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Fay Hawkins

Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project

A Collaborative Project of the Regional Oral History Office,
The National Park Service, and the City of Richmond, California

Interviews conducted by
Sarah Wheelock
in 2003

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Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project: An Oral History with Fay Hawkins conducted by Sarah Wheelock, 2003, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2007.

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Interview with Fay Hawkins
Interviewed by: Sarah Wheelock
Transcriber: Matthew Schwartz
[Interview #1: June 02, 2003]
[Begin Audio File Hawkins1 06-02-03]

1-00:00:00

Hawkins:

My name is Fay Hawkins and I live Point Richmond, California. I was born in November 13, 1922 in Mulberry, Arkansas, which is about twenty miles east of Fort Smith, Arkansas, on the Arkansas River. We moved here to Richmond, California in about 1925—24, 25. And my family—that was my mother, my dad my two sisters, and myself. One of my sisters was a twin sister of mine. And when we got to California, my father worked for the Certainteed Company, which is in North Richmond. And he worked there for a year, a little over a year, and then he joined the Police Department in Richmond and became a police officer; and worked as a police officer in Richmond until he died in 1941.

At that time I had graduated from high school and was working at the Mechanics Bank in Richmond. And that was in 1941. And in 1943, I joined the United State Navy—World War Two had started—and I joined the United States Navy and was stationed with the Naval Intelligence Unit in San Francisco, California. And I spent most of my Navy career there in San Francisco at that office. After leaving the Navy in December of 1945, I went to work for the Greyhound Bus Company and drove Greyhound Bus for a couple of months and decided that wasn't for me, you're gone from home too much. So, I left there, and went to toll collector on the Richmond-San Rafael Ferry, which has been replaced by the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge. I worked for the Ferry Company for about six months and then joined the Richmond Police Department in June of 1946. Worked there as a patrolman, working all of the shifts: day, graveyard, and swing shift. All my career, actually twenty-five years with the Richmond Police Department. Worked there as a patrolman in 1946, and about 1950 I guess it was, I got promoted to sergeant. But our police station at that time when I joined in 1946, was here in Point Richmond at 145 Park Place, in Richmond, which was the number one firehouse here in Richmond and we had half the building. We had our office, the Police Department was downstairs, and the Fire Department was one truck, and the crew slept upstairs. And behind the Police Department was our jail division, which wasn't part of the same building, but they expanded it, adding more cells during wartime because they had an influx of personnel that occupied the cells from time to time. Then in December of 1949 we moved everything over to the new Civic Center buildings at Twenty-seventh and Barrett, where it still is located. I understand now at the present time they are relocating their offices—all of the business offices—to South Harbor Way in Richmond. Because they're remodeling and refitting the present city buildings at Twenty-seventh and Barrett. My career as a police office was very varied. I worked in the Traffic Division. I worked at the Patrol Division. The Patrol Division was very enjoyable actually, because it was outside and you worked all three shifts. You varied from month to month most of the time. And it was enjoyable. We used to have a foot beat, which was all of McDonald Avenue from First Street to Twenty-third Street. And you would walk the beat, going in back alleys and up and back places.

1-00:05:39

Wheelock:

Was that when you first started in '46?

1-00:05:41

Hawkins:

That's when I first started as a patrolman. You hit all of those. You'd walk the back alleys, and some were pretty dark and scary, but you did what you had to do, regardless of what it took. But actually that was a very enjoyable time on their because basically you had only yourself to look out for—you and your partner. Had no other responsibilities except that. Then as I progressed over the years I became a sergeant. Then I was in charge of a group on a particular shift of the officers who consisted of about six or eight patrolmen, if we were lucky. Sometimes we were down to only two or three on the shift because of sickness or vacations or whatever. So you made do with what you had. And I think the hardest part after becoming a sergeant was letting the officer do his job and not taking over. Just being a supervisor more than actually doing the work. As a sergeant, I worked in the Detective Division for a short while, and kind of went back and forth between the Detective Division and the Patrol Division. And as I progressed—as I got more seniority—I would work up to where I had good days off, say weekends or good shift. I would get a promotion and then I would be back down at the bottom. I had bad days off and I worked a graveyard shift again. And you work up, and you become swing shift and a day shift if you were lucky. And if you got another promotion you started all over again. Which was interesting. We went through a very big strike the Standard Oil had a large strike that was in the mid-1950s. We had quite a bad deal out there at that time with the people on strike and so forth. And you were trying to keep them calm, and let the cars and the traffic go through. And you had to try and part these people and without making them too mad. And so one day I wound up on my butt. [laughs] I was trying to push these people out of the way as the car was going by, and I would be pushed up against the car. And all of a sudden the car weren't there any more. [laughs] And I wind up on my butt. But no damage done. Got back up and ahead with your duty. As the strike went on things kind of calmed down a little more, as far as the pickets were concerned, and we got to know quite a few of them as individuals, and they were nice guys. They were working stiffly like anybody else. We wound up by patrolling where they were and they were congregated at the different gates, and we got to know some of the individuals, would talk to them and so forth. The next day we would come to work and be out there again and say, "Hey, where's Jim? Where's Joe?" All those so-and-sos went back to work. So, I'm talking to them, in some cases I guess it did some good because they went back to work and so forth. But overall you don't really look at the bad times, you look at the times when things were enjoyable. The same thing as when you were in the service—in the military. There were a lot of bad times, but there were good times too. And fortunately, those superseded everything else. As time went on, as a sergeant I then became promoted to lieutenant, then I was in charge of the whole department, on some shift. And actually as I progressed, I was back on graveyard again. With bad days off and everything else. But, when you're there as a lieutenant at the time, you were the man in charge, and whatever went down or went up, that was your responsibility. And the worse thing you could do is pick up the phone and call the chief for some advice. [laughs] That was very embarrassing if you had to do that. Fortunately, I was able to take care of things and not have to do that. Then I was in Patrol Division again. Then I went down to the Inspector's Division where I was in charge of the investigation personnel down there in the Investigating Division.

1-00:11:03

Wheelock:

That's different than the detectives? Is that the detectives?

1-00:11:08

Hawkins:

The detectives yes, all of the detectives. As we progressed through the years we originally had the ranks where the chief, captains, lieutenants, sergeants, and inspectors. Inspectors were the detectives. And then there were just the regular patrolmen. As the years progressed they eliminated the name inspector, and it became the same as the sergeant. So sergeants and inspectors became one in the same. Some of the older personnel in there didn't like the idea of not being able to be called an inspector. It was a better sounding name than a sergeant. But they survived. Those were the old timers on there. And in those days, actually, when the department was big and expanded during wartime, the present officers were automatically promoted to the next rank by seniority. Of course the chief was aware of their abilities also, but there was no examination or anything. You became the next one as the inspector, lieutenant, or captain or whatever, just because you'd been there longer than the next one. After 1946 things changed, and you had to take a written and physical examination in order to qualify to become a police officer. Then after you became a police officer in order to go up in rank you again had to qualify, with written and oral examinations were concerned to be promoted to whatever rank it happened to be.

Here again, some of the old timers didn't particularly like this and I can't blame them because they were now being supervised by personnel that to them was inferior because they didn't have as much experience as I had. So, and here he is, and he's supervising me. My attitude always was, that it's not that I'm smarter than the next guy, it's just that I was luckier. And so when I went on the department in 1946, the shipyards, which had blossomed into Richmond—. We had three or four shipyards along Cutting Boulevard adjacent to the waterfront. And we had all of this influx of people coming from all over the country in order to work in the shipyards and make good money. That put an added burden on the Police Department. Where again we had to deal with the personnel when they were not working and with this traffic situation. Fortunately, in town at that time in 1940—well during the war and through 1946, and even into about 1947 we still had quite a number of theaters in town. And often as not, during the war times particularly, the theatres became bedrooms for a lot of these workers at the shipyards. They weren't able to find anyplace else to live or to sleep. So they'd buy a ticket to the show and go in and immediately go to sleep.

1-00:15:03

Wheelock:

So it was a late night, kind of an all night? Yeah.

