grandmother got the notification that I was going to be on the show and everything. Like I was going to be on the show at three o'clock in the afternoon. I had an early dismissal from the police—twelve o'clock. Sure enough at nine o'clock here comes Bess Myerson out. "Good morning, Officer." "Good morning, Miss Myerson." I said, "I'll be seeing you later." She stopped and looked at me like who does he think he's talking to. She'll get me transferred right uptown. I said, "Well my grandmother wrote a letter in to your show, and I was picked as a contestant and so forth." She said, "Well make sure you call to your attention that you know me and everything." Of course, she got me on the show. She got me on the show, because they give you a test to make sure you're not a dummy.

PIEHLER: The pre-screening.

HENDERSON: Yeah. Well, they have to.

PIEHLER: TV was live then. You were on a live ...

HENDERSON: Live. In fact the male, Bob Barker, or whatever his name is. He, almost at the break, he hit me like this on the side, "Good job answering that." And I had my revolver here, right. (Laughter) He says, "You can tell he's a cop." It was something. I answered three questions correctly, and if you go for the fourth question, that puts you into this \$15,000 mink coat, but if you stop you can get they give you the gift of the fourth question. I was doing pretty good so far. I said, "I'll take the fourth." The fourth was like a bone china set for twelve with the sterling silver and everything like this—I don't know a couple of thousand dollars here and there, whatever it was. So that was it. At the same time, the girl I was going out with, she was in show business. Good entertainer, good singer, very exceptionally, exceptionally beautiful, shapely girl and they ended up giving her a screen test at that time. It didn't turn out good. It was amazing. I was amazed.

PIEHLER: You really thought she was going to make it in the movies?

HENDERSON: Oh, I thought so, definitely yeah. So we got the honeymoon vacation and everything like this and all the goodies that went with it.

PIEHLER: You won at *The Price is Right*?

HENDERSON: Yes. Yeah. Lot of goodies.

PIEHLER: It's interesting cause there's a new—you get cable?

HENDERSON: Yes.

PIEHLER: There's a Game Show Network now that shows the old ...

HENDERSON: Wouldn't that be funny if you saw me on that?

PIEHLER: Yeah, or you might see yourself one day watching this, because they show the old *Price is Right*.

HENDERSON: You know I had gotten divorced and the Southern lady that I married, her mother was interested in all these shows and she remembered seeing me. She remembered seeing me. I couldn't believe it. She was very much into Hollywood things—always getting the theatrical paper and it was amazing. Maybe she thought that would help with me or something.

PIEHLER: You mention your first wife. In some ways you hadn't fully left show biz. Your initial foot patrol was in sort of ...

HENDERSON: No.

PIEHLER: And your first wife ...

HENDERSON: She and I ...

PIEHLER: But she was in show biz, too.

HENDERSON: Yeah. She was trying to further her career more. And we would go to a lot of bar-restaurant type things there. I'd end up singing a couple of songs and she would sing a few songs, too. But she ... It was solid. She had what my mother had. She had the bug. I'm just trying to think of the place, the—I remember the attorney when we were going to get the marriage annulled and serving the papers. He said, "You know, I like cops and I would rather not come to the station house. Can we meet somewhere?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, I understand that your wife is presently singing at a pretty famous club." I think Don Cornell was on the bill, too. So I had a ball. Served me the papers. Things can be done right.

PIEHLER: So in some ways your splitting up was amicable in the sense that—is that a fair characterization?

HENDERSON: Yes!

PIEHLER: Your wife had the entertainment bug and ...

HENDERSON: Yeah. She tried. She was a good girl. She tried. Had a miscarriage and was very depressed. Wanted to go back into the business. A cop and a showgirl don't go

together. They might have a lot of fun together, but it doesn't go as far as a marriage goes. So we worked things out.

PIEHLER: So you would have in many ways... is it fair to say you would have preferred to have a wife who stayed at home and have a family?

HENDERSON: At that time I would. At that time I wanted children. I was young. Why the hell not have children? Because that's the only time you can really stand them is when you're young.

PIEHLER: I know the ...

HENDERSON: Go ahead Kathryn.

MEUNIER: Your first two children, Tracy and James, right? Did they have any aspirations of being entertainers? Did they have that natural ability when they were young?

HENDERSON: No, those children were adopted. No, but my son, Jimmy, he wanted to go to Hollywood and start right at the top. I said, "Well, you just go ahead and take care of that and that'll be fine." They live in Vero Beach. My daughter, she's married now with a child. I've got a grandchild. Things have worked out for them pretty well. They talk to me now.

PIEHLER: I'm curious on going back to New York. You were on foot patrol for a while and then when did you make it to the radio car? Because I wasn't aware that that ... I'm curious if it's still like that in the police department. But then you said you get promoted to a radio car.

HENDERSON: Well, it's like time. You know your job and the opening comes up and you have an opportunity for it. You take it.

PIEHLER: What's the difference between, at least in your era, between foot patrol and then the car? Was there a big difference in the type of policing you did?

HENDERSON: Oh yeah, sure. You're answering all the calls. You're answering all the emergency calls that come in. On a foot patrol if it doesn't happen right on your patrol ... I was fortunate in that area there because I got a couple of nice awards for robberies and it's unusual. So I did make a couple of grand larceny, attempted larcenies and robbery and so.

PIEHLER: So you were very active. You really did your job.

