**LEXINGTON ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS, INC.**

# Interview
# *James Corr, Jr.*
# September 16, 1994

*Interview conducted by Richard Robbat*
*Videotape length 67 minutes*

**JC:** I am James F. Corr, and I lived in Lexington many years ago. It has been twelve years since I retired as Chief of Police. Right now we spend about eight months of the year in Florida, and we come to New Hampshire for the other three months, but if you ask me a little bit about my background, I grew up in Belmont, particularly Waverly Square and I went to Belmont High School. I graduated in 1945 from Belmont High.

I think probably the relevancy there is 1943, as you know, World War II was on at that time, and we used to leave high school at two o'clock in the afternoon and go to work at Raytheon at three, three to ten o'clock at night, and that went on for the last years of high school. So we didn't get to participate too much at the school, and I signed up to join the Navy when I was seventeen, and I left on my eighteenth birthday, and the war was over about two months after I went into the service. But I did about a year and some odd months in Japan on a mine sweeper. I had a very special girlfriend who is now my wife. When we got out of the service, went back to work at Raytheon where we had been working before I went in the service. I think I was coming from work one night, when I ran into an old friend who happened to be a Belmont police officer, and we stopped and chatted, and he suggested maybe it might be a good idea if I signed up and became a policeman in Lexington, and that's how it all started. I can remember going to the Lexington Police Department and talking to the then Chief John Rycroft about how one would go about becoming a policeman and eventually took the civil service examination, and eventually became a Lexington policeman in 1949. This would be two years after I was

married. We were married in 1947, and I think I became a police officer in January of 1949.

**INT:** What would you say, Jim, when you became a police officer in Lexington in 1949, what were the primary issues that the police were dealing with in Lexington during the early years of your service in Lexington?

**JC:** I think there was a tremendous difference between the years of 1949 when I became a police officer for the first time. In fact, some of the memories might give you a good idea as to the difference between being a police officer today and one in 1949. I can remember when we first came to work that somebody, whether it was Chief Rycroft or one of his other people, gave us the badge and the gun, and told us to go out in the street, that we were policemen. I can remember being assigned to Chris Barry who was supposed to be my mentor at that time. But I think police work then was a lot different. We didn't have the housebreaks or the drugs, or any of the major crimes back in 1949 that we saw as the time in Lexington went on. The town was a lot smaller. I think there was only about seventeen policemen when I came on, and I don't think there was more than seventeen thousand people in the Town of Lexington then, but totally, totally different. And the makeup of the police department was different.

You would find that in order to become a policeman you had to wait until you were twenty-one before you could take the civil service exam. What we found out over the years was that we couldn't wait for somebody to become a policemen at twenty-one because they would get out of high school and they would go to college or whatever; by the time they got to be twenty-one they were all set in life, and at that point we weren't getting the type of people that we thought we should be getting as police officers, but that changed over the years, but there was a big difference, big difference.

**INT:** When you first became a police officer, did you live in Lexington?

**JC:** Yes, I did. In fact, we had lived in Lexington two years prior to taking the examination to become a police officer.

**INT:** What changes did you see in the town itself between 1949 and 1970?

**JC:** I think if you were to ask me that question, probably the best answer that I could give to you is I think that the town in 1949 would [have been] a lot more conservative. As time went by, I think with the influx of people from—whether (it's) the Boston area—I think we had a lot of teachers, doctors, lawyers. I think that the town became more of a liberal community rather than conservative community, and I think it changed slowly; but, as time went on, there's no question. The complex of the town went from a general conservative nature to more of a liberal community.

**INT:** What was your reaction to that as a member of the police force at that time?

**JC:** I think that the difficulty as I saw it—even though we did what we thought we should be doing, giving them a fine police department, as I saw it—that I don't think you could do anything right all the time. There is always somebody pulling at you from one side or the other. There was always a great difference of opinion as to how a police department should run, but that's the change that took place over the years, as I saw it.

**INT:** When did you become Police Chief?

**JC:** 1965. I was thirty-nine years old.

**INT:** What positions in the police department had you held prior to becoming Police Chief?

**JC:** I became a policeman when I was twenty-one, and I think I was promoted to sergeant when I was twenty-three years of age, which was a drawback in itself. I became a lieutenant in 19–whatever. I was twenty-seven years old when I became a lieutenant, and I became a lieutenant detective in 19–something when I was twenty-eight years of age. I was a prosecutor in the district court for about eleven years, and we were the only

state in the United States that had what we called police prosecutors in the district court. So I did that for eleven years, besides being a lieutenant detective. When I was thirty-nine, Chief Rycroft died suddenly. He was on his way to the polls with Mary McDonough who was our Town Clerk, and he was driving her over to the high school, as a matter of fact, when he had a stroke. He pulled over to the side of the road. The ambulance took him to the hospital and I think he lived about three days. So, he died after the stroke. I was made the Acting Chief, and about a year later I became a permanent Chief in 1965.

**INT:** How old was Chief Rycroft when he died?

**JC:** My memory is that he was about sixty-three years of age. Yes. He had been chief for many years, many, many years.

**INT:** When you became a police officer in 1965, what did you see were the primary issues, or what was your agenda when you took over the police force? What were you trying to do in terms of the professionalism of the police department in Lexington?