1-00:15:06

Hawkins:

It was a late night. They were open all night long. The shows were opened twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. And a lot of people work in shipyards, that was their bedroom. That was where they did their sleeping. And there were a lot of restaurants. Some of the restaurants were innovative. They were made out of old streetcars—railroad cars. There would be one or two hooked together. They would be refurbished inside with dining tables. And as you probably see

some old pictures, the diner was actually, generally, a railroad car that had been converted to a restaurant. Some of those became quite elaborate; they had more than just one car hooked up. And there were a lot of bars, and a lot of...what? Junkyards and everything else. The town had blossomed from about twenty or twenty-five thousand people to over a hundred thousand during the peak of the war years of say 1940, 1941, '42 and so forth. We even had what we used to call a Toomerville Trolley that ran from Oakland along what is now 580 and the SP Railroad track, just bringing shipyard workers to the shipyards, which were located on Cutting Boulevard. They ran hourly. They ran all day and all night, and carried personnel—shipyard workers back and forth. Generally, it was a lot of fun and rather dangerous too, directing traffic at some of those intersections. At those times, during the war, and just after in '46 we only had maybe one or two traffic lights in town. The rest were just stop signs and intersections, which our police personnel had to man certain key intersections during shift changes. That was in morning, day shift, and on swing shift. Like Twenty-third and Barrett, Twenty-third and Macdonald, Carlson and Cutting—all of which is now 580. That one had over in one corner there was a platform. You stood on the platform and crank this crank around and that changed the signal light in the center of the intersection that was hanging there. Change it from red to yellow to green. And this controlled the traffic flowing along 580 or Hoffman Boulevard at that time. So you'd see somebody coming along pretty fast, particularly a truck or something, and you'd flip it over to yellow. But, you'd be sure that you didn't change from yellow until the truck was sure to be stopping. But they would slam on their brakes and the smoke would go out of the tires. You would then change to red, the official stop. But, at least you give them a chance. If somebody violated the signal light, you blew a whistle at them, and very often, which surprised me, they would pull over and stop. On beyond, maybe fifty yard beyond the light.

1-00:19:01

Wheelock:

You pulled them over with a whistle?

1-00:19:02

Hawkins:

Yes, just blow, just blow a whistle and they would pull over. It would kind of surprise you. So, you'd let him sit for a couple minutes and the wave them on. Go on. Get out of here. You didn't have time, you couldn't leave your traffic post to go over and write a ticket. You had to take care of the traffic. But at least they blew in and they did. Once in awhile you would have to get out in the middle of the street and you would regulate the traffic one way or the other by blowing your whistle and waving your arms one way or the other, which you wouldn't stop. And sometimes it got kind of dark and some of the officers would pick up a lantern. These are one of these oil type lanterns. And they would have that in each hand, and this to light themselves up a little more. Some of the traffic drivers were on the playful side sometime. They'd see how close they could come to your feet with their tire or their fender. They were hoping that it would make you jump back. Well, some of the officers got wise and take a piece of iron pipe and wrap it up in a newspaper, and this they would direct traffic with. And when somebody did this to them they would just reach out and off would go a headlight as the guy was coming. They wouldn't slow down they would just keep going twenty-five, thirty-five miles an hour, and you'd kind of reach out and tap on the fender. If you hit the headlight that was their problem. Of course that's when the days you could do a lot of things that you can't do now.

1-00:20:51

Wheelock:

Oh yeah? Like what besides that?

1-00:20:54

Hawkins:

Oh, like you would take some vagrants. They used to have what was call a vagrant law, which is no longer on the books. But some of these derelicts you'd take and you'd kind of transport them to the city limits, and tell them, "Get lost. Don't come back in town again." So you'd transfer your problem from one city to another. I heard that in the old, old days, when the ferry was still running, there sometimes would escort one of them and put them on the ferryboat to San Rafael, or the San Quentin area. And of course, San Rafael was doing the same thing, only coming this way. So, they were just exchange vagrants. But there are kind of fun things from time to time that happened. That's like as if before you kind of remembered the lighter things and so forth instead of the others. Of course, during my career of twenty-five years, I was into a lot more than just that. Some things were pretty serious, particularly when I was in the traffic division I did a lot of checking of accidents—fatal and so forth. Either two cars or a train and a car, or a pedestrian and a train, and so forth. They're not the best of sights, but they were something that you did. And any of these things you had to learn that you didn't take anything personal or get emotionally involved, otherwise you'd might as well go into the chief and say I quit. You did things that you had to do regardless of whether you had to do them or not because that was your job that time. One time my partner and I, we were working in traffic car. This would be when I was still patrolling, and we'd just kind of float all over town and cover off on a lot of different calls because we were a two man car, and lot of them had only one man in them at that time. And my partner, I worked with for quite awhile—after you work with a partner for quite awhile, you know what each is going to do. You go into a situation, you automatically know that he's going to do this, you're going to do that. We went on one call as a cover-off that the call came in about this fellow being an escaped convict from I think it was Alabama or Georgia—chain gang or something. And he swore he wasn't going to be taken alive. And he wound up at these people's house, and the lady was scared and she ran out and called the police because she looked at her husband who was talking to this guy at the table. And the last time she looked at him he was covered with what she had thought was blood. And so she put in the call to the police department, and the officer was detailed out to take it. So, my partner and I decided we'd just cover-off on that call and as we got to the address and got out of our car, walked over to the sidewalk, this fellow walking down the street turning in the walkway just ahead of us. And so, we didn't know who he was and we asked him, "Do you live here?" And he said, "Oh yeah. Just visiting to see what the people's problems is." So, as he knocked on the door, the party opened the door and said, "That's him!" Well my partner and I luckily hit him from the back, and drove him up into the wall. And in his right hand pocket he had a loaded revolver with his hand around it, and in the other pocket had a fist full of shells. So, luckily we'd had covered-off and got this man into custody, and turned him over to the officers who were inside who were at that time kind of white faced because of the possibilities. But luckily, my partner and I were there and took care of that part of the situation. We'd turn them over to the officer doing the reporting and we left, went back on the beat, again. And just one of those things that happened. We just happened to be at the right place at the right time.

1-00:25:32

Wheelock:

And you just went back to the rest of your shift?

1-00:25:34

Hawkins:

Oh, eventually he wound back up with the chain gang in either Georgia or Alabama or some place wherever it was. And so then one time as the sergeant, we had a call. One of the officer stopped this man in driving a car, and he didn't like the answers he was getting from this guy about the car. The car didn't belong to him. It belonged to somebody over on Twenty-seventh and Roosevelt, some place in there. And so he wound up down at the field hospital, which was down at Fourteenth and Cutting. And then I cover-off down there to check and see what was doing, and the guy says something about that he was from Twenty-seventh and Roosevelt, and so forth. And then a call came in this woman was screaming in the same location. From what this fellow said, I kind of recognized the duplex on the corner. And so I took off and went over to it, and went in and heard this gal screaming, and went in the building. And she was in bed with an alarm clock tangled in her hair, and this guy was draped on the side of the bed, had been stabbed about twenty-seven times, and she was in bed there screaming her head off. We got the inspectors down, detectives, and then one thing led to another, and found out that this gal and the suspect that was stopped on the south side of town were in cahoots together. They had killed her husband. And she had crawled back into bed and started screaming her head off to distract anybody else. But anyhow they both wound up in prison. They may still be there, I don't know that, that was a long time ago now. We had a large riot situation in Richmond back in the 1960s, where there was quite a large fire down on Macdonald Avenue. One of the fire of the stores, was completely destroyed, I think was Travellini's, which was a furniture store, and these were ignited by the riotous people with fire bombs, so forth. So we had out hands full taking care of Richmond as far as the riots go. And these went on and off for about, oh, four, five days, before they finally subsided and everything got down to what you may say is normal. I'm trying to thing of some other situations. It's hard, it's been quite, a little over, see I've been retired from this police department for over thirty-two years, surprising enough. So the town I would say actually has been good to me. And the wife and I, after I retired, we said we would just stay right where we are, in part of Richmond on the hill. We didn't know of anyplace we wanted to go in than here. And so here we are. We're still here. And she and I just celebrated our 60th wedding anniversary, and spent the night at East Brother's Light Station on the Bay by the San Rafael Bridge, and had a wonderful evening, dinner and so forth. In January 1972, I decided well, it was time to retire, that my pension had come and so forth, and it would be sufficient, and I wouldn't have to go out and work, digging ditches right at that time. So, if things kind of kept within reason, I'd be able to make it and we could go ahead and do pretty much what we wanted to do. And that's about it I guess.

1-00:30:14

Wheelock:

I'd like to ask you about your parents. They're from Arkansas, is that what you said?

1-00:30:21

Hawkins:

Yes, they were born and raised there in Mulberry, Arkansas.

1-00:30:25

Wheelock:

How did they decide that they wanted to come to Richmond? Do you know what made them?

1-00:30:29

Hawkins:

I don't know. I guess it was just the job opportunity back there at that time. This was back in, you have to remember, this was back in the early 1920s, which was before the dust storms in Kansas and so forth. So you can't blame it on that. But, I think that, probably, my father's sister living out here probably encouraged him to move to California and here to Richmond, and seek employment here.

1-00:31:05

Wheelock:

What made him decide to become a police officer? Do you know?