HENDERSON: I did the job, but I wasn't too good at giving out summons. I didn't really like that. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You didn't like to give parking tickets?

HENDERSON: No, no. I gave out maybe a few to keep the sergeant off my back. I didn't like that.

PIEHLER: You wanted to catch real criminals?

HENDERSON: I hated to stop somebody from going through a light. And if they gave a good enough crying story I usually let them go. (Laughter) Usually towards the end of the month, though, if you stopped somebody you just, "I'm sorry, sir. License and registration, please. You went through the red light—made a wrong turn." So you gave out a couple and that seemed to keep the higher echelon happy.

PIEHLER: So there was a real sense that there was something of a quota?

HENDERSON: I wouldn't say there was an exact quota. You had your requirement. If you're on patrol, you're asleep all the time if you're just ... It shows that at least you're active, right?

PIEHLER: You mentioned even on foot patrol you got some decoration because of larceny. Any story there in terms of ...?

HENDERSON: Oh, Jerri Clark. Oh first of all, the owner of the store came running out, cut and bleeding, and then the two female perpetrators came out. And Jerri Clark was probably a woman of 5'7" and about 300 pounds. And the other one was like Kathryn—you know, nice lady. (Laughter) I gotta make some points, you know? I got to her first and grabbed her and she fell down on the ground crying and I said, "Stay there." Jerri Clark still had the knife in her hand. I was going to shoot her. But her big behind going like this, I just started laughing basically. (Gestures and laughs) I finally caught up with her and she looked at me, she saw and she dropped the knife. Got her handcuffed—very, very, very difficult to handcuff her. Had to handcuff her in the front, which you never really do. Went back for the other girl and she was gone. But that was a good arrest.

PIEHLER: Did they ever find the other one?

HENDERSON: I don't know.

PIEHLER: You didn't have to testify?

HENDERSON: I didn't have to. No.

PIEHLER: In that case you never even know what happened then.

HENDERSON: The detectives follow through. She just pleaded guilty and that was the end of it.

PIEHLER: On foot patrol, how did you like it or were you waiting to get to the next level?

HENDERSON: I loved it.

PIEHLER: You liked walking a beat?

HENDERSON: I loved coming to work and didn't like going home. Bad for a marriage. Of course, I was single a long time, too. I just loved it and that's all. Miss it right to this day.

PIEHLER: Just being a cop on the ...

HENDERSON: I miss definitely being with the police department.

PIEHLER: What about as a radio patrol? Now you are responding to calls.

HENDERSON: Correct.

PIEHLER: Was that an abrupt transition from walking a beat?

HENDERSON: No. You knew the code signals and so forth like this. You are with a partner, you know. You're not strictly by yourself as we have a lot of our officers here. They just operate by themselves, which I never agreed with. I don't know how Knoxville does it. Knoxville's still single manning a car?

PIEHLER: Yeah. I have a cop in one of my other classes, and I should ask her about their patrolling.

HENDERSON: We always patrolled with two men. New York City did.

PIEHLER: New York City and the fact it's still my understanding it's still generally two. I know the police unions have been very adamant about very reluctant to concede on the two-man patrol cars. And it sounds like you're a believer in that?

HENDERSON: I am definitely.

PIEHLER: And why do you feel so strongly about it? I have a feeling it's a lot of practical experience.

HENDERSON: Back up. You're not—not unless you're Chuck Norris or something like this, where you can battle all the guys and knock 'em down. You can't do that.

PIEHLER: Why I guess, because I remember the days of the two-man patrol car. What advocates of single man in the patrol car, the argument is you can do, you double your patrol when you have two in a car if you split them up there is more patrol capacity.

From someone who has been in a patrol car and policing, why would two men in one car versus two cars that can theoretically patrol more?

HENDERSON: Theoretically they're viewed more. That's true.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

HENDERSON: But you're handling the jobs, lot of times you criss-cross on a job. You're not doing anything and another car is on a job. Maybe you go to it and you take it. You can operate pretty effectively that way. Domestic fights, which is the worst fear should be of any police officer—you never know what's going to happen. Two—I'd even go three. I think New Orleans has three patrolling.

PIEHLER: You indicate that domestic was your least favorite. Is that?

HENDERSON: Most police officers get hurt on domestic.

PIEHLER: That's the most dangerous, in a sense the actual?

HENDERSON: You don't know what can be the outcome of that one.

PIEHLER: What would the range of—I mean domestic. Give some sense of why cause I wouldn't initially thought. I knew they were very unpleasant, but why are they so unpredictable and so dangerous?

HENDERSON: Well, I know that I've been on a few cases where the husband was beating the hell out of his girlfriend. And you would go up there wanting to subdue him and then you had the girlfriend, she's ready to fight for him. So now you're battling two—for one man no good. You don't like to take your gun out in a situation like that. Had a funny story. You like funny stories?

PIEHLER: Oh, yeah. Please do.

HENDERSON: My partner and I—Phil Gerrard—just got a coffee and a doughnut. Sitting in the car there and we got a domestic—a location that we knew of. A big heavy set Spanish fellow and this petite little Spanish girl. He always slaps the dickens out of her. And so we went up there and we brought our coffee and doughnut with us. Walked into the apartment and they're screaming, yelling. He's standing on the couch. We sat down, drank our coffee, had our doughnut. I talked to Phil said, "Well, what do you think about today, Phil? How are things going to go?" He said, "Oh, they're going to go all right." And all of a sudden he comes down off the couch and looks at us and says, "You guys are crazy. You're nuts." I said, "You just caught us at a time we're having our coffee and doughnut." But still we are thinking if he makes the wrong move he's, you know. That was the end of it.

