

Thomas Morrissey

Side 1:

[12] He was assigned here as a special agent working for counter intelligence and was looking forward to retirement in Asheville. He and his wife looked all over the US. She had gone to Lake Kanuga as a young girl and liked the area. He was conducting work for the army until May 15, 1964. [Marylyne Morrissey, Terry Sanford]

[36] He had intended to go into interior design, having completed by correspondence, the course in the New York School of Interior Design. Instead he worked for a manufacturing concern for six years.

[43] He was approached by some young attorneys at Trinity Church in 1970 and persuaded to file for the position of Sheriff of Buncombe County. He had management ability and was familiar with law enforcement. He filed with a campaign of professionalism. He did not come up through political ranks. He "came out of the blue."

[72] The District Court System was established at this time. Everyone referred to their coming from this area. However, Asheville is made up of many outsiders as well. He was backed by lawyers and he knew the sheriff's responsibility:

1. Law enforcement
2. Civil processing in court
3. Jail

Each of these entities now has a separate budget. [Gordon Greenwood, Henry Colton]

[100] He started with 54 deputies - now there are 160. Administration was his forte. He traveled all over the county developing monographs which were later made into standards.

[118] He found a willingness on the part of the people to support his plan. He emphasized patrol, process and training. He worked with the Highway Patrol and Asheville Police Department and A-B Tech to train before being sworn in. [Gene Jarvis]

[149] The basement of the Court House was full of people when the office and all the guns were turned over [from Harry P. Clay 1962-1970].

[170] He describes the continuity in government and democratic procedures. The governor, law enforcers and city council are elected - county for 4 years and city for 2 years. If officials are not doing their job they can be voted out.

[189] He discusses the beginning of the drug problem (see enclosure). He met with many groups - black and white and hired the first black court officer. Having been with the Intelligence Corp,

traveling all over the country, and liking people he was able to lead groups in developing fairness and professionalism.

[226] Instead of having two people in a patrol car he established 1 person 1 car so there would be marked cars all over town. They could be called up on a moment's notice. The cars had been assigned according to shifts; he gave each person a car so they would take responsibility for it. There was a riot at T. C. Roberson.

[258] The deputies "product is people, not law." Working with people is their main job. For two weeks after he was elected he processed applications for deputies. Everyone took the standard MMPI psychological test followed by interviews.

[296] When he left office [followed by Sheriff "Buck" Lyda] there were 150 deputies and a budget of 3.5 million dollars. Today there are over 200 deputies with a budget of 6 million. [Sheriff Charles Long 1990 - Re-elected last week]

[307] There is no fire escape on the top 5 floors of the Court House where the jail is. He made physical changes eliminating crowding (2 bunks in each cell instead of 4) and social changes (juice break, games and TV). He said that by giving something (treats/recreation) there was something that could be taken away, which helped control behavior. The fire threat was much on his mind.

[358] In 1970, when he took office, the city lock-up was eliminated. All inmates went to his jail. The county prison is at Craggy. This is for sentenced prisoners and run by the State. There was a riot at Craggy and he backed up the State people until they could move in. Jail is used for un-sentenced people or people held for short periods. Long has established a building for work-release prisoners (they spend night in jail and work during the day). [Charles Long]

[406] He tells about the "new generation jail" where the jailer stays inside where TV cameras are used. There is increase in population - over-crowding and unsafe conditions.

[463] He was chairman of the National Detention and Correction Committee. All sheriffs have jails so there are many detention facilities in the US. He helped work out comprehensive plans for operation. He has dealt with jails for 15 years. [Don Omdt]

[510] There is a high percentage of recidivism - prison is a school for crime. You don't rehabilitate, you have to change their habits - to habituate them .[Art Linkletter]

[552] Chaplains at Craggy work with prisoners and their families at times of crises - i.e. death (see Lacy Haith tape)

[566] In the early 70's there was a riot concerning the Black Muslims. Police were called out in their riot gear. The people were given all the space they wanted but they could not go into the Court House. The blacks gave a lot of support.