1-00:31:09

Hawkins:

I think probably the job opportunity as much as anything. You see, in my opinion as a police officer, you're pretty well secure in your position as long as you keep your nose clean, so to speak, and do your job. And the pay at that time, even when I went on in 1946, the pay was not that good. The pay at that time was only 175 or 180 dollars a month. While my father was on, and back in 1936, they didn't even have a retirement system at that time. But they did—the police offices and the firemen in town got with the public and petitioned so forth, and got a retirement benefit package voted in by the people that covered all of the present police and fire at the time. And at that time that consisted of—if you worked for twenty-five years and retired, you would then receive half of that rank's salary for the rest of your life. Or your widow would receive the same thing if you passed away afterwards. And along with that was what they called an escalator clause that meant that every time the present working police and firemen got a raise, you got the same thing on your pension. So, if they got ten percent, you got ten percent on your half-pay at that time. So, that was a pretty good deal. They did not have medicals at that time. Whatever you contracted with some hospital or some medical group to have. Here the predominant one is in, who is with Kaiser. Of course not everyone has Kaiser. I didn't join the medical group at first after I went on, and I wound up with appendicitis, I had to take time off. And so, I decided to have it taken out, since I couldn't afford to have any more time off.

Right after that I joined medical group, naturally. As they say after the horse is gone, you close the barn door. But, like I say, here again, to me this city has been, I think in my own case, more than fair with my life and my father's life. When my father died, he died in 1941, and that was about five years after the retirement plan had gone into effect, and his wife at first was told that she didn't have any pension coming to her. So, they paid her back what my father had paid into the pension system. Each employee at that paid in a certain amount of his salary per month into the pension system. It was only less than ten percent, six percent, seven, eight percent, something like that. And so, she was told that she didn't have any pension coming at that time. So, she did housekeeping work for Kaiser Hospital and other odd jobs. And at that time, there was she and my twin sister, and my brother—younger brother, myself, living at home. That was about the time that—I graduated high school and went to work for Mechanic's Bank. And naturally you went home, you turned your money over to your mother, and she used it! But, we were fortunate

enough to be able to maintain the house and our own living at that time. A number of years later, going over the retirement system and so forth, some attorneys had told me, “No, statute of limitations rules about your mother getting anything.” Now, so, but I went in ahead and applied for it anyhow for her on the assumption that it was regulated buy a pension board set up by the city and employees of the city. And as such nobody had ever ruled one way or the other that she officially should or should not have a pension. I applied for it and luckily, they were surprised that she wasn’t getting a pension because she should have gotten one then. So they ruled that she should get the pension and she was entitled to the pension now. And I gave ‘em one stipulation that we didn’t want any back pension lump sum for her. Just the present pension and for it to continue for the rest of her life, which is what they did, and so enabled my mother to at least relax a little bit in her older life. She died, subsequently died at age ninety-five. So, she was forty-one or forty-two when my father died. So she lived until the age of ninety-five, and all of the time drawing that pension, able to least put food on her table and pay her bills, and so forth.

1-00:37:24

Wheelock:

You were about eighteen when your father died?

1-00:37:26

Hawkins:

Nineteen, I think, at that time.

1-00:37:31

Wheelock:

Do you remember him—did he ever tell you any stories about his job?

1-00:37:37

Hawkins:

No, no, he never did. I was just like my kids when they grew up. I was a police officer all the time they were growing up in school. And they complained, “I can’t never do anything in this town unless you get know about it.” I was the same way when I was a kid. In those days, the police officers knew all of the other police officers. They generally knew their families and kids, and kind of look out for them and chastise them if it was needed. If they found them doing something they shouldn’t be. And it was accepted by the families. And my family, my three kids, were the same way. [laughs] But, no, he never, said a lot of stuff he that he’d been into. But in the days that he was on the Department, the early days and that, they had backyard stills or basement stills in the area, which they periodically they would raid and confiscate or destroy the wine. Mostly, it was wine and so forth, and we had a few, very few after I went one. Most of those had been eliminated in the earlier years.

1-00:39:03

Wheelock:

I was curious if you had a sense of how your career was different after the war as opposed to his? You know before?

1-00:39:13

Hawkins:

To his before the war?

1-00:39:14

Wheelock:

Yeah, how your two—you know, you had the same, theoretically you had the same job, but Richmond had changed so much, I was wondering if you had any—.

1-00:39:23

Hawkins:

Well in the days when he went to work as a police officer, they—the city did not furnish cars for patrol work and so forth. If you got to that point you used your own car. You were reimbursed gasoline. You used your own car for beat work. They had no radios. Telephones were few and far between. They had call boxes listed, situated in various places in town and you would go over to the call box and open it, and take the receiver and pull the lever down and it would automatically connect you with the radio room over at the police department. As far as calls were concerned, they had a light system in this town, and on a tall poles it was probably six or eight of them around various parts of the community. They could be seen by officers and they would look up, and if the light was on and blinking a certain number it meant they wanted beat number so and so. And you would hit one of the call boxes and you'd call in and they'd give you your assignment. Here again there was no communication after you got there, unless the people happened to have a telephone, which as I said in those days, in the late 20s, telephones in the town were few and far between. Even when I went on in 1946, we had beat cars and we did have radios. But, you were not always in the car or with a radio. Particularly, if you were walking the avenue. When you were walking the avenue you walked very carefully and you kept track of your partner if you had a partner. And if the storeowner was kind to you, he'd let you use his telephone. Otherwise, you had to find the call box, which generally was a number of blocks away from you.

1-00:41:33

Wheelock:

The storeowners, did they generally cooperate with the police?

1-00:41:36

Hawkins:

Most of the time, yeah. Most of the storeowners, yes. Very few of them were reluctant, but most of them they would, sure. But, this is all part of—to me—was all part of being a police officer, and particularly if you were walking a beat in downtown area or in a business area, you got to know the storeowner and you got them to know you. And you did what you could to help them out. Sometimes, what you did for them was not official. But it was out of the kindness, out of the goodness of your heart. You did for them, not for favoritism, and I know that we had a few business people, entrepreneurs I guess you call them, would locate here from back east. And I understood back east that they used to pretty well take care of a beat officer with clothing and everything, you name it. The officer didn't have to pay for anything. Well, they would try that out here and it didn't work, because we had a pretty strict command system—chief and captain, and so forth, that that was a no-no out here. They want to give you a suit or something, oh no, no, no way. You did accept a cup of coffee, but that was about it. Once in awhile the officers would overboard and not pay for a meal and he got kind of called up on the carpet the next day when it was found out. But I can't say to my knowledge, most of the time, the officers were pretty good about paying for their meal and different things about that nature. Not taking bribes so to speak.

1-00:43:30

Wheelock:

So, your father died in '41?

1-00:43:33

Hawkins:

Yeah, he died—he was forty-six when he died.

1-00:43:36

Wheelock:

And that was early 1941 that he died?

1-00:43:38

Hawkins:

June. I had just graduated from high school and was working at the Mechanic's Bank at the time, and I got notified by the manager of the bank, you better get yourself home. So, I did and he was there. Dead by the time I got there. Whether it would have done any good to take him to the hospital, I don't know. He had just gone to work that day, and that day, let's see I think he used to ride the bus. We lived on Barrett and Key Boulevard in Richmond. Another thing in those days, to be a police officer or a fireman in Richmond, you had to live in Richmond, and you had to stay living in Richmond while you were on the job. Sometime in the 1950s they relaxed that, and due to constitutional lobbying they said it was unlawful for them to require you to live within the city. That you could live any place you wanted to. It was just your responsibility to be able to get to and from work when you were supposed to. So, they relaxed that. First off, you could live, just outside or you could live within a certain mile radius. Now you can live any place. But my own feelings again on that, is that I firmly believe that police and firemen particularly, should live in the community that they are working at. To me it becomes their home and their property, and they're more out to take better care of it, I think. And in the days when my father was on, they were truly police officers twenty-four hours a day, and they were expected to take action, that is on serious crimes. Not on little petty things, but on more serious things.

1-00:45:49

Wheelock:

So 1941, sounds like it must have been a really terrible year for your family and for everybody obviously, after this happened.

1-00:45:58

Hawkins:

Yes, I guess it was. What it was like—. Police work in the 1920s and 30s, I don't think it was quite as bad because most people, as I said, the community knew each other and all that, particularly with police and firemen. And the average police and firemen was pretty well loved by all the community, and very well respected. It was years after that, and over the years things, I think, gradually broke down there. What the reason for the breakdown is, I don't really know. You could speculate all kinds of things. I think it's the upbringing of the kid. The kid responsibility for upbringing is with the parents and they should teach them to respect their elders, respect their teacher, their pastor, their police officer and so forth. Regardless of what they may think personally, whether they should be respected.

1-00:47:13

Wheelock:

I was wondering how quickly did you see the city start to change after December 1941? Because you—.

1-00:47:23

Hawkins:

Oh, you said '41?

1-00:47:26

Wheelock:

Did you notice things start to change right away?

1-00:47:30

Hawkins:

No, I noticed that there big changes came, I guess with the shipyards coming into town in the late, well let's see, in the '40 to '41, '42, with the shipyards coming into town we had an influx of people from out of town. At that point then you had a bunch of strangers, and in some cases the no good parts of the strangers from the other communities would come here because they worked in shipyards and make good money. Many the fight we refereed or broke up in back of bars. And the attitude of people was, there are no weapons involved, don't bother us. And so, in a lot of cases you made sure it was a fair fight and that was it. Sent the party off to the hospital that was needed. But as long as it was a fair fight, and this was their bringing up back where they came from in Oklahoma, Arkansas, New York, or wherever it was. This was the creed that they lived by. As long as it was a fair fight, don't bother us. And as such, in a lot cases we kind of respected them because you didn't go in and try to break up a fight by yourself when there was a half dozen people down there. You went in with, all of them want—you wanted them all on your side. Not on the other side. That happens every once in awhile, you get in and you're doing good, and all of a sudden bang, everything turns against you.