PIEHLER: He calmed down?

HENDERSON: Calmed down. Thought we were crazy. He said, "I'm getting the hell out of here. You're nuts." Walked out. The girl says, "Thank you very much officers." That was the end of it.

PIEHLER: That was a pretty low-key approach. You were just grabbing your coffee and doughnuts.

HENDERSON: You know some times you don't follow the book, and that's the right way.

PIEHLER: I'm curious because we now, I think a lot of Americans are very aware of domestic violence. But I get a sense in your era you were very aware of domestic violence, but a lot of the public wasn't aware.

HENDERSON: I think that's one thing that has never, ever changed.

PIEHLER: You don't think it has changed?

HENDERSON: It has never changed. And you always can get hurt on a domestic.

PIEHLER: But I even think a lot of people weren't aware how prevalent in a sense that there's a lot ... now I think people are more ...

HENDERSON: God, look in the paper ...

PIEHLER: My sense is that it wasn't as well recorded when you first started out as a cop.

HENDERSON: Of course not. No.

PIEHLER: Now there's all kinds of policies.

HENDERSON: Today they arrest. At that time we used to refer the woman to family court. And ninety-nine out of a hundred times she's not going to go to family court because she's living with this guy and she's used to getting smacked around anyway. She's never the one that calls the police. It's always some neighbor that calls the police.

PIEHLER: What do you think of changes now that mandates arrest more often? Even in some sense really mandates, because a lot more attention has been given to domestic violence.

HENDERSON: I think you are involving yourself in a lot of paperwork. If you want to be on patrol and so forth, you're going to lock somebody up for domestic. Whereas, for just disorderly conduct we used to be able to just issue summons. Give a summons, let 'em go.

PIEHLER: So how would you resolve domestic disputes? You mention the one where you had your coffee and doughnuts. I mean what were the various—how would they ...

HENDERSON: The best thing to do would be to get the male out of the house.

PIEHLER: Even if it's just for a short time?

HENDERSON: Yeah, let him cool down. Because that's just what it is—they're blowing off steam. That night, nighttime comes, late nighttime, they have a couple of drinks, they're in bed making love. The whole thing is over with. So you don't take up the paperwork. Get him out. Of course, the opposite side of that is you get him out of the house and he comes back and kills her. So now what?

PIEHLER: And how often would just getting him out of the house? How often could you do that and he'd cool down? And how often would he get?

HENDERSON: Mostly all the time you could.

PIEHLER: But in cases that didn't work?

HENDERSON: He's locked up.

PIEHLER: You would arrest people for—sometimes you just couldn't calm the situation?

HENDERSON: You're locking him up not only now for either assault on his girlfriend or something like this, but resisting arrest. He knows he's going to go to jail.

PIEHLER: So in other words when you were on patrol, to get arrested for domestic violence I have a feeling he would take a swing at you or resist arrest. I mean it would really escalate.

HENDERSON: Yeah. It got escalated to a point where there was nothing else you could do but arrest the guy and put him in jail for the night. There wasn't a cooling down period.

PIEHLER: You mention it was very unpredictable. What was your closest call in a domestic? Any really close calls? As you said it was very unpredictable. Did anyone ever pull a weapon, say on a domestic call? Really threaten physical, not just threaten, but really start swinging?

HENDERSON: I've had a few. Nothing really bad. Nothing worse than a night stick didn't take care of and that was the end of it. Of course, handcuff 'em, lock 'em up and that's it. But I've had the girlfriend just jump on us too. Remember now, you're

concentrating on him, and if you're alone and she decides to grab a knife, you're dead. If you've got a partner at least you've got some help.

PIEHLER: What other—I mean you told us your most vivid story of the chase and then the gunfight. What other, besides domestic violence, what would be the routine?

-----END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE-----

PIEHLER: So burglaries were a lot of your case?

HENDERSON: Yeah.

PIEHLER: That leads me to another question about your relationship with prosecutors and the prosecutor's office.

HENDERSON: Are we on tape?

PIEHLER: We're on tape again, yes. We can go off tape if you want.

HENDERSON: No.

PIEHLER: What was that relationship like? Particularly when you were just a cop on the beat or a radar car.

HENDERSON: It was always good.

PIEHLER: Even as the cop on the beat?

HENDERSON: Oh, I ... Never mind I had a couple of very good cases where the defendant's attorney was magnificent, and he cross-examined me for six hours. But his problem was that I was telling the truth, and when you're telling the truth and you've got the bases covered, there's nothing he can do. But even though I did tell the truth and had all the bases covered—identification, line-up, and so forth—the witnesses something happened to them. The case was thrown out.

PIEHLER: What type of case was it? Without any specifics.

HENDERSON: It was a fellow who was getting a pension and he had an argument with his girlfriend and it was about ten o'clock at night and he stood outside the bar and fired six shots at her with other people in the bar. The other people in the bar are the witnesses now, right? The neon lights were outside so you could see his face. For some reason or other their memories just forgot.

PIEHLER: Was anyone harmed by this?