**JC:** I had always felt that the police department had to meet the community at its education level. At that time I think that a good percentage of the people who lived in Lexington were college graduates. So one of my first aims was to start the cadet program wherein we would go into the high school and select youngsters who would like to go to Northeastern University and get their degree in Criminology, and we did that. We also not only selected the students that we thought were the best, but we also offered to pay for their college tuition, which we did. I went to the Board of Selectmen with this thought and idea, and they quickly jumped on it as a good idea, and we did just that. We went to the high school, convinced some of the youngsters over there to become police officers, police cadets with us. They would do five years at Northeastern University and come out with their degree in Criminology. They would work in the Co-op program with us. They worked six months for us, and six months at

the college; at the end of the five years, we had also passed some legislation at the state level which would allow us to put these people who were our cadets at the top of the civil service list. So what we began to do at that point, obviously, was to put onto the police department boys who had their degree in Criminology, and as time passed, I think when I left the department, probably about seventy-five to eighty percent of the police officers had at least their Bachelor's degree.

**INT:** When you first took over, how many officers had a Bachelor's degree? Can you recall that?

**JC:** To my memory, none. So, that was a good program. It worked very well for us.

**INT:** What was the nature of the relationship that the police department had with the district court in Concord? You were a police prosecutor so you have a pretty good sense of the nature of that relationship.

**JC:** When you say relationship with the district court you are referring to all of the criminal cases that we had in Lexington obviously funneled first through the district court at Concord, and, from there, if the court didn't have jurisdiction, it would go to Cambridge. But all of our cases went to Concord first, no matter whether it was a simple traffic offense, or whether it was a first-degree murder. It would go to Concord District Court for either a probable cause hearing, or for preliminary hearing before they went to Superior Court in Cambridge. But, as you are asking me, Concord Court was our court. We were one of the several communities that went to Concord.

**INT:** Do you recall why Massachusetts was the one state, as you indicated, that had the police prosecutor program? What was the rationale behind that?

**JC:** The only answer that I could probably have for that would be that the district attorneys over the state didn't have sufficient moneys to put DA's [District Attorneys] into the district court, but that system was in place

when I came on in 1949, and I don't know how it ever started, but we were the only state that I know of that had that system. Right now you may know that they don't do that anymore. We have an assistant DA in the district courts now. The police prosecutor, so-called, now just goes to court and assists the DA, but the DA does all the trial work.

**INT:** What was your feeling about that particular role? Did you like it, not like it? Personally in terms of your role, and then looking at it as a police chief, what did you feel about it?

**JC:** If you ask me if I liked it, I enjoyed it very much. I always thought it was quite a challenging place to be. I enjoyed my work and others followed me, Captain Lima—Jim Lima—and Paul Furdon took over as prosecutor after I became Chief; and, as we know, Paul Furdon later became the Chief. It was a very challenging position. I think the problem that maybe I saw at the time is that I was also a detective that was supposed to be doing police work in Lexington and the trial work at Concord took a lot of our time, and I always felt like we were stretched between two different jobs, didn't have enough time to do the work.

**INT:** What were the most frequent kinds of cases, court cases that the Lexington police had?

**JC:** In the early days, probably more of the traffic, the problems within the homes, some housebreaks. Then, as time went along, beginning probably in the seventies when house breaks began to happen at approximately one a day, we used to have an occasionally bank robbery, a store robbery, but house breaks, larcenies, problems within the homes. I think as I was Chief, I maybe had either two or three murders, but generally that's…traffic was also a good part of what we used to do, obviously, "driving unders" [under the influence of alcohol or drugs], speeders, stop signs, whatever.

**INT:** Were there any kinds of activities on the Green during those years prior to this event that you people had to deal with?

**JC:** No. As you might recall, as the Town of Lexington saw it was a very special place. This is a place where we said, "The shot was fired that was heard round the world." It was always considered to be a very, very special place. There were people buried on that Green[1] and the Town of Lexington in its wisdom years ago created a special bylaw[2] to protect the integrity of the Green, and to see to it that they didn't play ball on the Green. Part of our policing activity was to see to it that that Green was kept with a decorum that was meant to be, and I think that's why, when the issue of the protest came about later on, that it became such an issue, that that Green was a special place, and no one in the past had ever spent any time…you couldn't be there after ten o'clock at night. You couldn't have parties on the Green. You couldn't drink on the Green. You couldn't ride your bicycles or things, play ball, because it was a special place, not just for the people of Lexington but for the whole country. People came from all over the United States to visit our Minute Man and our Green and our very special homes.

**INT:** Early seventies now, what would you say were the major law enforcement issues that your department was facing?

**JC:** I think that's probably when we first began to notice the drug problem increasing, the early seventies. I think that O'Leary[3] from Harvard was one of the first people that I can think of who thought that marijuana was the way to go, and a lot of our problems started in the early seventies. Of course, the Vietnam War was creating a problem for all of us because of

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[1] Within the gated area surrounding the obelisk on the Battle Green the remains of those who fell in the Battle of Lexington in 1775 are buried. According to the inscription, the remains were moved from "the old cemetery" and placed by the memorial in 1835

[2] The bylaw, Section 25, reads as follows: "No person shall engage or take part in any game, sport, picnic or performance on the Battle Green, without the written permission of the Selectmen or other board having charge and control thereof, and no person shall climb upon, deface, mutilate or otherwise injure any tree, shrubbery, monument, boulder, fence, seat or structure thereon, or behave or conduct himself on the Battle Green otherwise than in a quiet and orderly manner in keeping with a respectful regard and reverence for the memory of the patriotic service and sacrifice there so nobly rendered." This town bylaw was in effect in 1971 and dates back to 1923 or earlier; it was not amended until the 1980's.

the variances of opinion, and even in the Town of Lexington [there were] those that felt that we should be there, and those that didn't. But generally police work went on as I discussed, or as I suggested to you before on an ever increasing rate, obviously, compared to what we were used to back in the forties, but…

**INT:** How big did the department get? As the population grew, did you find that the size of department grew? Was the town willing to support an increase in the size of the department?