1-00:49:25

Wheelock:

So, having, you know, obviously having lived here before the war, and then once everyone starts to come in because of the shipyards things really start to change. Did you like the change; I guess is what I'm trying to ask with all of the new people or was it?

1-00:49:41

Hawkins:

Well, in a great respect I wish it was back to the small community again of maybe thirty, forty, fifty-thousand people. It seemed like in some cases the wrong people stayed here. The right went back to their homes, so forth. So it left us with a lot of wrong people here, with some money, and various opportunities. But, I think that one of the biggest things with our communities now is the lack of respect that the general public has, particularly towards the police, the fire. They don't stop to think that a police officer has a job to do, and you may not like what he's doing or how he's doing it, but in theory he's a professional. Leave it up to him and just respect him, and do as he asks you to do. He generally does not have time to try to communicate to you in a manner that you understand that you will accept. All he has time to tell you to move or to do this or that. He doesn't have time to sit down and draw you a diagram, or to really go through a big explanation

of why you should do what you have been requested to do. So, they sometimes, the officer gets a little abrupt. But, just stop and think, he's a human being like you are, and so forth.

1-00:51:25

Wheelock:

When you joined the Navy, you ended up working in Naval Intelligence right? And that was out of San Francisco?

1-00:51:31

Hawkins:

Yes, in San Francisco.

1-00:51:34

Wheelock:

Were you living in San Francisco, or were you—?

1-00:51:35

Hawkins:

No we were living—we had got married just after I went in the Navy. We got married, and we moved, and lived in Berkeley, off of Hillegass Avenue. You know where that is?

1-00:51:49

Wheelock:

Yes, I do.

1-00:51:50

Hawkins:

Okay, we lived on—not to far from the Sather Gate, is it? And we lived there on Hillegass. We lived in an apartment house there, upstairs. And her sister-in-law lived downstairs, and another couple lived in another. There were three units in that apartment, and we lived there. And we lived in there until I was sent to Honolulu. The war was almost over with, and further out—and this officer was being sent. I went to—from here—went to what they called a JICPOA, which was Joint Army-Navy Intelligence in Honolulu, at Pearl Harbor itself. And, then we, she came and lived with her mother and father. And at that time we had our daughter. She had another one on the way. So, while I was over there, she had our first son, and he was born while I was over there in Honolulu. And then I came back and got out of the service in December of 1945. And then a few months after that she became pregnant again. I don't know why, but she did. And we had our youngest boy, who at the present time is six-foot four, and weighs as much as I do, two hundred and some odd pounds. And he is, at present time, he's a fireman in Vallejo, California, and with only a couple more years to go before he's going to retire from that. Our daughter, just retired from her job with the county—Contra Costa County. At the time she retired she was a civilian employee working in the Jail Division of the sheriffs department, in charge at that time of the other personnel that had to do with the computers and keeping track of all the inmates and so forth. And so, she just retired from that two years ago. Our oldest boy is a mechanic in refrigeration, and hydraulic, electric and so forth. And is presently working for Sealand, which at the present is, I think it's owned by Marsky. M-A-R-S—something or other. You see it on the side of their containers at the Port of Oakland. And he works there. He works graveyard shift. He prefers to work the graveyard shift, and which he does. But he's got to work a few more years before he's at home.

[Begin Audio File Hawkins2 06-06-03]

2-00:00:00

Wheelock:

One incident?

2-00:00:00

Hawkins:

One incident I could mention was that she missed most of the little paddy wagon I have up on the shelf here. And we used to have one similar to that. And shortly at this is '46 and '47, when we had prisoners in jail here, and this was before we moved to the new station around Twenty-seventh and Barrett, we were at the old place of 145 Park Place in Point Richmond. We used to take prisoners out on weekends to collect bail money. This was ones who are just on misdemeanor—out drunk or something like this. And they would make a phone call and arrange to pick-up some money at Joe Blow's place or whatever like that. So, we would load maybe half a dozen in the paddy wagon and we would go from one place to another and take the party, and they would collect their bail money and we'd come back. And then after we were done, we'd wind up back at the police department and they would bail themselves out. Well one Saturday, I guess it was, we took this number of prisoners out, and one of them happen to be a merchant marine seaman, and his ship was in dock at Point Molati here in Richmond. It was a government run operation, a fueling operation over just off of what is now the San Rafael Bridge. And, so anyhow, we took the man, and we made the mistake of walking up onto the ship. And at that time the ship still had Navy Armed Guard personnel on it. This was right at the end of World War II. So, anyhow, we contacted the first mate there and the fellow asked for bail money, and the first mate said, "No, you don't get any." And, so, we turned and said, "Okay, let's go." And he reached over and tapped me on the arms and said, "You're not taking the man off the ship." And I said, "What do you mean I'm not taking the man off the ship?" "You need a United States Marshall in order to do this on a government ship." Said, "You're not taking the man off." I said, "Well. Okay, see you later." So, went back minus a prisoner, due to the technical mistake that we made. And after that we didn't take people out for bail money any more. So, we kind of ruined it for the rest of the personnel. [laughs]

2-00:02:42

Wheelock:

You didn't take them out at all? Anybody?

2-00:02:44

Hawkins:

No. No, they could make a phone call. People could bring the money over, but we would not take the people around. We would go all over town to various places, houses and so forth, for the party. It was something, we didn't have to do it, but we just did. But, when we lost this man this way because it was a government ship, and we couldn't—we had no jurisdiction on it, that we stopped taking people out for bail money after that. They could call in, and have people bring money in, but we wouldn't take them out.

2-00:03:22

Hawkin's Wife:

How about the time that you and Don Hyde took that old Scout looking for a couple boys that were lost?

2-00:03:29

Hawkins:

Well, wasn't him.

2-00:03:32

Hawkin's Wife:

Wasn't?

2-00:03:34

Hawkins:

No, that was on what they called the Point Beat, here at that time.

2-00:03:38

Wheelock:

About year was that? Do you remember? About what year was that?

2-00:03:44

Hawkins:

Oh, that was in—here again, in the '47, '48'. I was just a patrolman yet, and I was on this beat here at the Point, and we got a call that a couple boys had been down to the waterfront off of south Forth Street here, and they hadn't been seen yet. They were still not home, and this was about two, three o'clock in the morning. So, they said that they were out there and that they were going to go to Brook's Island, and they hadn't come back yet. So, we get down as far as we can on the landside, and looking out that way we didn't see anything. But we did see an object floating in the water, quite a distance out there. So we decided well that's not them, but now we better go out and take a look, because if it is them we're in deep something or other and so forth. So, we managed to find a large rowboat, and this thing was about four feet wide and twelve feet long of heavy Dory used by construction workers. And so I said, "Well, who's going to go out with me?" And nobody spoke up, so finally, Inspector Davis, he was acting lieutenant that night, he said, "Okay, I'll go with you." So he and I, we got in this boat, and we rowed from Cutting Boulevard on the canal here, out, and we tried—he would use one oar and I used the other, and we covered that zigzag course all the way out. Found out it was a log in the water and it had rode all the way back again. But if we hadn't gone out and found that it was a log, and it happened to have been a boat that the kids had had, we would have had a lot of trouble. But the best thing about it was that it was a bright moonlit night. It was a nice night for a row.

2-00:05:49

Wheelock:

What happened to the boys? Did they figure it out?

2-00:05:52

Hawkins:

Oh, they were over on Brook's Island, and they come up on shore the next day. So everything worked out all right for them, for the kids.

2-00:06:04

Wheelock:

And you got a nice row?

2-00:06:06

Hawkins:

Yeah.

2-00:06:07

Hawkin's Wife:

Oh, I thought that was the one where you contacted the folks, and you hadn't found the boys and they were sleeping under the porch of the house or something. Okay.

2-00:06:22

Wheelock:

North Richmond, that was patrolled by the Contra Costa Sheriffs, is that right?

2-00:06:30

Hawkins:

Some of it is, the rest of it is in Richmond. Our city limit sign goes out quite a ways in what they call North Richmond. And then it becomes county and then it's just county problem.

2-00:06:44

Wheelock:

Even when you started in '46? So, it's always been kind of both jurisdictions?

2-00:06:49

Hawkins:

Yeah. North Richmond generally took in out to Gertrude Avenue in Richmond, which is on the northern edge of town, then it became county and most of the—a lot of the houses were in Richmond, and a lot were also in the county, and there was kind of a dividing line. At that time Gertrude Avenue went down, going east and across the railroad tracks. At the railroad tracks was a company called Certainteed They were a—.