HENDERSON: No. Nobody. The shots missed everybody. There were about eight people in the bar.

PIEHLER: That was very lucky.

HENDERSON: Went through a television. Oh, God Almighty! You know there's usually a television above the bar.

PIEHLER: So you were on patrol and you came to that crime scene?

HENDERSON: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you make the arrest right there?

HENDERSON: Oh, no. No.

PIEHLER: No, but you were the one responding to this?

HENDERSON: We were detectives at the time.

PIEHLER: So that was when you became a detective?

HENDERSON: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Well, let me since you raise the detective. Your getting the Medal of Valor really helped you in terms of promotion to detective.

HENDERSON: Oh, yeah. Sure.

PIEHLER: And you became a detective. Do you remember what year you became a detective? Roughly?

HENDERSON: Boy you're—I should have done some more homework, huh?

MEUNIER: '63 or something like that? You went to school in '62 for it, I think.

PIEHLER: CIC Detective, September 24 to October 26, 1962.

HENDERSON: On your report?

PIEHLER: Yes, what you filled in.

HENDERSON: June 20th was the time of the incident, and I guess it was a couple of weeks or a month or so after that that I went to detective school. And then from there they assign you to the youth squad. You know they start you off kind of low for a little bit. Put you in youth squad for a while. Chief inspector's office, little plain clothes or

whatever happens. Then the day comes and they get you to go a few, assign you to a detective squad and within a few weeks, “Hey, Henderson you got to go down to headquarters and pick up your shield.”

PIEHLER: So that was a very big moment?

HENDERSON: Oh gosh, you’re kidding me, yes. It’s a big moment because it’s a big money increase, too. How much I forget.

PIEHLER: Yeah, but it’s also very prestigious. I got the sense that being a detective that’s one of the very prestigious...

HENDERSON: Oh, we read the stories in the comic books. You always want to be Dick Tracy, right? Everybody wanted to be a detective.

PIEHLER: That’s the goal if you’re a cop? For most cops?

HENDERSON: That’s right.

PIEHLER: What squad were you assigned to?

HENDERSON: 24th.

PIEHLER: 24th, back to your old?

HENDERSON: No, 23rd.

PIEHLER: You were in the 23rd?

HENDERSON: 23rd as a patrolman.

PIEHLER: And then 24th...

HENDERSON: A detective.

PIEHLER: Detective. And then 24th...

HENDERSON: West 100th Street. 100 West 100th Street.

PIEHLER: 100 West 100th, so you’re in Uptown.

HENDERSON: I went over towards the West Side.

PIEHLER: The West Side and then Uptown.

HENDERSON: Really just across.

PIEHLER: Just across, so you basically, what was the coverage for that squad for that precinct?

HENDERSON: 86th Street to 110th.

PIEHLER: So you're what you're just actually parts of that, that takes you to parts, that's Columbia and ...

HENDERSON: Columbia University?

PIEHLER: Yeah, and Riverside and the Lincoln Center and ...

HENDERSON: During the riots and everything?

PIEHLER: Yeah. That neighborhood has also become tonier over time—large parts of that neighborhood.

HENDERSON: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Parts of that neighborhood are now pretty toney. Like I remember Lincoln Center in the 70's was not the toney neighborhood that it's become. So you're a detective and it's very exciting and it's what you've always wanted to be, so what's your most vivid memories of detective, in terms of running the job of a detective?

HENDERSON: I think my lieutenant at that time was Hugh Ferguson. He was the whip of the squad and I worked with three other men: Vinny Sanchez, Ed Kawiecki, and Joe Adamo.

PIEHLER: What was the range of cases you did as a detective?

HENDERSON: We worked on time. You worked with four men and you worked an eight-hour shift, and let's say I got the first two hours and do it that way. The way the cases came in that was the way they came. You could get maybe about eight cases or something like that. Nothing unusual to get forty or fifty cases a tour.

PIEHLER: Who does the sorting of priority?

HENDERSON: You do.

PIEHLER: You do?

HENDERSON: You do. You do. You just got to, you got many burglaries. Although you're supposed to go to every one, a lot of them you can handle on the phone. I mean, you can't go to every one and take fingerprints. You would be—that's...

PIEHLER: You were a detective in an era when at least it was probably perceived, and I think statistically crime really started soaring in the '60's.

HENDERSON: It was some bad times at that time. Heroin was very popular and coke came in, and you had to be pretty careful.

PIEHLER: What about, I'm curious—it's a larger question even dealing with when you first got—became a police officer—what was the culture of the force like because I'm not surprised you listed a lot of Irish surnames, Mahoney and others?

HENDERSON: We had a large, well the police department I think years ago was prominently Irish you know, and then Italians and everybody got into it. We had a pretty mixed precinct you know.

PIEHLER: The 24th or the 23rd or both?

HENDERSON: 23rd and 24th.

PIEHLER: When you say mixed what was the range of different ethnicities and religions?

HENDERSON: Like with my group I had a Polish fellow, Ed Kawiecki. Sanchez was Spanish, God bless him. He spoke Spanish fluently and it was a Spanish neighborhood. DeVergee—he was black. That was great. And myself.

PIEHLER: That's a very ethnically, particularly for the police department at that time, a very diverse. Sounds like you got along, your relationship...

HENDERSON: It's like a marriage.

PIEHLER: Was it a good marriage?