**JC:** Yes. We felt that the Town of Lexington was always very supportive of their police department. Generally speaking, with very few exceptions, whatever we asked for over the years we usually received, and we had about fifty-five sworn personnel, and of course we had our office staff and our crossing guards, and our mechanics within our department. So I think we had a total of about eighty-five people working for us when I retired.

**INT:** As the nature of the law enforcement in Lexington began to change and the Vietnam era began to take place even in areas like Lexington, did you find…and there was some anti-war activity that occurred in Lexington during the late sixties and early seventies. Was your department involved at all in any of the anti-war activities that took place in the town?

**JC:** Yes. We had many protests that took place in Lexington, and I think that was the… obviously, the Vietnam War, I think, were one of the instigators of the civil disobedience, that if you didn't like it, then you protested. We saw what happened in Chicago. We saw what was happening in the rest of the world. Lexington—although we didn't have the same kind of incidents that they had in the rest of the United States—we did have our protests. We did have the people who came from other cities and

[3] This is likely a reference to Timothy Leary, a professor at Harvard University in the early 1960's who studied hallucinogenic substances; he left Harvard and went on to become a proponent of mind-altering

towns, and marched around Lexington protesting the war, and, yes, we did. We had our protests.

**INT:** Were there any arrests that took place during these protests?

**JC:** No, not to my memory. Most of them were peaceful. Usually before a protest like that would take place we would meet with the leaders of that organization, and they would tell us what was in mind, and we did whatever we could to see to it that the peace was kept. I can't remember any arrests with respect to that.

**INT:** Who would initiate those meetings between you and the protest groups?

**JC:** There would always be a leader or two of every one of the organizations that decided that they wanted to come to Lexington to protest, and they always made themselves known, and we would obviously sit down and chat with them, and find out what they wanted to do, and we would do what we could to help them with respect to traffic, and see to it that nothing happened.

**INT:** In terms of the chain of command within the department, was there an individual who was primarily responsible for that interaction with these groups?

**JC:** Not really, no. It just depended on how big it was going to be. If it was a small protest, then obviously it would be handled at the lower level of echelon of troops, but, no, I don't…we didn't have anybody special.

**INT:** What going on internally with the feelings, the personal feelings that you had as you saw as a veteran, as you saw the protest movement grow and you had this responsibility also as Police Chief in the town? Could you explain some of the emotions that you might have felt at the time?

**JC:** I have always felt that civil disobedience was not the way to go. I don't believe that breaking the law to accomplish an end was the way to go,

and anytime that I saw this happening obviously it was a displeasure to me. But it happened, and they felt that they had the right to do it, but that wouldn't be the way that I would want it to go, and I think that even today, if we look back now and see what is happening today with the civil disobedience that goes on, I would say, "See, I told you so!" We should have never allowed it to get out of hand like we did. It just cannot happen. The world cannot operate without the law and people obeying the law; and, if we allow this civil disobedience thing to spread to some point, you know, I always gave a little corollary that said: we are going to at some point drive up to a red light and say, "I don't believe that I should stop at the red light, and I will go through it." That kind of thing. I think we have to obey the law, and I didn't like what I saw.

**INT:** What about the police department in general? What was the feeling going on among your department at that time when they had to deal with these earlier protests and…

**JC:** Without looking back and second guessing Vietnam, I think that probably most of your police officers at one time or another were part of the services. They were either Army, Navy or Air Force. Most of the boys had done some service time, and I think that they basically felt that if their country felt, or their president felt that what we were doing over in Vietnam was the right thing to do, then they were backing that premise, and I think that they, most of them, didn't like the idea that we were having people protest the war.

**INT:** What do you remember most—we still haven't gotten to the weekend and the major event, so we are going to get there shortly—what do you remember most about the other protests that took place around the town?

**JC:** Well, that's hard for me to remember as to what took place because we had many protests including even your strikes at the Lincoln Laboratory, and I think a lot of your civil disobedience was taking place

under those set of circumstances, too, and we had a lot of problems with strikes at Lincoln Lab. We had problems with strikers at Raytheon up on Spring Street. But I think when you are handling protests you had to be ready for whatever you thought might happen, the ultimate. You never knew what a protester was going to do. A lot of them went off peacefully, but you didn't know that that was going to happen. So most of the time when we had a large protest we would meet with our troops in the guardroom. We would outfit them with their riot helmets and suggest to them to keep peace, whatever we could do to keep peace, not let anything break out that we could stop from breaking out, but we were ready and you never knew what was going to happen, but most of the time it was peaceful.

**INT:** What kind of emotion would you feel with this degree of uncertainty that you had? What goes on in the mind of the law enforcement officer when that kind of environment or setting is before them?