2-00:07:29

Hawkin's Wife:

Roofing.

2-00:07:30

Hawkins:

A roofing company and they were on the south side of Gertrude. And on the north side, was also, I think it was Certainteed also, but they made shell casing and so forth during the war—during World War II. They were still in Richmond also. That was kind of the dividing line. We had a lot of mostly residences in the Richmond part, in North Richmond, and just across the line were a number of businesses, restaurants and so forth, businesses.

2-00:08:08

Wheelock:

How did it work with the—did you have a shared jurisdiction at all with the Sheriffs? Like could you—.

2-00:08:16

Hawkins:

Well, in effect the sheriff really has jurisdiction in Richmond. I mean technically. They don't, as a normal thing. You don't take over jobs that you don't need. But no, the cooperation between

Richmond and the sheriff's department was always good, and between San Pablo and El Cerrito, and everything else, all around. The communities, particularly the officers, they all work together very well. The only argument they sometimes have is whether it's in your jurisdiction or mine. And sometimes, you try to shove it over the line a little bit depending on what it is. [laughs]

2-00:08:59

Wheelock:

Depending if it is on something you want to deal with?

2-00:09:02

Hawkins:

Yeah, but normally the jurisdiction they all get along, because they're all in the same type of work, doing the same thing for the same reasons. So, as brother officers and that, you get along with them, and so forth.

2-00:09:21

Wheelock:

So, if you had a need for say San Pablo, would you call them?

2-00:09:26

Hawkins:

Oh yeah. There was always this community thing you could always call for help from the various communities as you needed it. Generally, this was done by your chief and so forth, with the other chiefs, you'd call for help. And it's just more or less a given thing, that if your radio room calls my radio room, and we need help this and that and so forth, you just put it out on the air and so forth, and you get this response, and it's a—. What is it?

2-00:10:03

Hawkin's Wife:

Mutual aid.

2-00:10:04

Hawkins:

A mutual aid type thing between the communities. The same thing with the fire personnel. So when you need help, you've got it, and you're always glad to have it.

2-00:10:14

Wheelock:

So, you usually had a mutual aid call, when you had something that was unexpected? Or something where you, what I'm trying to say is that the cooperation would have sort of impromptu, you would need to have more personnel to come in?

2-00:10:28

Hawkins:

Yeah, if you needed more personnel, you just call for aid, from Richmond, San Pablo, El Cerrito, or whatever.

2-00:10:34

Wheelock:

Were there ever like coordinated actions with the different departments?

2-00:10:40

Hawkins:

Oh yeah, during the big riot situation we had in the downtown area, I forgot what actually set that off now. But it was kind of a nationality type of thing. Black and whites, more in that. And then we had a lot of help from county, and El Cerrito, San Pablo, and even Berkeley and Oakland even at that time. During our big strike situation in the late forties here at Standard Oil, we also had mutual aid from El Cerrito and San Pablo, and sheriff's department at that time. And that was kind of spotty off and on we used those. In one incident we did use tear gas at one time, on the Standard Oil strike back at that time. That was kind of fun situation, so to speak. One of the tear gas shells shot from a tear gas gun, wound up about a block away, went into an apartment building. Needless to say, the apartment building was evacuated very suddenly. Another shell was fired and this guy had come out from behind some barricades at Castro Street, and through some rocks at us and so forth. Somebody, fired his tear gas gun at the guy, the shell hit this guy in the in the butt just as he turned around. Luckily, most of the time they kind of tumbled and it didn't do any damage, it set him back off his feet.

2-00:12:35

Hawkin's Wife:

There's a lot of funny stories. [laughs]

2-00:12:37

Hawkins:

But as I say, there are humorous things that happened and luckily they don't really cause any personal damage. But, they kind of damage your ego maybe, but that's all.

2-00:12:56

Wheelock:

Did you know Lonnie Washington and Doug Ellison?

2-00:13:03

Hawkins:

Went to school with Doug Ellison. Yeah.

2-00:13:06

Wheelock:

To high school?

2-00:13:07

Hawkins:

Yeah, high school and junior high, and high school, and we graduated about the same time. And Doug was on our police department and became sergeant at some time there. Then after he retired and left he went to BART and was on the police department with the BART trains.

2-00:13:32

Wheelock:

He was hired at about the same time you were? Doug.

2-00:13:36

Hawkins:

About that, probably about in the very early fifties, either late forties or early fifties, probably three or four years after I was on.

2-00:13:46

Wheelock:

Was that unusual to have African American officers?

2-00:13:50

Hawkins:

No, we had—when I went on, we had, I think we had two officers on when I joined. One was a heavy-set guy, and the other one was, I think Washington was his name. {Loney?} Washington I think it was.

2-00:14:18

Hawkin's Wife:

There was one with an Irish name. Murphy?

2-00:14:20

Hawkins:

Another one was a really heavy-set guy, I can't think of his name now. He left after a number of years. I forgot why, but he left. But Lonny Washington retired from the PD.

2-00:14:39

Wheelock:

Did you think that was helpful in trying to include, make it easier for the police to communicate with the entire community of Richmond? To have a lot of different sorts of officers?

2-00:14:51

Hawkins:

I really don't know whether it did or not. It didn't hurt anything to have an integrated department. I'm not one for these quota type of things. I think if the party has the ability to do the job and does the job that's what's required. It's not, he's not there because of who he is race or creed or anything else. He's there because he can do and is doing the job he is hired to do. And as long as they're doing that that's fine. And whether they're male or female, I don't know what I'd do with a female officer or not, because I'm just old fashioned enough that my protection ability comes into play there. And I don't know whether that affects any of the present personnel, fire or police, when they're working with a female partner whether their instinctive protection comes into effect there or not. But if you're old enough and brought up that way, you have a tendency to protect the female regardless. Although, some of the females I was involved with didn't need protection. I needed protection, because you get some pretty wild ones once in awhile.

2-00:16:27

Wheelock:

Oh yeah? How was that?

2-00:16:30

Hawkins:

Oh yeah. Well, there was one gal I can recall that she would fight you just like a tiger or anything else, so you'd pull no punches with her. You just did what you had to do to subdue her and that was it. And it didn't have anything to do with the sex part. It was just if you had to hit her, you hit her.

2-00:16:49

Wheelock:

What was she getting in trouble for?

2-00:16:53

Hawkins:

Generally, drunk and disorderly that way and so forth. And here again, most of the people I run up against that way. When they sober up, they're pretty nice people. It's just in most of the cases it's just the liquor taking over and so forth.

2-00:17:14

Wheelock:

So, you saw a lot of drunk and disorderly?

2-00:17:17

Hawkins:

Oh, lots of it, lots of it, around town. Particularly, when you're walking the avenue you see a lot of that. One day, I forgot, a swing shift I guess it was. I was sitting into Macdonald Avenue at the corner of Sixth Street in my patrol car and watching the people and the pedestrians. The bars were all over, the cafes and everything. Really going full ten. So, I look to the street over to my left and saw this group of four or five guys taken a VW, and taking it from the street and putting it up on the sidewalk. And you take four, five guys they can lift a VW. And they did this, and they put it on the sidewalk across the street from me. I sat there watched them, enjoying it, you know? And there was a group standing beside my patrol car, and they kind looked at me quizzically and they looked across there and they looked at me and I wasn't doing nothing. I'm just sitting there watching these guys do what they did. So, they got the VW up on the sidewalk and then they did the most stupid thing they could, they walked directly across the street to where I am. They were going to this café. So, as they got the middle of the street, I stepped out of my patrol car and gone over and said, "Okay, guys, you've had your fun, now go put it in the street where it belongs." Okay, so they walked back and put it back in the street where it belongs, and this group of gawkers, on my right, they had a good laugh at that time. And these guys no qualm about it, they just went back over and put it right. I had no argument with them. They had no argument with me. They just put back in the street where it belonged and went on about their business.

2-00:19:06

Wheelock:

They just felt like putting back on the sidewalk?

2-00:19:08

Hawkins:

I guess so. They were just having fun and so forth. But it was a group, that they were just having fun that they knew they had it when I stepped out in front of them, and they went over and put it back in the street, which kind of non plussed me a little bit that they did it without argument.

2-00:19:30

Wheelock:

So, what were the areas of town where you ran into the most problems?

2-00:19:37

Hawkins:

What type of problems?

2-00:19:41

Wheelock:

I just mean in general. I guess my question—were there areas of town where you had more problems than most?

2-00:19:49

Hawkins:

Well, downtown area during the early days, it was mostly drunks and that type of thing. All over town, was just other disturbances: family squabbles and things of that nature. No place more. North Richmond was kind of our shadier part of town at that time. And that's where a lot of your criminal, more of your criminal element lived in North Richmond area. Now, that it's all over town. You talk about things that have changed. When my dad was on there were problems like that too, but generally, in those days, they had more respect for police officers. As time went on over they years, the respect for police officers got less and less, to like you hear it now. There's not much respect for police officer. They'll shoot you as not. And that's what they do now.