HENDERSON: It was a good marriage. It was an excellent marriage. That's where you look at the squad there and try to work things out and everything. Now you got gal detectives. So you have to be careful how you pair them off.

PIEHLER: How successful can you be as a detective? Cause I've read, particularly in your era of policing, and even criticism of the nature of policing that the ability to sort of solve crimes was very low, particularly burglaries and car thefts.

HENDERSON: Oh, they're nothing. You're looking at your armed robberies and your homicides. You put a lot of extra work on something of that nature.

PIEHLER: So it was the homicides and armed robbery that the bulk of your ...

HENDERSON: Take the bulk of your time.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Yeah.

HENDERSON: And you had to be there with an open mind on it. That's all. You know you lock somebody up. You do your job. Let the facts take care of it. You do your job. And if they're cut loose, they're cut loose. You can't let it be a personal thing.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you had to have some separation.

HENDERSON: You should. It's not always that way. And that's maybe the fellows that have a little problem or the females that have a little problem.

PIEHLER: You were also on the police department when women police started coming in not just as police matrons.

HENDERSON: Yes, yes, that was very interesting.

PIEHLER: So what was so interesting? Cause I have a cop in my—she in fact one day she came up to see me during office hours with her uniform.

HENDERSON: Well, there's a tremendous amount of females on the job that I don't feel should be out in the street. I would rather put those girls handling the jobs that come in, in clerical. Why should we have civilians handling this that we know nothing about? They shouldn't know anything about our damn business really. I mean that's my opinion. And yet there's a couple of female officers that I knew that I would love to work with. I mean, they're tough pieces of work you know.

PIEHLER: So you were not opposed to the idea of women policemen?

HENDERSON: No, I was never opposed to it, but I ...

PIEHLER: But you were very concerned that those who actually particularly go on patrol were up to the job?

HENDERSON: Yeah. We had one girl that she's about 5'7", 120-some odd pounds. I mean, she belonged in Playboy. You could pick her up and throw her through the roof. I think they could be a little bit more clever and put her with the ... See, we used to have a female detective squad. They would take care of all these perverts, make these arrests and everything like that. But women's rights and so forth.

PIEHLER: I think there used to be in the New York Police Department a separate female detective squad.

HENDERSON: They had. I'm just trying to...

PIEHLER: Yeah, because I know Los Angeles had a separate women's squad.

HENDERSON: This is where I feel that most of the female officers, most of them belong with. Now I had a partner whose daughter—she quit the police department. In fact he called me and he said, “Ellie, she’s off the job.” I said, “Oh my god, what’s wrong” you know. He said, “She’s with the FBI.” (Laughter) Now in the FBI—now she’s about 5’10” and about 150-some odd pounds. In the FBI she was number one academically and tied for second physically. They had a run-off and she lost. So she could handle herself. You wouldn’t have any worries about that. It would be like working with another police officer that maybe wasn’t too well or something like that but they would carry him. So you end up worrying about him if you got into a tussle. That’s what I would worry about.

PIEHLER: I’m curious, you were in New York in a very tense time. I’m going to make sure I ask you—your precinct included Columbia University. I’m curious about when the students took over Columbia? What’s your memory and what role did you have, at all?

HENDERSON: I wasn’t involved in going in after the students. We were outside controlling those that were outside, little rebellious. They had a cause. They had a couple of busted heads since they lost. That’s the way it goes. If you feel you’re right, go for it. If you end up in the hospital, well that’s part of the routine, but you certainly can’t have students take over a university.

PIEHLER: So you were assigned, you were a part of the sort of police activity in the Columbia area, but you were outside?

HENDERSON: We just happened to be outside, yeah. Just wondering, I think I was there on a detail. So if you were there on a detail you were on the outside and those that were detectives that were assigned to go in with full combat gear.

PIEHLER: I’ve been very impressed, I mean I once observed the New York Police. It was, ironically, outside of a concert. At the time I didn’t know what was going on. I was very impressed with the ability of the New York Police Department to control crowds and disorderly situations. Particularly, cause I’m walking through, I was trying to catch a train and I think it was a Grateful Dead concert out at the Garden. At first I had no clue what was going on cause I’m walking along and some guy had done something and all of a sudden out of the blue this detective comes out who doesn’t look like a detective. But then his shield comes out, pointing out through the gap and I was very impressed with that. Any stories about—because the ‘60s were a very tense time—about the ability of your department to deal with crowds and protests?

HENDERSON: Show of force to me is about the best thing. We had the horses. They were used very efficiently with the exception of the Harlem riots because they would be hit with darts and everything. You know they would throw darts at them. But the dogs were the greatest. The dogs, the greatest.

PIEHLER: But horses, it's interesting. A cop actually told me this and he said why he got horses for the Rutgers Police Department. He said first of all they're great for crowds, but he said no one ever pets a police car. People pet police horses.

HENDERSON: We had the mounted stable in my precinct and they had some of the junior horses that hadn't been out. Oh God Almighty! They would bring them over to the 22nd, the park area. You would see a horse running up and down the block with no cop on him, God bless. Or somebody would honk a horn and the horse would jump and land on top of a car spread-eagle. But when they got them perfected, they were wonderful.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, you entered, and I think it was Mayor Wagoner who was the first mayor when you started.

HENDERSON: He's the one that gave me the medal.

PIEHLER: He did? Personally?