**JC:** Probably more anxiety than anything, not knowing what was going to happen. I think that that's what the average police officer felt when he was out there. He was ready, ready for problems to start, ready for a problem to happen. I think a lot of them were anxious, anxiety, a little bit of nervousness, and hoping that the protest would come off without anything serious happening.

**INT:** Is there any type of special training that was occurring at this time for the police department?

**JC:** Over the years, needless to say, the police officers, including myself, were not just given a badge and a gun as I was back in 1949. As time went on, obviously we had training academies. All of our police officers went to State Police Academy at Framingham, every one of them. I went to the FBI National Academy in Washington, DC, and others followed me there. A lot of your seminars that we used to send our troops to, many of which would handle such things as what you were just asking

me the question about, seminars on how to handle people during the protests and so on, yes, they received a lot of training that way.

**INT:** How comfortable were you at that time with the level of training of your police force?

**JC:** Very comfortable, very comfortable.

**INT:** As we get now to the event that we are attempting to focus on, when and how did you first learn that the Vietnam Veterans Against the War were planning to march and come to Lexington during that Memorial Day weekend of 1971?

**JC:** I am sure that my first memories were: the Board of Selectmen asked me what would happen if they did not allow this protest to take place on the Green, and I was made aware of the fact that the Vietnam Veterans Against the War had asked to come to see the Board of Selectmen with respect to holding this protest on the Green. At some point, I am sure the Board asked me, as Chief of Police, what I thought would happen under different sets of circumstances with respect, mostly, to their denial to allow them to use the Green. I think the Board was set—I know they discussed it at length—but they were absolutely set against anyone being on the Lexington Green overnight, and my memory is that they offered them alternate sites. They offered them the site up on Lincoln Street where they could camp out for the night. But I think if we look back at the situation now, I think we could all agree that the protest was going to take place on that common and that was their point. They wanted to be on the common, that very special place, and that's where that protest was going to take place.

**INT:** So, did you sit in on the meetings with the Board of Selectmen as they were discussing the options?

**JC:** I think I missed probably the first one or two, but after this thing started to get serious, yes, I would sit and the Board asked me several questions. They would ask me what we could do if the protest got out of hand, and so on, and so on. Yes, I did.

**INT:** Who, in addition to you and the Board of Selectmen, were present at those meetings?

**JC:** I really don't remember. I am not sure whether or not I would have had Paul Furdon with me at that time, or I might have been there by myself at the meetings. We would have held some meetings at the police station with our own people afterwards, but I think I might have been alone with the Board.

**INT:** What was your initial reaction to the information that this march or this situation might take place in Lexington?

**JC:** At that point, knowing what was happening with the protests that were taking place across the nation, I thought probably it was going to create some problems for us. I really didn't think that we could get through the night should they come and protest without having real problems.

**INT:** What types of problems were you thinking about?

**JC:** You never know what is going to happen at a protest and, if your memory is as good as mine, you will always find that somebody decides that they want to become angry, start fighting with the policemen, and the next thing you know you have got yourself a riot, and that's what we were always afraid of.

**INT:** Did you have any information at all about what was going on in Concord with regard to them camping in Concord overnight?

**JC:** No, not really. We understood that they had had some drinking parties and they had made some arrests, but it hadn't become violent.

**INT:** So there were arrests in Concord the previous night?

**JC:** That's my memory, yes, there were.

**INT:** Do you recall how you learned about that or what was the source of that information?

**JC:** Probably made some phone calls would be my guess. Probably after I knew that this thing was going to be inevitable, I probably had talked

to Chief Costello in Concord, and asked him what kind of problems he had had.

**INT:** Were there any other law enforcement agencies with which you were in touch as you became more and more involved in…?

**JC:** Yes. Oh, sure. When we knew that the protest was going to take place on the common, I was in contact with the Bedford police. In fact, we had Bedford police officers come down and operate our buses for us, and we asked the State Police to give us a contingency of troops, and they did, and we kept them in reserve, not out in the open, but where we could reach them in case we needed them, and we brought all our special police officers on board that night and we…every one of our police officers.

**INT:** What did you know about what the VVAW was planning for Lexington?

**JC:** Nothing other than that they were going to camp out on the Green against the bylaw. This is what the Board had told them, that we had a bylaw in the Town of Lexington that prohibited anyone being on that Green after ten o'clock at night, and the discussions went back and forth. They said, well, they were going to camp out on the common and they were going to be there all night long, and they knew that they would be in violation of the bylaws of the Town of Lexington, and that whatever was going to happen was going to happen, and, if they were going to be arrested, then they were ready for it, and that's about it.

**INT:** If violence occurred, were there special plans in place to deal with that type of occurrence?

**JC:** Well, I am not so sure that you can put a plan in place that will answer the question of violence. You try not to have violence; but, obviously, if it happens then we were going to bring in the support troops from…that were in hiding, or in behind the library at that time, and we would just have to do whatever we had to do to put it down. That's all.

**INT:** Is there, in your work, and in the plans for this particular event, were there levels of reactions that you had in mind so if this occurred you know what you were going to do? If it escalated to this, you knew what you were going to do? How does a police department, or a law enforcement agency plan the levels of reaction based on the levels of action that are taking place?