00:21:17

Wheelock:

So, the problems you ran into in North Richmond, they were vice kind of stuff?

2-00:21:24

Hawkins:

They were vice problems. In those days, the vice problems was more with liquor and alcohol, rather than drugs. Mostly the liquor. We had some cab drivers who sold liquor out of the back of their cabs, which is a violation and so forth. But in North Richmond you had some prostitution, you had some liquor, mostly that type of thing.

2-00:21:57

Wheelock:

And so, you were saying that the USO, you had trouble on the avenue sometimes, or just a lot of people, a lot of bars?

2-00:22:03

Hawkins:

Most of that was a lot of people, and I've got to tell you that—recalling during the wartime and shortly after, for a few years after that particularly bars—. Well bars were open until two o'clock in the morning. Eating establishments were open all night long in many cases, and the shows were open all night long. So you would have both, you'd have your drunks staggering around which you'd try to take off the streets. If they were near their home, a lot of times I'd give them the choice, say, "You either get yourself or you go to jail. One or the other. Will see you. I'll be back along here shortly, if I see you, in you go." You'd come back and they'd be gone. But they would have a certain amount of respect for you. A lot of it depending on how you approached the individual. If you approach someone in the right manner or stern talking to, a lot of times that did more good than anything else. So it wasn't always necessary to take the guy to jail, if he would do what you asked him to do for his own good, that's all you asked for, clean up his act and so forth.

2-00:23:26

Wheelock:

When you were starting out, do you remember, what were the most prevalent problems you ran into or crimes that you saw?

2-00:23:34

Hawkins:

A lot of it was mostly traffic violations, particularly there was my job as a traffic officer for a number of years, was traffic violations and accident investigation. And then you took care of whatever the radio told you to take care of. Sometimes we would have a list, you would make a list and take the most serious one first off. That is what you thought was the most serious anyhow, and then go on down your list, which you had. Most of the time, in those days, we had more of a beat system. I don't know what they have now. But we had a beat system, and the town was cut up into about, when I went on, about eight beats. There were about four on this side of Macdonald Avenue and there were about four on the other side. And you were assigned a beat, and your sergeant checked on you all of the time. And you were expected to take care of whatever problem came up on your beat—whether it was traffic or what. It didn't make a difference of what it was, you took care of it: parking problems, traffic problems, squabbles at the house, drunks, or whatever like that. You were expected to take care of, as they say to keep your beat clean. And their threat then was if you don't keep your beat clean, we'll have you walking North Richmond. So you kept the beat clean. Nowadays, I don't know what they do. Really, I sometimes wonder.

2-00:25:30

Hawkin's Wife:

How about the stakeout at the bank, when all of you were waiting for the supposed—.

2-00:25:37

Hawkins:

Well, we were working the possibility of a bank robbery at Mechanic's Bank at Ninth and Macdonald.

2-00:25:44

Wheelock

When was this? Do you remember?

2-00:25:47

Hawkins

Here again, it had to be some place in the early fifties, and we were working with the FBI. And, in fact, they had an office in our police building. And the guys stationed there with the FBI were pretty nice guys had a lot of fun with them. And so we were working this stakeout and right opposite of where I was parked with this other fellow, there was a store that had birds. And they had, I guess it was a myna bird in there. And the signal for something to go down over here at the bank was a whistle. Well, all of a sudden we hear this loud whistle and it was this myna bird. Well, we all jumped in and ran over to the bank. Well, that wasn't what happened. The bird should not have whistled at that time, but it did. So, they kind of blew that. Blew the cover on that one.

2-00:26:49

Wheelock

What was it like having the FBI having their office in the same building?

2-00:26:55

Hawkins

It was fine. Here again the big story then was with the FBI and the local police, no matter who it was, was that information generally went one way to the FBI. And if you wanted information from them you didn't get too much information from them back. So it kind of rubbed things the wrong way in some cases. But generally you got along pretty well with the fellas. We had one fella, tall thin fella, been with us for years. I think Barthol was his last name. And he was putting on a course for our policewomen in the upstairs classroom. And it was in how to search prisoners. So, this one policewoman and I, I knew her pretty well, in fact she lived in a house that I lived in as a kid. That's another story. Thirty-sixth and Cerrito. But I get together and said, "He's going to teach you a class in what?" I said, "I'll fix that." So, my aunt worked at a ladies' apparel shop downtown. So, I went to ask her if I could borrow a female mannequin. She said, "Sure." So, we borrowed this female mannequin. We took it in. And this gal, this policewoman, she dressed the gal. And, in fact, she took off her own girdle because the one she had—the mannequin had a rod coming out of the butt to hold it up somewhere, and it kind of interfered with the pantyhose, or whatever it was she was putting on. So she had a pair that would fit. So she went in the room, took it off, and put on the other pair, and dressed this mannequin. And we set it up there and I said, "Let me know what he says when he comes in." So, the next day he came to work and he goes in, and she's in there. She watches him, and she kind of does a startled take of this mannequin. But then everything goes fine, because then he could hide things on her and anyplace he wanted not embarrassing anybody as a live model. So, it actually worked out pretty well. But it was a long, long time before he found out who or where the mannequin came from, or who was involved with it. But he was real good. And he was the type of an instructor that you never dozed off with him. He always had that knack of getting to you and making things so interesting, no matter what he was teaching, he did it in such a manner that you never got bored and you never dozed off in his classes. Very fine fella. He's long retired, and I don't know whether he's alive yet or not. He may be. If he is he'd probably be close to ninety. I just turned eighty. But he'd at least be more than that. But he was a real fine guy.

00:30:30

Wheelock:

How did it come to be that the FBI ended up in the Richmond Police Headquarters Building?

2-00:30:37

Hawkins:

I don't really know. But when we moved into the new building in 1949, they wound up with an office upstairs on the second floor. And they were there for many, many years. I don't know when it was that they left out of there. But it was—well I guess it was good to actually have them in there than and not, because there was some information that came both ways. But most of it all went in to them, and that's the way they operate nowadays too. They get things in and they'll say, "Well, maybe this that and so forth."

2-00:31:19

Wheelock:

So how many policewomen were there when you started? Was there a number?

2-00:31:23

Hawkins:

When I started there was—.

2-00:31:29

Hawkin's Wife:

Gracie.

2-00:31:29

Hawkins:

Well, there were no actual policewomen, as such. We had a police matron, and she worked in our juvenile division for awhile. She was a big woman. And I forgot what her name was now. But I think she lived in San Francisco. Or the last I knew she lived in San Francisco. She was there and she did a lot of our matron work for us, where they call for searching female prisoners and so forth. And then we hired our first, I guess one of the actual first policewomen was Betty—.

2-00:32:19

Hawkin's Wife:

Not Shirley?

2-00:32:20

Hawkins:

I think Betty Williams, I think was her last name. She was actually a police officer, as a woman. She worked in our juvenile division for many, many years. And that too {inaudible} we really had a policewoman at that time. I mean, one that has a badge, carries a gun, et cetera. We had a number of police matrons that worked in our records division and we'd called on them for—a lot of times—for searching female prisoner coming in and so forth. Or if we needed a female matron we would get one of them. They were qualified for that. But they didn't carry any guns or anything like that. There were policewomen, matrons that worked there. Then one of our better ones who we had for many, many years was a gal by the name of Grace Porter, and she worked in our radio room. And she knew what she was doing. And it was long time—whether it was the newer officers, from many years there, they would not like to take what she told to do. But we finally got to them and say, "You do what she tells you to do, because she knows what she's talking about." And she did. She knew everything about what was going on, like anybody else, or like an older officer would. But a lot of the officers, the newer ones, they wouldn't want to do what she told to do, even though it was the correct thing for them to do. And she worked, and even after she retired she worked part-time occasionally. I don't think she does now.

2-00:34:20

Wheelock:

Was she dispatch?

2-00:34:22

Hawkins:

Yes, she was. Oh yeah, she was dispatcher on the radio. And she would tell you and you could ask her, and she could tell you what to do and what not to do, and so forth. And she just had that capability, she knew it from years of experience and what was going on.

2-00:34:37

Hawkin's Wife:
She's a great gal.