HENDERSON: Personally. Personally handed it to me. Put it on me.

PIEHLER: And then he would be followed by John Lindsey. What were the attitudes towards Wagoner and Lindsey?

HENDERSON: Everybody knew Wagoner was an alcoholic.

PIEHLER: That was common knowledge.

HENDERSON: Common knowledge, yeah.

PIEHLER: And why was it such common knowledge? Was it because of the ...

HENDERSON: I guess it just spread around, you know. When he put the medal on me ...

PIEHLER: He smelled?

HENDERSON: I detected a dinch.

PIEHLER: Interesting, because I never heard. I don't know New York mayors that well but I never ...

HENDERSON: But he seemed good to the men. They all have their little thing. The last police commissioner that got out, what was his name. I just read his book. I would have liked to work when he was commissioner. Only guys that he had had working for him were people that had the Medal of Valor and anything like this. Because they had been through, and he wanted somebody like that.

PIEHLER: How interesting. What about—I asked about John Lindsey cause I get a sense among a lot of rank and file police he was very controversial. He was controversial in general, but ...

HENDERSON: I think him and his brother had some difficulties.

PIEHLER: I guess another question I get is at one point, I think it was in '68 he walked around Harlem. Just walked around in his shirt sleeves.

HENDERSON: I don't remember that.

PIEHLER: You don't remember that?

HENDERSON: I think if he did that he was crazy.

PIEHLER: But you don't remember him doing that?

HENDERSON: No. But I'm sure that if he had walked around that way in my precinct there probably would be a hundred-some odd cops there too walking with him. I don't know why people do that. We got the ex-President. He's got a place up there. Why? I don't know.

PIEHLER: You would also be a police officer in the fiscal crisis. What did that do for morale? Particularly when it became very serious in '75 when you had the first layoff, I think the only layoff in modern memory of police officers. That was towards the end of your career.

HENDERSON: I don't think it was, if it was a police officer that was laid off [but] it was not hiring.

PIEHLER: Might have been not hiring. Or it may have been an academy class that was like ...

HENDERSON: Academy—I know the class behind me didn't start for a long time. Now that was in '57. So if you didn't get in that class there, the next police class didn't come up for over a year. And that was, wow, a year and a half or so. If I didn't take that, I would have waited and there were a lot more goodies that went along with getting on at that time as far as your pensions and everything.

PIEHLER: I guess another question is, I mean the New York City, and I particularly grew up with this during the fiscal crisis watching the news. The police union, which is a force to be reckoned with I think, I have a feeling the mayors learned this lesson. What was your attitudes and what was your involvement with the PBA [Patrolmen's Benevolent Association]?

HENDERSON: PBA or DEA [Detectives' Endowment Association]? Because most guys had the PBA ...

PIEHLER: Well, you were both. In fact, sergeants have their own union.

HENDERSON: Right to this day, I carry right with me, the Detectives' Endowment Association. It's got a president, wonderful. It's very, very powerful. Investments—smart, you know, just smart even though we lost \$60,000,000 in the pension funds with Enron, but our assets are over a billion.

PIEHLER: So you were a big supporter of both the PBA and then the Detectives'?

HENDERSON: Oh, yeah.

PIEHLER: Yeah that makes sense.

HENDERSON: Oh I think that's a must. I think Knoxville has a Patrolmen's Benevolent Association. I know everybody else does not. So if John Doe comes along and makes a complaint about you to the right person, they can let you go. You might have some grievance, but you're here today and gone tomorrow. You don't have protection. Whereas, now you make a mistake, you go before a board, you have a hearing, and if the mistake is big enough you're gone.

PIEHLER: Well, I guess one of the disputes that was present both in the '60s, but it seems to be a perennial issue is in terms of the whole issue of review boards and particularly the involvement of civilians in review boards for police. What are your feelings on that issue?

HENDERSON: I don't agree with that.

PIEHLER: You think they should really be internal?

HENDERSON: I definitely do, yeah, because the average civilian, what does he know about police work. The same way with our Olympics. I think all the judges should be retired Olympians that know the triple and what a score is and everything like this.

PIEHLER: You have some good questions, because she did her homework for this. I was very impressed. You haven't jumped in with one.

HENDERSON: You have some good questions!

MEUNIER: You were on the job for some twenty years. Did you ever experience any of the corruption that was, as far as the numbers and the gang that went on—did you ever experience any of that and did you ever know anybody that took part in any corrupt acts?

HENDERSON: I was very much aware of it, yeah. I haven't thought too much about the numbers. Maybe a few bucks here and there. I know a lot of people have made, but I can honestly say that I knew of no officer that took money for narcotics. Nobody that I worked with anyway. It was, you know, nobody that I worked with. I think the big thing was a funeral or something like this.

PIEHLER: So narcotics became a real problem. Did you know people who took some money on the numbers?

HENDERSON: Numbers, I would say. Yes.

MEUNIER: How did you feel when Commissioner Murphy took over for Commissioner Leary? Did you think that that would change anything? Did you really think that he would help get rid of this problem?

HENDERSON: Are you talking about in the times where the Knapp Commission was?

MEUNIER: Yes.