**JC:** What we try to do…let me answer it this way. What we tried to do that evening; now we are up to the evening when these people are all showing up on our Green, and I know we had Mike [Forten] in plainclothes, and Mike was mingling with the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and he was listening to what they were saying, and we were meeting. I can recall going up onto the common that night with a megaphone as the Chief of Police advising these people that at ten o'clock at night, if they were still there, that they would be in violation of the town bylaws and that they would be arrested, and we received, through Mike and others—I remember one of the priests at Saint Brigid's Church was mingling not only with the protesters, but he was with Bob Cataldo and I—and what we were basically trying to tell one another is that we didn't want any problems, that if these people decided that they wanted to protest, that they had to understand that at ten o'clock at night or shortly thereafter we were going to have to place them under arrest and that we hoped that they would understand that, and we gave them plenty of warning. I know, as I said, I took the megaphone, went out onto the common myself and told these people that we were prepared to place them under arrest at ten o'clock at night should they not leave the common, that kind of stuff. We received word back from the Vietnam—people who were in charge of that Vietnam protest—that they did not want violence, that they knew that we didn't want violence, but they meant to protest, and that they would probably stay there after ten o'clock at night. And, as it turned out, as we all know, when the time came, we arrested them, and they were very peaceful about it.

But I think probably as the evening wore along, and we watched this thing progress, at ten o'clock there were a lot of people on the common. There were a lot of families on the common. There were a lot of children on the common, and so many people there that we would have never been able to handle them. So what we decided to do at ten o'clock was to back off and to let the evening progress along and see what developed, and it was kind of cool that evening in my recollection. As time wore on, as it got to be eleven o'clock at night, or twelve o'clock at night, a lot of the people who were there, the protesters, decided that they would go home, and around two o'clock, three o'clock in the morning, we felt at that point enough of them had left that we would have to make our move. At three o'clock, before that, we had told our troops who were all on board, all fifty-five of them, plus we had them at the police station, other than the few that were around the common. We went down and held a staff meeting at that point. We brought the buses on board that were being operated by the Bedford police officers. We told the State Police who were over behind the library that we were about to make our move. We went back to the common with all of our fifty-five people and our buses. We went there with cameras, and we warned them one more time that we were about to start arresting people on the common, and they lined up to get on the buses, and for every person that was arrested, we had a policeman stand beside them and take a picture so that we would be able to identify which police officer had arrested which person.

Now prior to that we had obviously set the town barn up, where the Public Works Department was. That was going to be our holding area. We had all of our staff in, our four girls, who we set up [at] the tables to go through the arrest procedure with these people, and we did what we could to make them comfortable, but we arrested them on the common, all four

hundred and twenty-five[4] of them. We bused them to the Public Works Department where we had an area roped off for them, and that was the jail for the night, and anybody who wanted to get bailed after they had been placed under arrested and processed could have been bailed, but most of them decided to stay through the night. It went off without any violence and we were very happy with that.

**INT:** What is the nature of the chain of command in the town? You went, for example, as Police Chief to the common or to the Green with your megaphone. Could you explain for us who is your boss, who was making the decisions with regard to instructions as to what would happen?

**JC:** Well, at one of the last meetings that the Board [of Selectmen] had with me, obviously, they advised me that they had made up their minds that they were not going to give the Vietnam protesters the right to stay on the Green at night and that, when the violations began at ten o'clock at night, for me to use my best judgment and do whatever I had to do, but the Board had made up their minds that there would not be a protest on our Green, and it was my responsibility to enforce their actions.

**INT:** Then the timing of the arrests was done in consultation with the Selectmen, or was that…who made that final call on now is the time to do that?

**JC:** I remember Bob Cataldo being with me on the Green, and I think that there was a lot of talk back and forth between…well, there was Paul Furdon, Jim Lima, my captains, and the Board. We looked at this thing and realized that at ten o'clock it was just impossible to handle the number of people that were on that Green, and I remember we agreed together that we would delay the arrest procedure until such time as we felt we could handle it, and we did that.

[4] The number given by the *Lexington Minuteman* is 458

**INT:** During the day itself, did you or did any other of your officers have any encounters at all with members of the Vietnam Veteran group or citizens in and around the Green?

**JC:** Yes. We had two or three police officers up there in plainclothes, listening and talking, Mike Forten particularly. Mike was always great at that, and Mike mingled very well with the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. I mean, they chatted all day long, and he continued to feed information back to us as to the feelings of the people that were on the common, the feeling of the Vietnam protesters, and, as I suggested to you earlier, generally understood that they were going to protest whether they were going to be arrested or not, but they wanted to do it peacefully.

**INT:** What was your reaction to veterans now, being a veteran? Was there any feeling on the part of you or your department with regard to veterans, arresting fellow veterans in a sense? Was there…?

**JC:** I don't think so, no. I think that we just recognized that this was going to happen and we just had to do what we had to do. The Board had made their decision that nobody would be on that Green that night, and it was our responsibility to carry it out.

**INT:** As more townspeople got involved, was there any feeling about that, and arresting your fellow townspeople, citizens that you live with and shop with, and…

**JC:** Very much so. You say that, nobody wants to arrest people of Lexington who we live with, who we play with, but the fact of the matter is that these people wanted to be arrested, and there wasn't much you can do about it. They couldn't line up for the buses fast enough. In fact, I can recall there was one person there in a wheelchair, a fellow in a wheelchair that didn't have any legs, and he wanted to be arrested, and we kept telling him, “Stand aside. When the time comes that we can put you on the bus, we will do it,” but I can remember pushing him aside several times, saying, we'll get to you, we'll get to you, and we never did arrest him because,

obviously, we couldn't put him on the bus, but it was that kind of an evening. The [church] bells were ringing at two or three o'clock when we started to arrest and it was…it was not a good night, needless to say. It wasn't funny. It was not a good night. Nobody enjoyed what they were doing. Nobody wanted to be there that night. It was not a good night. It created all kinds of problems in Lexington after that, too. There was a lot of feeling that the Board should not have made the decision that they made, but that's the way it went.