Side 2:

With the county commissioners' permission a dispensary was opened. It was accredited by the State and records were established. To keep prisoners active, a recreational area was created.

[2/21] Drugs were coming onto the scene. A grant was obtained from the State to work on crime prevention for youth. Four officers worked with a small walk-through van with a display of drugs (see enclosure) and lectured in high school classes. He taught the history of law enforcement at A-B Tech. [Mr. Harrison]

[2/70] Law enforcement and crime prevention classes were given from K-12th. A little yellow school bus was used to display safety. "Billy Bike" was taken to classes. The children were finger-printed.

[2/85] He was on the vestry of Trinity [Lutheran] Church and instigated a home for runaway children called Trinity Place (see photos). Before this children were taken to juvenile detention buildings or jail. The building was obtained on a 5-year lease and is operated by the Lutherans.

[2/107] Two dogs were given to the police by Dr. Billy Graham] and trained to search for narcotics. An auxiliary officer kept the dogs on his property. They were very effective. [Billy Graham, Jerry Silverman, Ruth and Bill (dogs)]

[2/122] While he was in office, he begged for a new jail. Should there be a fire the county would be responsible and could not afford to pay off all the law suits.

[2/144] The law enforcement patrols had 4 days on and 3 days off. There was an overlap on Friday.

[2/156] The primary responsibility of a sheriff was to be a role model for his deputies. He worked closely with other law enforcement agents - Woodfin, Weaverville, Asheville, Biltmore Forest and the State Bureau of Investigation. There are mutual agreements across borders. He had 40 units on the border to be called if needed when Hendersonville had a riot.

[2/171] Stake-outs on the roads were primarily for drugs.

[2/174] The Highway Patrol is a separate entity - concerned with highway and traffic on the roads. There is a regional office on Tunnel Road with headquarters in Raleigh.

[2/191] He did not feel satellite stations were necessary as every squad car is a moving satellite and cases have to be "papered" in the DA's office. There was one in Enka because that area felt cut off (see enclosure about satellite in West Asheville now). [C.V. "Buck" Lyda (1986-1990)]

[2/224] In large cities store front offices are set up to reduce fear of crime. Undercover people travel on busses. In this city he got a grant to put black and white officers on a 24 hours a day basis in housing developments. (see enclosure)

[2/245] He feels the original concept of housing developments was good but too many people are packed in the space. The one way in, one way out is good, he thinks.

[2/260] Satellites tie up a percentage of the Sheriff's manpower in the city whereas their responsibility is for the county. The water department agreed that many of the city expenses would be reimbursed by the county.

[2/277] His greatest accomplishment was establishing a structure. The department is larger now and an old school building is being used as a night court. [Sheriff Charles Long]

[2/280] Criminals have better weapons than the police. We are losing the battle with drugs as it is being fought. Drugs are a "selfish play toy" and a person taking them has no relationship with the world.

[2/339] He describes how drugs work. Level A - get high - then down to under A - repeat, taking enough to get back to A. This is a social problem that ties in with poverty, ignorance, and self-worth. "If you can cut down on smoking you can cut down on drugs." The right approach is not being used. People are not kept in prison long enough to be effective. Showing the effects of drugs to young people doesn't work for they feel immortal.

[2/374] He believes in reasonable gun control. Our society has always been violent. More officers are killed in the South than any place in the country. You "can't just do away with guns - they won't give them up."

[2/402] In domestic cases, officers can go in without a warrant.

[2/432] Michigan and North Carolina have a relationship because, during the Depression many went up to auto factories to get jobs.

[2/469] He was treasurer of the National Sheriff's Association and went to Costa County in California to study the "new generation jails."

He mentions his children. [David and Karen Morrissey (he is teaching), Tom and Tammy Morrissey (Atlanta) son Rob, John Morrissey (Denver - Radio/TV WY60), William B. Morrissey (Asheville)]