HENDERSON: Ok, I don't think things change that much. I know I didn't change mine. My partners didn't change their routine too much. You might be a little cautious, if you made sure that you paid for a meal or something like that. You know that seems to be the big thing today about putting people through the police academy that are spies, something like that. Field associates I think they're called. I don't think—I think that's a very poor policy. How can you trust anybody you can work with, then? If you're new on the job, you know, and trust is the only thing that you have.

PIEHLER: When the Knapp Commission hearings were going on, you said you knew a little it almost sounds like petty corruption with the numbers, an occasional free meal, but no narcotics particularly with the people closest to you.

HENDERSON: No, no, if anybody got caught taking narcotics, I would feel sorry for them going to jail and that's about all.

PIEHLER: Was any of the Knapp Commission a revelation? One of the things that struck me about the New York Police Department is how large it is. It's a very large force.

HENDERSON: If you do an investigation on any group, company that's affiliated with the public or community relations you're going to find something. A lot of these things are put in maybe political to push somebody's agenda along a little bit. And so they lock up, whoopee, the patrolman on the beat, for taking \$10 or something like this. It makes the paper, and there's a lot more serious things that go on. This last police commissioner if you screwed up, he dismissed you. I think he had a pretty good outlook on it, although I didn't agree on the book in some of his things. Bernard—Bernard something?

PIEHLER: I can't remember.

HENDERSON: There's a book out. It's an interesting book.

PIEHLER: What—particularly in the 1960s there was lot of complaints about police brutality in some communities in New York. What was your attitude as a police officer? How did you respond to them, very generally, and your take on it? Because I think ...

HENDERSON: I have really seen—in my time I saw very little police brutality. Now, is it police brutality if you get into a fight with somebody and you smack him in the head with a nightstick? No. If you hit him five or six times, yes. Shoot him once—like this poor Spanish guy who didn't have anything on him. They shot him forty times.

PIEHLER: The case in the Bronx.

HENDERSON: Yeah. Unfortunate thing, but if you and they got dismissed. They didn't have to go to jail, but they got dismissed. Put yourself on the other side of that. One cop fires a shot. "He's got something!" Fires a shot. Everybody starts shooting. That's human nature, the same in military service. Before you know it they use up all their ammunition, and they don't have any more bullets left. And they're charge it's crime. Give me another good question.

PIEHLER: What was your feelings at the time the *Miranda* came out, the *Miranda* decision [*Miranda v. Arizona*]? And did that effect the policing in New York very much?

HENDERSON: We had little problem with it. First of all, anybody that you lock up says they haven't been advised of their rights, right? And police brutality. I don't think they have it. They used to send it out in all the things. They got everything in the back here, it's very interesting. (Gestures to a book) But what we used to do is we used to get them to sign a paper that they had been advised of their rights. It has two parts – you've been advised of your rights, what statement do you have to say and then it comes and nothing else can be said about you. So it protects who you're locking up and it protects you. Now we always did that. I think it's standard today, but they still go when they came in "Nobody advised me of my rights and they took me into custody." I don't go along with it. I think it's a tool for the perpetrators to use and attorneys to use to make a few bucks.

PIEHLER: One of the last in terms of policing is, you mentioned when you came in there were a lot of veterans that joined the force. I have read that it was very common after World War II for large numbers of veterans...

HENDERSON: Korean War.

PIEHLER: Korean War. But even World War II there was a pattern. I remember reading a story in the late '70s [about] concerns about the police department because in fact the newer police officers that were coming in in the '60s and '70s increasingly didn't have a military background. ... How did that change the dynamic of the force, because in fact

you had gone to the police academy, but you had already been to boot camp, you had already been in the Army, you had even been to sort of ...

HENDERSON: I think what happens as it progresses, you have a, per se, college graduate who wants to be in the police department, who doesn't know what stickball is, hasn't been around, thinks that if you touch a glass of beer you're going to hell. You're getting more into the book. When you're dealing with the general public, you have to understand that there's a lot of crazy people out there, so you give them a break. Put an icepack on their head and let 'em calm down.

PIEHLER: You clearly loved policing, just in doing the interview, it just conveys you and you still follow your department very closely. Why did you leave the force at the time?

HENDERSON: I made a mistake, that's all. Pressured—family and children. They moved down here. I had a year to go back. Got so involved with my work as a motel/hotel/restaurant manager. Then my ex-wife said to me one day, "I've got you." I said, "What do you mean?" "Your year is up, you can't go back." I forgot all about it. Right then and there I knew I made a mistake.

PIEHLER: Now did you, I hope you don't mind me asking, did you qualify for your pension?

HENDERSON: Oh, yeah.

PIEHLER: I believe it's a twenty-year ...

HENDERSON: Yeah. In fact I had an absolutely wonderful attorney. He said we need to get this through right away.

PIEHLER: So by not going back you didn't lose pension rights?

HENDERSON: No, I didn't lose pension rights and no, my ex didn't get my pension either. She had a right and now a woman depending upon how long she has stayed with him, fifteen years well then she's entitled to X amount of the pension. God, that would have been a catastrophe.

PIEHLER: How did you end—you moved down to Pigeon Forge. Did you move to Sevier County in 1977?

HENDERSON: I went insane.

PIEHLER: Well, Sevier County was a very different place then in 1977.

HENDERSON: No. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: It's a different world than New York.

HENDERSON: Yeah. Very different.

PIEHLER: What was the easiest to adjust to? What was the thing that just at first you just—because I could go on about moving from the New York area to here even today and what I like and ...