**INT:** On Sunday morning when the court opened up, were police officers present at the Concord District Court for the processing of these people?

**JC:** We had talked to—I think it was Judge Forte at that time—as to…he knew we had made the arrests. We had been in communication with Judge Forte, and it was his decision to open up the court on Sunday morning. Otherwise, we would had to have kept these people at the town barn for another twenty-four hours, and at that point we would have to have fed them, and it was not an easy task as it was. So he opened up the court and told us what his plans were, that generally speaking, he was going to enter a plea of not guilty for these people, and let them go out on their personal recognizance. But even so it took many hours on that Sunday morning to get these people out of the Public Works Department barn, into the buses, and back up to Concord. We took several trips to get them up there, and it took many hours to process them through the court.

**INT:** Do you know who contacted him about this?

**JC:** Me.

**INT:** You contacted him.

**JC:** Yes, I did.

**INT:** So you made the arrangements with him to open the court.

**JC:** Yes, I did.

**INT:** Okay. Did he have any problems with that request at all?

**JC:** None whatsoever. He knew it had to be done. It just had to be done.

**INT:** What was the nature of your relationship with Judge Forte?

**JC:** At that time, very good.

**INT:** There are implications to that, and probably beyond…

**JC:** Actually, if these people had all pled not guilty, assuming that they had pled not guilty, and all decided to go to trial on an individual basis, they could actually bring the court system to its knees. It would have taken months and months and months to process each and every one of them on a trial basis, and we thanked God afterwards, all of us that were involved in this, that they didn't decide to take that route. The judge eventually found them not guilty, is my memory, not guilty of the disorderly person [charge], and found them guilty on the violation of the town bylaw, and I think he either fined them ten or fifteen dollars. That's my memory.

**INT:** What was your impression of the behavior of the people who were gathering on the Green during that late afternoon and into the evening?

**JC:** They were quiet. They were there. They knew why they were there. There wasn't a person on that Green that was in favor of the Vietnam War. That's what it was all about. They were against the war. They wanted to protest and that's exactly what they were doing, and they knew that the Lexington Battle Green was the place to do it, and they did, but they were quiet. I mean, they were all milling around, talking and walking, but no problems, no problems.

**INT:** There was talk, Jim, in talking and interviewing other people, and hearsay, that there was concern that there was a lot of drinking going on, or the use of drugs, or marijuana probably more specifically, but do you recall that being an issue at all from your perspective?

**JC:** We knew that some of that was going on, but it didn't get out of hand. Again, Mike Forten and a couple of other police officers were there in plainclothes, and they were watching it, but it didn't get out of hand, and

that's the kind of a thing, at that point, that you are better off if you let it happen and not make an issue of it with that many people that were there, and we did.

**INT:** I have a personal question. What was your feeling about what was going on with regard to Vietnam? Did you…you had indicated earlier that you did support the President?

**JC:** Absolutely.

**INT:** That you would support the President. So, was your feeling that our efforts in Vietnam were justified, and that you had no question about that in your mind?

**JC:** At that time I was completely behind our President and his actions in Vietnam. If I was to look back today and ask me my feelings today, I would tell you that, as far as I am concerned, the Vietnam War was an error, where we should have never have been there. But, at that time when we are talking about back in 1971, I was of the feeling that our President was doing the right thing, and I think that all our people that worked under us felt the same way, and we felt that what these people were doing on the common was wrong, and that they shouldn't be violating the law to express their opinions.

**INT:** What about your…what was going on in your family? Did your kids and your wife share the same viewpoints regarding Vietnam at the time?

**JC:** Yes, they did. My son was there. One of my…well, Steve who is now a lieutenant was a cadet at that time, and I didn't want any of the police cadets there that night, but they were all there. They wanted to be there. They wanted to be a part of this. I know my son, Jimmy, who was one of our special police officers, he stayed up all night with me. He was there, and my wife stayed at home, and she stayed up all night, too, and she was just as worried as the rest of us that something bad was going to happen that night, and we were all concerned about that, but it didn't.

**INT:** Any debates in the house with regard to Vietnam policy? You son pretty much shared the same perspective as you did?

**JC:** At that time, I can't remember any difficulties in our home with respect to that. We all felt the same way. I don't think we had any disagreement that way at that time. I think most of us, including Jim and mother, we look back at it now, we will all say the same thing, that the Vietnam War was an error. We should have never have been there.

**INT:** After court, were lawyers involved at all? Who were the lawyers? How were they involved? How did they get involved? Could you tell us a little bit about that?