2-00:34:39

Hawkins:

And she still is that way today. She doesn't work there any more. She's retired and she doesn't fill in part-time anymore either. But she did for many, many years. And there were another couple like that. Now onto the later years now, they have quite a number of regular police officers who are female. In fact one of them just got promoted to captain, I think. She was lieutenant the last time. I forgot the name, I saw it in the paper the other day. But she's been there for quite awhile. I don't know how many years, quite a number of years, more than ten or more. And she's a captain, and I saw in the paper here they have either one or two, or at least one lieutenant now, and they have a number of other officers on the beat and that. I just wish that all of them would learn their vehicle codes and so forth. I have a problem with that. One time, I made a U-turn down here at the intersection, down by the foot of Washington Ave. and I parked in front of the market there. And they had Washington and Parker blocked off for some reason. She was standing over there barricaded. And as I got out of my car, she come over, she says, "You know you're not supposed to make a U-turn there." And I said, "It's alright, I can make it there." She said, "No you can't, it's a business section." Well, I didn't argue with her, I said, "Well, okay I'll watch myself from now on." But I went and saw, looked up my vehicle code and it says in there that there is an exception that you can make a U-turn in a business district even with a firehouse there, as long as there's sign that say you can't do it. Well, I haven't seen her yet. But I went and checked with a couple of other officers, and asked them this question: Is there an exception to making a U-turn in a business section? And they said, "Oh no, you can't do that." I said, "Check the vehicle code with that section on it." And at the very end of it says that there is an exception that you can do it if there isn't any sign that says you can't. I had this same experience one time on a traffic problem in court with a judge. I written this party a citation, and he put not guilty and his defense attorney was an old fella that I knew very well, and the judge was an old fella that I knew very well also. And so, they got that point and this defense attorney got up and says, "Judge I move that this case be dismissed as the section does not apply." So, the judge picks up his vehicle-code book and opened to that section and read the first section, and said, "I agree. Case dismissed." And I was sitting by the district attorney at that time, and I didn't say anything to him, because it wasn't my place to say anything. And he didn't say anything. So afterwards I talked with the judge about the thing, and the judge says, "Well that'll teach me to read the whole section before I make a decision." And I laughed with the defense attorney afterward and said, "You'll pull anything won't you?" [laughs] He said, "Sure." And that's the way they do. They had nothing to lose. And he didn't have anything to lose, and everything to gain. And he did it, and the judge went along with it. So, this is one of those things that I try to teach all the personnel working under me to—if you make an arrest be sure that you have made a good arrest, and don't worry about what happens with the case after you've made the arrest. I said, many things may happen to it, which you have no control over, so don't get upset about it. Just remember that you did a good job and did your job.

2-00:39:13

Wheelock:

I was wondering, what was it exactly that made you decide to join the Richmond Police Department?

2-00:39:21

Hawkins:

Well, the main thing is that I knew about the job my father had. And I thought it was a fascinating job, and also I knew that the pay was good and the retirement was even better. So I knew that after twenty-five years I could, if I wanted to, I could retire. And I think some of those things are some of the basic things that I think a person looks out for. I was looking out for something that I could do that I would enjoy and I did enjoy it. Helping people is, many of them say, the main thing. But the excitement, if you want to call it that. The changing job things that occurred were very interesting to me. And like I say, one of the big things was I knew that after twenty-five years, if I wanted to I could retire, and so forth. And with any amount of luck live on what the retirement was.

2-00:40:48

Wheelock:

When you were hired had they started the Civil Service-type tests?

2-00:40:53

Hawkins:

Yes. In fact, I was one of the first ones where they gave a written examination and a physical, and even we had an agility out at the Richmond High School that you had to do certain things in order to qualify to come on the police department. And after that they'd kept the procedure of taking a written examination and qualifications, and they check your character and everything about you, and so forth. When I went into Naval Intelligence, I know when they checked me they checked my background as far as, all the way back to, one or two teachers that I had had in grammar school. And I was nineteen, twenty at that time. So they even checked, they're thoroughly as far as that part is concerned—your background, and so forth.

2-00:41:51

Wheelock:

And did you have an academy when you first started?

2-00:41:56

Hawkins:

Police department?

2-00:41:57

Wheelock:

Yes.

2-00:41:58

Hawkins:

No. We did have in-service classes by various officers on the Department. They were to give a class on this and that and so forth. They didn't have like they have in the present in the academy that they have now—that you go into. It was all, you read your manuals and so forth, and they give you class instruction. I think we had about at least a week, or two weeks of class instruction by various officers on the department in various procedures, and so forth.

2-00:42:42

Wheelock:

So you started—you had two weeks of classroom and then you were out on the street?

2-00:42:47

Hawkins:

Most of the time you were out with a training officer for a week or two, and then you were on your own.

2-00:42:55

Wheelock:

So you had basically had three weeks of training, and then you were free to go?

2-00:42:58

Hawkins:

Yeah, that was about it. Yeah, the rest of it, you hoped you knew enough by that time to keep yourself out of trouble.

2-00:43:10

Wheelock:

How did you remember all of the codes and stuff like it in three weeks?

2-00:43:13

Hawkins:

Well, in those days when I went onto the beat I had a large rubber band made out of an inner tube. And I had a penal code book, or nor a penal code book, but a vehicle code book, a notebook, and my citation book. And in the citation book I had a number of little note tags in there with various code numbers on them for the various offenses. And that's about all you had. And they hoped you knew enough the penal code in that that you could get by. You knew what you were doing.

2-00:43:56

Wheelock:

What was that like when you first started? Did you feel like you had enough training when you went out there at first?

2-00:44:04

Hawkins:

I think so. Because in a great respect, I think part of the making of a good officer is good judgment and somebody that's got his feet on the ground, and has good judgement and good thinking of what he's doing. He doesn't try to lord it over somebody and so forth. He's just a good average individual, and I can't think of the word I want to use. But just has a lot of good judgement.

2-00:44:50

Wheelock:

So, you learn by doing?

2-00:44:52

Hawkins:

Yeah, you learn by doing and making a few mistakes here and there, and hoping that they're not too serious and so forth, and generally they weren't. But mainly it was getting along with the public was the big part. And I also maintain that a police officer makes his own reputation as an individual. Not just because he's a cop, but so that people get to know you as being a fair and a just individual. And that goes a long way in getting your job done. People know that and friends

that know you and so forth. And every once in awhile thankfully someone will say, “Hey, he’s alright! He’s a good guy.” And that’s what helps you out if you know Joe Blow here and you’re talking to his cousin or something like that, and Joe Blow says something like, “Hey, he’s alright! He’s a nice guy and so.” That helps you out.

Interview with Fay Hawkins
 Interviewed by: Sarah Wheelock
 Transcriber: Matthew Schwartz
 [Interview 2 June 28, 2003]
 [Begin Audio File Hawkins3.6-28-03]

00:00:00

Wheelock:

I wanted to ask you about when you were in the Navy, stationed in San Francisco, and you said that you were working for Naval Intelligence. Is that right? Just ask you what you did as part of that? What did that entail, I guess?

00:00:17

Hawkins:

Well, most of that work was office type work—filing and checking through files and things of that nature. Just secretarial type work at that time.

00:00:35

Wheelock:

And then you got reassigned to Honolulu, right near the end of the war?

00:00:40

Hawkins:

Yeah, towards the end of the war in 1945. I guess it was about, in September or something like that, they were closing things down here, and sending all of the personnel down to Honolulu, to what they called JICPOA, which was Joint Army Navy Intelligence. And it was stationed just outside of Pearl harbor in Honolulu, and in an area they called Aiea. I think it was Aiea, I believe or something like that. And, so all of the intelligence stuff was going through that office.

00:01:24

Hawkin's Wife:

That's one of my, that little hummingbird crystal up there. [referring to noise on the recording]

00:01:38

Wheelock:

Go ahead.

00:01:39

Hawkins:

It's one of those in back of the—one of those. It won't do it now. [laughs]

00:01:48

Hawkin's Wife:

It's just when the breeze—.

00:01:49

Wheelock:

Just when the breeze comes in.

00:02:01

Hawkins:

I didn't that in the way. These things are so sensitive.

00:02:09

Hawkin's Wife:

If I whispered, would you hear me?

00:02:12

Hawkins:

Probably.

00:02:12

Wheelock:

Yeah, I'm sure. Okay, I'm sorry. So, you were saying everyone was reassigned.

00:02:20

Hawkins:

So we were being reassigned to Honolulu, in the Honolulu area. And doing the same type of work over there. I was doing the same type of office work and also security work around the perimeter itself.

00:02:42

Wheelock:

So was that patrolling? Like actual security?

00:02:45

Hawkins:

No, just more or less building security, more than patrolling and so forth.

00:02:53

Wheelock:

So was it similar to police work, some of it?

00:02:55

Hawkins:

In one respect, yes. Yes, it was similar to police work, slightly. Not—it's kind of hard to define it really.

00:03:12

Wheelock:

I was curious because in our earlier interview you talked about—I asked you like, "How did you decide to be a police officer?" And you said, "Well, it didn't really pay that well." And so, I was wondering what your motivation was considering that you could probably find—you already worked in a bank. I'm sure you could have find a lot of different things.

00:03:34

Hawkins:

I was pretty well satisfied that I was going to go on the police department many years before that. I did my father's occupation as a police officer here, and I knew that much about it, and I knew a lot of the personnel who were on the police department at that time. So, I had pretty well decided that's probably what I was going to do when I got home. In fact, I probably would have

gone on when I was twenty-one, except I was still in the service at that time, so I had to lay there for two or three years.