HENDERSON: Of course, I missed the shows right off the bat.

PIEHLER: The Broadway shows?

HENDERSON: Yeah. I missed the food.

PIEHLER: Oh! The food was much more limited in the 1970s.

HENDERSON: I missed being able to be served a decent drink.

PIEHLER: Oh yeah, Sevier County was dry then.

HENDERSON: Yeah. Still can't get a drink in some places.

PIEHLER: Some places. Sevierville and Gatlinburg you can, but Pigeon Forge is still damp. How did you like running a motel and restaurant?

HENDERSON: I found it pretty interesting.

PIEHLER: That part you did like?

HENDERSON: Yeah. Dealing with people. It wasn't the best of a job, but \$300 a week at that time was pretty good money.

PIEHLER: The Green Valley Motel—was that in Pigeon Forge or was that ...?

HENDERSON: Pigeon Forge.

PIEHLER: So Pigeon Forge then—my wife went to Gatlinburg in 1974 on her way to moving out to Tulsa from New York, which was another shock. She said she remembers Gatlinburg vividly, but she said Pigeon Forge was hardly anything to remember. It's developed since you moved here.

HENDERSON: It has. Well, you have to remember—well, let's see when I got married to Carolyn Schiffer, I came down here and vacationed down here in '63. I think that's when TVA didn't have ... too much of a control system. I think there was a storm that night and her folks lived in this smaller thing on the river. You know off the highway there the river.

PIEHLER: The Pigeon River?

HENDERSON: Yeah, that little river there.

PIEHLER: Yeah, the Pigeon River.

HENDERSON: I looked out the window and the river was this far from the sill and there was a trailer going down. I met a lot of good people that I liked. I played golf a lot. In fact I even joined as a member of the Gatlinburg Country Club. So I've got a lot of good people I knew at that time and ...

PIEHLER: Most of us are struck by how Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge has changed because when I've gone to Pigeon Forge, particularly when I live up there during the Celebrate Freedom. I take people to Gatlinburg when it's on a Saturday or Friday or Saturday night—it's like New York crowds on the streets.

HENDERSON: Oh, yeah.

PIEHLER: And restaurants become much better in Gatlinburg particularly.

HENDERSON: They are. We're getting better in Pigeon Forge.

PIEHLER: Yeah! I love Pigeon Forge because of Celebrate Freedom. When did Pigeon Forge start to seem more like home? Did the things you missed as much...cause I say the restaurants have improved quite a bit.

HENDERSON: I don't think it ever became more like home. I just think you ended up tolerating it a little bit more. I've got a few rental properties and I had Jimmy Bryant. I don't know if you know Jimmy Bryant. He was one of my renters. (To Kathryn Meunier) Do you know Jimmy Bryant?

MEUNIER: I've heard of him.

HENDERSON: He's a great entertainer. And he used to have Dolly and Juanita up at his house, excuse me, up at my apartment. I had a big two-story and not any kids anymore so we had him living up there. They would practice. My only complaint was they didn't sing loud enough. I had to go up and knock on the door and say, "Sing louder or I'll stay here." So I stayed. Things have improved a lot. Last month I went back to New York and stayed for a week.

PIEHLER: How did you like it?

HENDERSON: I went to two shows.

PIEHLER: We went back there two weekends ago for a long weekend and ... we went to see the opera, we went to a show, and we went to the museum, and we ate and part of me for the right job would move back. "When can I start?"

HENDERSON: We went on that Freedom, Red, White, and Blue thing. And really got a fantastic hotel and everything. They wanted us to spend a few extra days and I said you can't afford to stay in this hotel extra days. But through the program I ended up getting four more days for \$50 a day.

PIEHLER: That's very good.

HENDERSON: And the room is normally at \$250. I mean they're all business people. The average person can't [afford] 200-some-odd dollars a day for a room. We're getting pretty close to that in Pigeon Forge. Pretty soon, we'll have 'em.

PIEHLER: How many former colleagues do you stay in touch with from the police department? Do you stay in touch with anyone regularly?

HENDERSON: I had three. Three pretty regular and then one passed away, Eddie Kawiecki. Vinny Neville was still—he was my partner in the 23 as a detective for a while. I speak to him. In fact, I met him while we were in New York. And the other partner of mine, Pat Moriarty, he's got a bad medical problem. Has to walk around with oxygen. But not as much as I would like to stay in touch with them.

PIEHLER: You're not close. I mean, you can't just drive over.

HENDERSON: We're going to stop by and see him—he doesn't know it yet—in May.

HENDERSON: Any other questions? You're not asking any questions at all. I'm on record, Kathryn.

PIEHLER: Is there anything we've forgot to ask you about anything? You've been very honest and very open so we've really enjoyed it.

HENDERSON: I can't. You've covered.

PIEHLER: My wife is funny, because she said you make a good attorney. So I'm very flattered that I have some independent verification.

HENDERSON: You have to think of questions to ask. I think time, doing it so many times probably helps you out a lot.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I know. I've been doing it a while.

HENDERSON: And then you have background. If you send out these things here, you can basically start asking questions on each name, so you're not too bad.

PIEHLER: I also have an advantage here is because unlike when I do other native Tennesseans I know more things to ask because this is the world I grew up in. Whereas I often have a harder time here because I'm still learning Tennessee. Well, thank you very much for coming in. We really, really appreciate it.