**JC:** There were probably only one or two lawyers who decided…in fact, they came from Lexington. They thought they would…they were up there that morning. Who called them I don't know, but I am sure that they were part of the protest themselves, and they gave advice to the people who were there. But my memory is that in the end, I think Julian Soshnick was one of them, as my memory goes. That name just came to me, and I think at the end Julian Soshnick probably advised them that probably they should plead guilty to the *nolo*, to the violation of town bylaw, and we had had some discussion with the judge anyway, and we knew that the judge was going to find them not guilty on the disorderly, and dismiss it, and find them guilty and fine them on the bylaw, but Julian Soshnick was the only attorney that I remember that was very active at the court mingling with the people and talking to them as they went through the system.

**INT:** What was your reaction to Judge Forte's decisions regarding the not guilty/guilty, how he differentiated…?

**JC:** That didn't disturb us. I think that probably what we really were looking for, basically, was just to make sure that they didn't dismiss all of it and make it look as though what we had done was wrong, so the fact that he found them guilty on *nolo*, he accepted a plea of *nolo*, and I think he placed the case on the file, and the payment of expenses, but, at the same time he

did punish them, and they knew that was coming anyway and they accepted that.

**INT:** So, as a law enforcement agency, when this thing wrapped up during Sunday after the processing of these people, how did you feel?

**JC:** Well, I think that what was happening that night, I think the Vietnam War split the Town of Lexington in two in the beginning, and I think that this protest and the arrest actually made the situation worse in Lexington. I think that further divided the people's feelings, those that were for and those that were not for, and I remember within weeks after this protest that there were open hearings at Cary Hall, and the Board and people on the floor fought back and forth over the event, and it wasn't a happy time. It wasn't a happy time at all even at Cary Hall three weeks later, and we have often said that it cost some people the election at the following… those that were on the Board weren't voted in the Town of Lexington, and it did split the town. Again, this town was split over Vietnam anyway, and it did create problems, very definitely.

**INT:** To what extent did the aftermath of the protest affect the image of the police department within the town?

**JC:** Well, everything that I had heard afterwards I think was generally favorable. I think that the people that were on the common knew what we were going to do; I think that they felt that we did it in the manner that we should have done it. They knew what we were going to do, and I think they felt that we did what we had to do, and we did it the right way, and I didn't hear too many complaints. In fact, I don't recall hearing any complaints. They knew what the Board had said, and what the Board's decision was, and that the night that they were going to be there, that they were going to be arrested, and we did it without any problems, and I don't think that they felt that we had done anything wrong, the police department in general. They felt that we had to do what we had to do.

**INT:** So while the march and the arrest certainly had an impact politically on the town.

**JC:** Yes.

**INT:** You don't feel that it had an impact on the mission and the perception of the role of the police department?

**JC:** No, I don't, I really don't. I may be wrong, but I don't feel that way today. I didn't feel that way then, and I still don't think so.

**INT:** You talked about how the event had an impact on the town. Could you sort of give us your view as to, from that time on how it did change the town or affect how the town operated?

**JC:** Well, I just think that both sides got more active, one trying to knock the other one off, and…

**INT:** Characterize those sides. Who are the sides?

**JC:** Well, those that were against the Vietnam War and those that perhaps were feeling that what we were doing there was right. As I said, it wasn't just Lexington. All we had to do was look around at the rest of the country and see what was going on and we just became a small microcosm of what was generally happening in the United States anyway. It was a terrible time, not good times at all, not for the Town of Lexington, and not for us, and it wasn't happy times.

**INT:** So the town was split, you say.

**JC:** Very definitely.

**INT:** And as Vietnam sort of went by and dropped into the background, do you feel the town was still split?

**JC:** Very definitely. That's my impression.

**INT:** Along what lines?

**JC:** Well, along those very same lines. I think that we are not talking about the arrest at this point, but I think over the ensuing years that there were those who felt that they were on the liberal side of the town and those that were on the conservative side of the town, and there wasn't anybody in

the middle. For those who ran for election, if you looked at some of the *Minuteman* advertisements, and if you looked at the sponsors that were underneath it, you would find the same names coming up under the same people who were running for Selectman on this side; and on this side where somebody was running for the Board, same names were on the other side, and that went on year after year and still does.

**INT:** Did that create any pressure on the law enforcement agencies within the town in terms of the expectations that the town had of them?

**JC:** I think that our job became more difficult as time went by. I think that I felt that way anyway. I felt that, even though we tried to do what we thought was best for the community, the people in town were never satisfied. There was always somebody pulling at us on one side or the other. If we did something over here, then this group over there were telling us we did the wrong thing; and if we were on this side of the street, then these people over here were pulling at us telling us it was the wrong thing, and we had several groups who began to join together over the period of the years that followed the Vietnam War that became more involved with how we ran our police department, very definitely.

**INT:** What was your reaction to that?

**JC:** Well, basically I didn't like it. I didn't like it. I felt, like I told you, that we had been trained to do a job. We always felt that the law was the law; and if you broke the law, you ought to pay for it, but there were people with different opinions. Some thought we were too strict. I think that's basically what I saw at the end of it, is that some of the people in Lexington thought that we ran too strict an organization, that maybe we should soften our approach to the town, but we didn't think we were too strict. We thought we were doing what we should be doing.

**INT:** If there were situations—now we have gone beyond this event to your role in the community where a group, or these groups, you said, banded together—were there occasions when you would meet with these

groups, or you were invited to talk with these groups, or was there any…what was the nature of the communication that you or your department had with different groups within the community?

**JC:** We met with them continually. We had different committees that were appointed by the Board of Selectman. We tried. We obviously tried and tried and tried and tried but we never ever could really resolve the problem. It was always there. I just didn't go away. It never went away. I think that's probably one of the reasons why I retired.