00:04:08

Hawkin's Wife:

He was over in the islands when our daughter turned one. So we took pictures and sent those over.

00:04:20

Wheelock:

Now you know nowadays, they have at the junior colleges and the college level people can take classes in law enforcement? They didn't have anything like that at that time?

00:04:33

Hawkins:

No, at that time they didn't have the present type of curriculum in the colleges or in the schools for police work. Those were developed in the late-fifties and sixties to where, in most case now, a lot of people going into police work do go into the junior colleges that have a police academy and they learn a lot about police work there. And a lot of departments now will use that training and the graduates from there as personnel that they will choose from to become a police officer for their community.

00:05:23

Wheelock:

What did you think about that, when they started to implement these programs?

00:05:26

Hawkins:

I think it was good. Because when I went on in 1946 the schooling we had was in-service training. They were by the department's own personnel, who were good, and they would train us, give us courses in law and all kinds of police work—apprehension, firearms training and everything on there. And that went on for about four to six weeks of in-service training that way. Then we were put out with a beat officer to ride along with him and observe and learn beat work, and so forth, from the training officer. And that went on for two or three weeks, and then you finally graduated to where you were on your own. And, hopefully you learned enough to keep you out of trouble.

00:06:31

Wheelock:

So you started, like you said, you started in 1946 with the police department. And I was wondering if you felt like there was a difference between the people that were from Richmond originally and the people that moved here during the war, in terms of how they related to the police?

00:06:58

Hawkins:

Yes. Well they came here from all over the country, and during wartime. And it was mainly because—well of the war, and the job opportunity that enabled them to get a job and make good money while they were working here. And as the war progressed, and finished. The shipyards cut back down, and a lot of the people stayed here in the community. This became their home.

And you could understand why, because most of them were from other parts of the country where job opportunities were not there. And so they were making good money out here and they liked living here, so they continued to live here.

00:08:01

Wheelock:

So, in terms of people that you ran into or people you had encounters with—earlier in our interview, you had said that sometimes you would go into bars and people would be fighting. And the idea was that if there were no weapons involved, then it was just kind of let them brawl it out amongst themselves, because that was how they had been—that was their, you know, culture from?

00:08:27

Hawkins:

Yes, I understand. That's true to a certain extent. You tried—you broke up the fight. You didn't let them continue fighting, regardless of whether there were weapons or not. But in most cases, it was mutual combat between people with no weapons involved. So you did break it up, you couldn't let them go ahead and keep fighting, because others would probably get involved, which you didn't want. But the main thing was to make sure there were no weapons involved. And there were a lot of times people went out behind the barn, so to speak, and they duked it out back there with no weapons involved. And you got a long with the people better yourself, when you understood what the problem was and you didn't go overboard with weapons yourself. They respected you more because you didn't use any kind of weapons yourself in settling the situation than otherwise.

00:09:55

Wheelock:

The other thing I was curious about is that during the war they needed more police officers, and obviously it was hard to find people to hire. So I was wondering where did they find people to become police officers during World War II?

00:10:11

Hawkins:

They just wanted us to put an advertisement in the paper, and word of mouth when you would talk to people on the street and say why don't you go down. And at that time—during the wartime—all you had to do was apply and you probably were taken in. They did a background check. It wasn't really a through background check, but they would do a background check—make sure you weren't wanted in someplace for crimes yourself. And at those times you bought your own equipment, and they handed you a badge and say, go on out. That's about what happened in many cases with very little training. It was after I came on in 1946 that they really got into the training and the testing procedure to become a police officer. The requirement was, always was, that you had to live in Richmond and be a citizen of Richmond to be a member of the police department, and you had to live in the city. Sometime in the 1950s or early-sixties they had to abandon that requirement as unconstitutional, and as a result of that a lot of people did not live in town. In fact, some of that did live in town moved out of town. And I personally, I think that they should be able to keep that requirement because I feel that the person that is working for the city as a police officer or a firemen—it becomes more their property. And I think they would take—they have more pride in taking care of that property, other than just as

jobs, like any other job around. That's my own personal feelings on the thing. It's like your own property. You keep better care of your own property than you do your neighbor's. If you come in here from out of town and it's just a job, and soon as you're off of it you go out of town and so forth. So, you don't care. And technically a police officer is a police officer twenty-four hours a day in the community he's working at. With that they can live any place, I personally think that they should change it. I'm old fashioned enough on that. There's a lot of things like that I think that they should not have changed. I think they have broken down a lot of the strict requirements of eligibility to become a police officer. I don't care who it is, as long as they have the ability to do the job and that's the main thing.

00:13:26

Wheelock:

I was wondering. The people that were—if you know about this—the people that were hired during World War II, were they people that had lived in Richmond before the war? Or had they moved to California along with a lot of other people that came over here and they were hired?

00:13:46

Hawkins:

I don't really know, but I think that they just came to Richmond from other areas, and either to work in the shipyards, or maybe they were working in the shipyards and they weren't content enough. They would talk to other police officers. And sometimes the police officers would say, "Well why don't you go down and apply to the police department, and so forth. And a lot of people were recruited in that manner, just word of mouth. And they were able to meet the requirements at that time and so forth.

00:14:27

Wheelock:

Do you know if anybody was recruited out of state?

00:14:32

Hawkins:

Not that I know of. I believe that at one time or during some of the times that they were recruiting for a chief of police that they did recruit from out of state. But, let's see none of the chiefs that I worked under was recruited from out of state. Most of them were members of the department, then went through the ranks and became the chief.

00:15:15

Wheelock:

Now, for something else I wanted to ask. How things changed after Miranda, because you retired in '72, was that right?

00:15:26

Hawkins:

Yeah.

00:15:27

Wheelock:

And I was just wondering if you had a feeling of how things were before and after that decision?

00:15:37

Hawkins:

Well, your interrogation, mainly with Miranda decision, when you talked to a person if he was your private suspect, you had to be very careful of how you talked to that person and got information from him—interrogated him. Because under Miranda, there were so many ways that the fellow's attorney later could have things thrown out of court because you didn't give him his rights and so forth. Give him all of his rights that he was entitled to. It did affect your ability to some respect. But you got around that. You learned to live with it. And you would talk to people and so forth. You had to be very careful, and be able to prove that you didn't violate the man's rights. A lot of things changed as time went on, with civil rights and Miranda decision, and all of the others like that, that made it actually more difficult for the officers to obtain the information they needed to solve crime. There were so many loopholes that were there, that would trip the officer up and his presenting of the evidence, that they were thrown out of court. And so it made it, as I said, it made it a little more difficult in how you obtained your evidence.

00:17:33

Wheelock:

There was something that you wanted to say about, something we brought up in the other interview with the--.

00:17:39

Hawkins:

As far as I mentioned before, about the taking of vagrants to the San Rafael Ferry or to the city limits and saying, "Well, goodbye. Don't come back." Those things have happened from time to time when a lot of departments--. But they mostly were in years ago, thirty, forty—well, I have remember I've been retired thirty some odd years. Sixty, seventy years ago back in the twenties and the thirties, something like that, before they even thought of civil rights. Not that people's civil rights were violated all the time, but it just the way that the country grew up. And you could do a lot of things back in the 1920s and thirties that you couldn't do today because of the legal requirements that are in place now. Not that what you did was really violates a lot of rights, it was just that is was one of those things man to man that you understood each other.

00:19:05

Wheelock:

So, my final question. Looking back on your career, if you were talking to somebody who was wanting to get into law enforcement, is there anything that you would give them as advice or reflection on your career?

00:19:27

Hawkins:

Go ahead; take all the training that you can get and law enforcement is still a good occupation and there are benefits to it, both financially and otherwise that you would get from it. And just have a good judgment. And take in all of the training that you can in the various aspects of it. And things are different now than they were when I went on. A lot of the things they changed are for the better. Some I don't think are. They should do some of the old things, I think. They talk about community policing. That's pretty much what I was brought up on in the department, because we had the city was cut up into what we call beats at that time—certain areas of the town. And an officer was assigned to that beat, and his sergeant kept pretty well track of him and told him you keep, you be clean. In other words, in those days you took care of everything

that happened on your beat. No matter whether it was murder or robbery or thefts or parking or traffic or whatever. You took care of the problem. You didn't say, "Well we'll get somebody else out here, we have a parking enforcement, we have a traffic enforcement, and so forth. That's what they have. They have more of less specialists. In those days, every officer on his beat was a specialist in everything. And he took the initial reports, and he may turn everything over to the detective later. But the initial thing was done by the officer himself. And nowadays, I don't know whether that's done now or not.

00:21:43

Wheelock:

Is there anything else you want to add?

00:21:46

Hawkins:

Well, like I said there, the community policing, I was more or less brought up on that, and to me community policing is the officer knowing the people that live in the area that he's patrolling, and getting the people to know him. And when this happens, I think the officer has a much easier time with solving crimes and so forth on his beat.

00:22:15

Wheelock:

Well thank you for all of this.

00:22:18

Hawkins:

Yeah.