**INT:** How old were you when you retired?

**JC:** Fifty-five.

**JC:** After thirty-four years I used to come home and I would say to my wife, I'd say, "Darling, I have had enough. I think it's time."

**INT:** Do you think that the term of your successor in the years…was there a modification of the types of things that you tried to do or do you think that Chief Furdon continued to pretty much carry on the policies that you had established?

**JC:** I would tell you that the day I walked out of that police station, I never went back and I have very little communication with Paul Furdon. After we retired we went to Florida, and we spent a good part of the year in Florida, and when we came back, although we did come back to Lexington for a couple of years, we did move shortly after that. We left Lexington, and I really don't know how Paul ran that police department. I am sure he did a fine job, but I don't know whether he changed my policies or not. If he did, I am sure he ran them as he saw fit, and that's the way it should be. We instituted a lot of policies over the years that…and everything that we did we thought we were doing to improve the police department, and I am sure we did. I think that when we left that police department was in pretty good shape.

**INT:** You have done a really great job of encapsulating things, and anticipating questions. So I am trying to think of how I can...well, is there

anything else you would like to say about the events on the Green and that weekend that we haven't talked about, or summarize in any way?

**JC:** No. I think that, as I said earlier, the only conclusion that I have drawn that was the early days of civil disobedience, and I say to you again and I will say it to anyone else that, at that time it was wrong, and there's ways of protesting without breaking the law, and I just cannot conceive and I will not ever agree with breaking the law to make a point, and I say that…I look around as I pick up the newspapers, whether I am in Florida or up here, I am seeing the problem of civil disobedience, which started back in the Vietnam War, is getting more and more and more, and getting out of hand, and I think we better stop it pretty quick. That's my feeling. We can't have it continue because it is getting worse.

**INT:** Would you go back into law enforcement if you had a choice again?

**JC:** Absolutely. What do you mean, if I had to do my life again?

**INT:** Yes.

**JC:** I probably would. I had no problem. I enjoyed my job very much up until maybe the last seven or eight years, and I would say it to anyone who asked me, the last twelve years of my life have been the best, and that's the retirement years [chuckles].

**INT:** Let me ask you a question that I am interested in, a series of questions, I think. Were some of the people that were affected by the outcome of the march of the Green personal friends of yours?

**JC:** I don't know that they would be personal friends of mine. I don't remember arresting a personal friend on the Green that night, or to see that a personal friend of mine was arrested, but certainly some of the people that were on that common that night I would consider to be very nice people, and they are not personal friends but I knew them and I knew them well, and that didn't change a thing. We did what we had to do.

**INT:** With the political fallout that occurred with subsequent town elections, was Bob Cataldo, for example, would you have characterized him as a personal friend of yours?

**JC:** Very definitely. Bob Cataldo is still a very close friend of mine, and I am of the opinion and I would remain of the opinion that Bob Cataldo was probably one of the finest Board of Selectmen members that this community had. He did a fine job, and he lost the election because of that. That's my opinion.

**INT:** With the split in the town and what happened to Bob Cataldo, and what happened to the politics of the town, to what extent would you say that that affected your attitude about your job?

**JC:** I think it had a lot to do with it, very definitely. I can recall the little things, like Walter O'Connell who I always felt was conservative, good Board of Selectmen member—not Board of Selectmen but Town Manager—of ours, and I can remember the people lobbying to come on that Board of Selectmen with one purpose in mind, to fire Walter O'Connell, and I can remember the day that they did elect Howard Kassler, for one. I remember he became Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, and he was against Walter O'Connell, and he didn't like our police department, and it was he who fired—he and his other cohorts on the Board, that the minute they took office—fired Walter O'Connell. Things like that that went on, that you began to realize that these people didn't like the policies of certain groups in this town, and that they ran for office with one purpose in mind, to take over the organization and to put the people in there that felt as they did.

**INT:** So the town really became politicized as far…and that you would characterize as a major change from the time you first came to Lexington, and the time you first became Police Chief.

**JC:** Very definitely.

**INT:** The latter years.

**JC:** Very definitely.

**INT:** And that's what created the discomfort or the…

**JC:** Absolutely, absolutely. Politics—it became more a part of Lexington life than when we first became police officers, and it is still there today.

**INT:** Are there any ways to deal with that that you would recommend?

**JC:** I don't think that the Town of Lexington is probably any different than any other city or town in the United States. I think that as we got bigger and the population increased and there were more people, that things just change, and they did. Lexington as we knew it back forty, fifty years ago we all say, it just isn't the same. It isn't the same. It became too politicized.

**INT:** And that, to you, is a negative.

**JC:** Definitely. Absolutely.

**INT:** So the challenges of the police department became greater then, not only in terms of police, law enforcement, but in terms of image and public relations. Did you find yourselves spending more time with regard to public relations?

**JC:** Yes, yes. How would you like to have…remember the last years of my career as the Chief of Police, we had a group in town that were known as YELP, the Youth to Educate the Lexington Police, and they had many people in the...fathers and mothers, and people of the community who backed these kids, and that gets out of hand. What can I say?

**INT:** I mean, that's…you certainly helped us get another perspective with regard to the impact of this event on the town. Anything else you would like to say?

**JC:** We have said it all.

**INT:** You have said it all. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW