

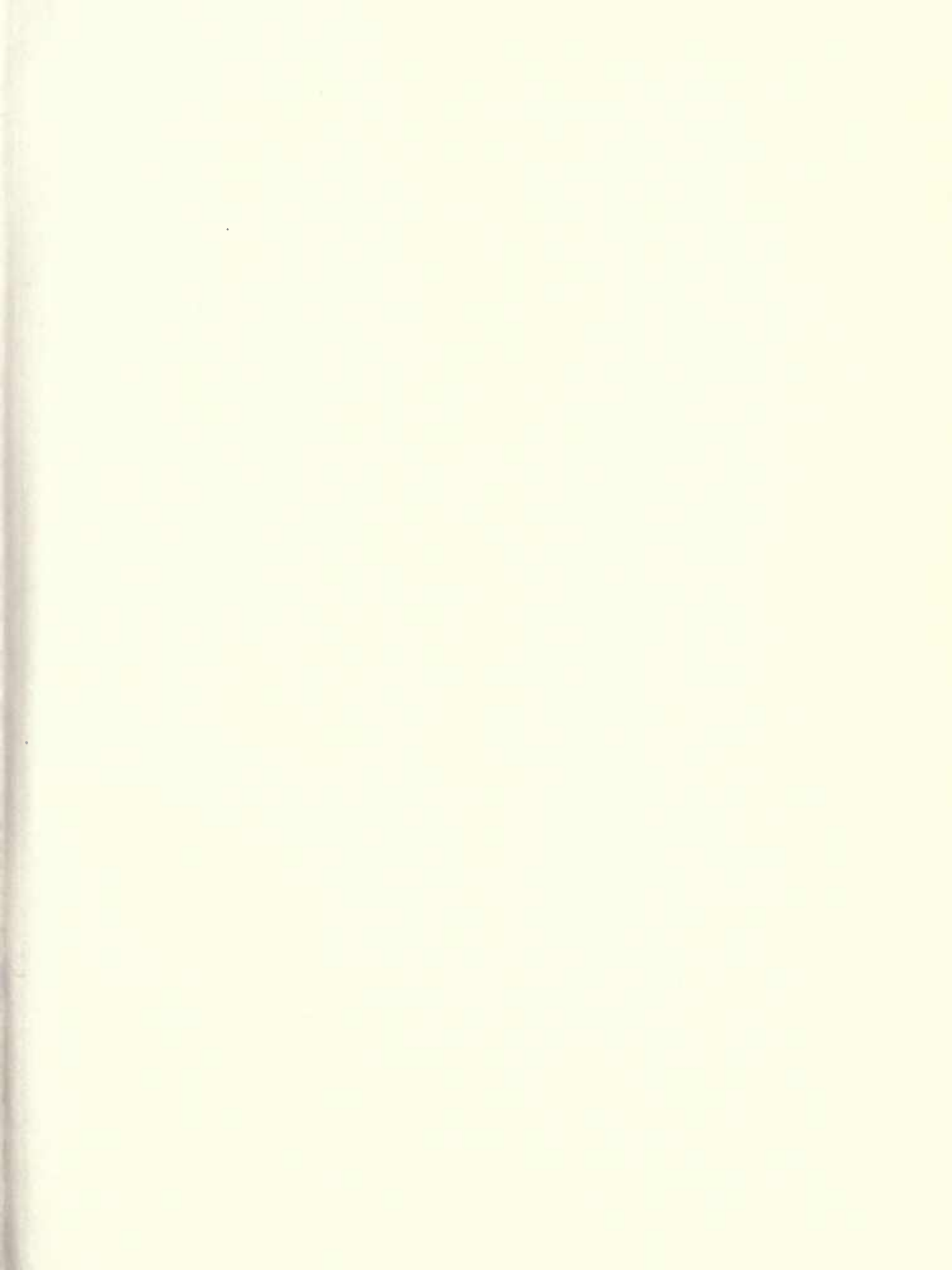


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AUGUST VOLLMER: PIONEER IN POLICE PROFESSIONALISM

John Holstrom	Vollmer as a Man: Memories of a Close Friend and Colleague
O.W. Wilson	Training by Correspondence: Vollmer's Influence on Orlando Wilson, Berkeley's Most Famous "College Cop"
Milton Chernin	The University Years: Vollmer as a Professor
General William Dean	Vollmer's Influence on the Career of An Army General
Rose Glavinovich	Covering the Berkeley Police Department: August Vollmer and the Press
Gene Woods	August Vollmer: His Community and His Staff
Al Coffey	August Vollmer: A Man of Principle and Action
George Brereton	Looking Back: Ex-Director of the California Department of Justice Remembers His Years as a Patrolman Under August Vollmer
Thomas Hunter	The "V" Men, Vollmer's Dedicated Proteges
Willard Schmidt	Enforcing Prohibition: August Vollmer, Earl Warren, and Willard Schmidt
Muriel Hunter	August Vollmer's Secretary Talks about Her Boss
Alfred Parker	Vollmer's Biographer Discusses His Subject

Interviews Conducted by

Jane Howard Robinson





August Vollmer in home study  
1950



August Vollmer, shortly after retirement, 1932  
Berkeley Police Department

May 21 1950



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## PREFACE

The August Vollmer Historical Project was initiated in the Spring of 1971, while I was doing research on the development of police professionalism in the United States in connection with a doctoral dissertation for the School of Criminology, University of California at Berkeley. My discussions with police leaders such as John Holstrom (Berkeley Police Chief from 1944-1960, later lecturer in the School of Criminology) and Bruce Baker (present Berkeley Police Chief) led me to recognize the strong impact that August Vollmer had had in shaping modern law enforcement during his years as Berkeley police chief (1905 to 1932) and later as a writer and educator in police administration. The generation of Berkeley police leaders following Vollmer had vivid memories of the years of innovation and development during which they worked with him, and they communicated to me their strong feeling that some record of Vollmer's influence should be made by those who had worked closely with him.

At this time my research was being funded by a fellowship from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. From these funds I set aside about \$1,000 as an initial budget for a historical project on Vollmer. The project was developed in conjunction with the Bancroft Library, University of California, and consisted of two main aspects: First, collecting and cataloguing materials on Vollmer's life and career that were dispersed in various places. Most of Vollmer's private papers had been left to the Bancroft Library upon his death in 1955, but had never been catalogued. A considerable amount of material was also located in the files of the Berkeley Police Department, which I proposed to have transferred to the Bancroft Library where it could be catalogued and assimilated with the other materials. Additional papers, letters and photographs were in the possession of former associates of Vollmer.

Second, we planned to conduct a series of oral interviews with former colleagues and friends of Vollmer's, who could give their impressions of Vollmer as a man and as a police leader, and could supply information on the specific aspects of his career with which they were most closely connected. Because Vollmer had such a strong personal influence on other police leaders, I felt that these interviews, conducted under the supervision of the Regional Oral History Office of the Bancroft Library, would lend depth to future biographies of Vollmer and future studies of the period and profession.

It was soon evident that available funds and staff would be inadequate for this ambitious job. The first objective, collecting and cataloguing the Vollmer papers, was limited to a modest effort, in the expectation that the Bancroft Library would be able to supply the staff to complete the job over a longer period of time. We decided to concentrate our present funds upon conducting the oral interviews, and received generous support from several





people. Mrs. Willa Baum, Head of the Regional Oral History Office, agreed to provide technical assistance and guidance for the project. Since I would be leaving Berkeley in July, 1971, to take a position on the faculty of Trenton State College, New Jersey, Mr. Holstrom agreed to supervise the project following my departure. He also provided invaluable advice about the design of the project and the selection of persons to be interviewed. Dean Sheldon Messinger of the School of Criminology volunteered the School's clerical support for transcribing, typing and correcting the manuscript interviews. Finally, I was able to recruit Jane Howard Robinson, a fellow graduate student with whom I had been associated in a professional program in India, to become Project Director and serve as the project's only paid staff member. Mrs. Robinson assumed the responsibility for conducting the interviews and coordinating their typing, editing, proofreading, and final preparation for binding.

### PROCEDURE

Our first concern was to determine who should be interviewed, and how Jane Robinson, as interviewer, could best encourage interview subjects to talk fully and openly about their work and friendship with August Vollmer. I drew up a list of potential subjects who could provide a meaningful perspective on Vollmer as a man and a police professional. Mr. Holstrom developed a comprehensive list of sources of information about Vollmer, including retired and former members of the Berkeley Police Department and other friends of Vollmer. From these sources we developed a list of interview subjects for Mrs. Robinson to contact.

We developed an open-ended questionnaire to serve as a guide for the interviews, after consultation with Mr. Holstrom, the Bancroft Library Regional Oral History Office, and Alfred Parker, co-author with Vollmer of two books on policing and author of an informal biography of him.\* The questionnaire (see Appendix A), containing only seven questions or topics, was used as a tool to encourage free discussion, not to direct or contain it. The questionnaire was revised slightly about midway through the project, since Mrs. Robinson found that a rearrangement of topics led to a smoother flow of conversation during interviews. (See Appendix B for copy.)

Concurrent with this project, the Regional Oral History Office was involved in an extensive oral history of Earl Warren. August Vollmer's term as chief of the Berkeley Police Department overlapped Warren's term as District Attorney of Alameda County, and on many occasions throughout the years the two men worked together. Mrs. Amelia Fry, Director of the Warren project, worked with Mrs. Robinson and me to develop some general questions that were asked to Vollmer interview subjects concerning Vollmer's relation with Warren. Specific topics were outlined for the interview with

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\*Alfred E. Parker, Crime Fighter: August Vollmer (New York: Macmillan, 1961).



Willard Schmidt, as he had worked very closely with Warren in enforcing Prohibition laws in Emeryville.

Interview subjects were contacted by telephone or mail by either Mr. Holstrom or Mrs. Robinson. When Holstrom made the contact, Mrs. Robinson called or wrote to confirm.

The interviews were conducted informally. If subjects asked what preparation they should make for the interview, Mrs. Robinson stressed that the session would be informal, and that they should simply talk about what Vollmer was like, and how they remembered him. If they felt a strong need for written guidance, the questions were sent to them. All efforts were directed toward producing relaxed, informal interviews that would show Vollmer as an individual.

Thirteen interviews were conducted. One was inadvertently erased, and a repeat interview was not possible. The final volume contains twelve interviews. (See Appendix C for a list of subjects and interview dates.)

The interview tapes were transcribed by the School of Criminology secretarial staff under the direction of Mrs. Linda Peachee. Mrs. Robinson corrected the tapes for typing errors and forwarded them to the subjects for changes, deletions, additions, and corrections. The corrected and revised tapes were returned to Mrs. Robinson and forwarded by her to the School of Criminology for final typing. They were then proofed, corrected, given a final reading, and forwarded to the Regional Oral History Office for indexing, copying, and binding.

Taping, travel costs, coordination of processing and preparing the interview volume consumed the entire August Vollmer Historical Project budget, as was anticipated shortly after the project was conceived and designed. Fortunately, the other aspect of the original project design -- cataloging Vollmer's personal papers and transferring the Berkeley Police Department papers to the Bancroft Library -- did find support in the Bancroft Library. As of June 1972, cataloging of Vollmer's personal papers was almost complete. Discussions between the Berkeley Police Department and the Bancroft Library had led to the transfer of papers on the Vollmer era from the department to the library, with cataloging of the papers to begin after completion of the cataloging of personal files.

In the course of this project and independent work on the career of August Vollmer, my own dissertation research came to center almost entirely upon Vollmer's role in the early development of police professionalism. The dissertation is in the final stages of writing, under the title "August Vollmer and the Origins of Police Professionalism," and will be formally completed by the Fall of 1972. The Earl Warren history, mentioned above, also contains much relevant material on this period of policing and social change. It is my hope that, when the Vollmer papers are cataloged and made available to other scholars, further research will be conducted into this important era in the history of American policing.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have been involved in making the oral interview project possible. I would like to thank John Holstrom for his continuous advice and support, and for his cooperation in contacting many of his colleagues to arrange for interviews. It would have been very difficult to win the cooperation of many of the subjects without Mr. Holstrom's support. He also provided the highly useful list of interview subjects and other Vollmer associates, which will remain on file in the Regional Oral History Office in Bancroft Library, to use as a guide should funds become available for further research.

Within the School of Criminology, Dean Sheldon Messinger deserves recognition both for the initial encouragement and advice he provided to us and for the many hours of secretarial support he made available. Ann Goolsby, his assistant, managed the funds for the project. Linda Peachee coordinated the transcribing, typing, and correcting of all interviews at the School of Criminology. She and other secretarial staff members provided many hours of cheerful service, despite the fact that this work was not in any way a part of their regular duties.

I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable technical assistance and support that made the production of a formal volume possible. Mrs. Willa Baum provided extensive advice on all aspects of the project, and supervised the final production of the volume of interviews. Mrs. Amelia Fry provided questions to the interviewer that helped to establish the link between the careers of August Vollmer and Earl Warren.

The Berkeley Police Department under the leadership of Chief Bruce Baker also provided the project with important support. They made all personnel records available to Mr. Holstrom to assist in the development of the list of interview sources, and provided space for the interview with Mr. Schmidt.

I am also grateful for the financial support that was possible through the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, in the form of a fellowship that has enabled me to pursue my research in the history of American policing. These funds were sufficient to permit us to produce this volume of interviews, and to provide a beginning for future research that may be possible in this area.

The primary credit for the success of this venture, however, belongs to Jane Howard Robinson, who provided the only link between all the individuals and departments involved. Her skill in coordinating all aspects of the project, from interviews to financing and typing, has prevented the project from languishing for want of direction. She has used her good judgment in interviewing and editing to ensure a rich level of interview material, and has coped patiently with the difficulties of administering a project that often involved people living at considerable distance from Berkeley.



We are pleased to have gathered these interviews together, and hope that they will stimulate further research on August Vollmer and his times.

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June 1972







Course in microcopy in Berkeley Police School, 1915. Left to right: August Vollmer; A.S.J. Woods, Captain; Oscar Puteker, Sergeant; C.D. Lee, Captain; Walter Johnson, Captain; Frank Rogersoll, Superintendent of Records; Charles Becker, Sergeant. Standing: Dr. Albert Schneider.



August Vollmer with Chief of Junior Traffic Police. 1949.



August Vollmer



## INTRODUCTION

The image of professional policing as we know it today is largely the creation of one man, August Vollmer, who was police chief of Berkeley, California, from 1905 to 1932. Vollmer was a tireless crusader for the reform of policing through technology and higher personnel standards. Under his direction the Berkeley department became a model of professional policing -- efficient, honest, scientific. He introduced into Berkeley a patrol-wide police signal system, the first completely mobile patrol -- first on bicycles, then in squad cars -- modern records systems, beat analysis and modus operandi. The first scientific crime laboratory in the United States was set up in Berkeley in 1916, under the direction of a full-time forensic scientist. The first lie detector machine to be used in criminal investigation was built in the Berkeley department in 1921.<sup>1</sup>

Vollmer's department was best known for the caliber of its personnel. He introduced formal police training in 1908, later encouraging his men to attend classes in police administration that were taught each summer at the University of California. Eventually he introduced psychological and intelligence testing into the recruitment process and actively recruited college students from the University, starting around 1919. This was the beginning of Berkeley's "college cops," who set the tone for the department throughout the 1920s and 30s and came to be accepted by police leaders as the ultimate model of efficient, modern policing.

Nationally, Vollmer worked through such forums as the International Association of Chiefs of Police, serving as President in 1922. He served as a police consultant in cities like Kansas City, Missouri (1929), and he directed the police study for the 1931 National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement,<sup>2</sup> better known as the Wickersham Report. He condemned the corruption and ineffectiveness that prevailed in most American police departments and urged professionalization of the police function, removal of political influence from routine police operations, and the adoption of modern technological methods.

Vollmer's concept of professionalism has dominated police literature since he articulated it, and remains relatively unquestioned today. We need to explore the origins of this concept, the historical realities within which it developed, and the police department that served as its model.

James Q. Wilson has characterized Vollmer's professional police department as one that emphasized "efficiency, law enforcement, aggressive street patrol, and honesty."<sup>3</sup> Traditional policing in the period when Vollmer was active was the victim of political meddling and inept leadership, and the traditional policeman was haphazardly selected and poorly trained. The ideal professional policeman, on the other hand, is honest,



skilled, and impartial in the face of competing political demands that are made upon him. He is trained in the technology of policing, especially in criminal identification, evidence gathering and investigation. He avoids the overtly coercive aspects of policing whenever possible, aiming instead for the prevention of crime or confrontation through his appreciation of the psychology and sociology of crime and criminals.

August Vollmer was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1876. His only formal education beyond the grade school level was a vocational course in bookkeeping, typing and shorthand that he took at the New Orleans Academy. His family moved to Berkeley, California in 1891 when Vollmer was 15. Three years later he opened a coal and feed store with a friend and was active in the formation of a volunteer fire department. He enlisted in the army when the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898 and was sent for a year to the Philippines, where the U.S. Army was engaged in warfare with indigenous Filipino groups following the expulsion of the Spanish. Vollmer took part in river patrols and participated in 25 engagements with the enemy. He came to admire the organizational skills of the professional army corps, and frequently referred to his army experience in later years when discussing the strategy of police operations. After returning home, he worked as a letter carrier in Berkeley for four years until he was approached to run for town marshal.

Police scholar Bruce Smith has referred to the position of marshal as "not primarily devised for what we now know as police work."<sup>4</sup> In Berkeley, the marshal was a political functionary who ran for election every two years and was responsible for a loosely organized body of services. Law enforcement had been lax in the past, and Berkeley had acquired a reputation for having poor police protection. Gambling and opium dens operated with little interference from the authorities, and criminals from San Francisco and Oakland found the town an easy target. It was these conditions that prompted several leading citizens to sponsor Vollmer for the job. His backers included Friend Richardson, editor of the daily newspaper and later governor of California from 1922-26; and George Schmidt, Postmaster, both important members of the Republican Party. Vollmer campaigned hard and won election by a margin of three to one.

Vollmer entered policing during the Progressive era, in a town that was known for its reform-minded citizens.<sup>5</sup> At that time Berkeley was a town of 20,000 persons, many of whom earned their living in San Francisco or Oakland but were alarmed by the corruption and lawlessness that prevailed there. Only fifty years before, San Francisco justice had been dominated by vigilante committees, the most organized and powerful in American history.<sup>6</sup> The current police forces both there and in Oakland had reputations for corruption and inefficiency.

Berkeley was an ideal setting for the introduction of an honest, efficient, technological police force. It was a small city dominated by middle-class business, professional and academic groups who supported municipal reform. Vollmer was able to provide the aggressive leadership in policing



that the community wanted. As one associate has described it, Vollmer "pushed crime north and south,"<sup>7</sup> creating a haven of honest policing. At one time Berkeley had the lowest crime rate of any city in its class, along with the lowest per capita police costs.<sup>8</sup>

History also intervened, when the San Francisco earthquake and fire in 1906 overnight doubled Berkeley's population and began a boom period of economic development, spurred by businesses that deserted San Francisco for the East Bay. Vollmer turned his department from a town patrol into an urban police force in a few short months, and the community was willing and financially able to support bond issues to pay for his innovations.

Scholars will date professional policing from Vollmer's decision that the police officer needed significantly special skills to do his job, skills that could not be learned on the beat by a recruit who was indifferent to the "higher purposes" of policing. He was awed by the amount of technical information that could be used in crime investigation, an awareness that he developed from his contact with professors at the University and his own program of self education. Any new technology, whether two-way radios or computers, required the retraining of existing line operations, and suggested that the occupation may have been significantly changed by the introduction of the new techniques. Old-style policing had been so inefficient and uninspired that there seemed to be a radical difference between a political functionary who walked a beat and Vollmer's image of a trained professional who attacks crime with an armory of technical aids. It was natural for Vollmer and his advisers in the University faculty to overestimate the technical and intellectual skills that the new policeman would be required to have. He developed an almost visionary concept of the kind of individual who should be a professional policeman:

My fancy pictures to me a new profession in which the very best manhood in our nation will be happy to serve in the future. Why should not the cream of the nation be perfectly willing to devote their lives to the cause of service providing that service is dignified, socialized and professionalized. Surely the Army offers no such opportunity for contributing to the welfare of the nation and yet men unhesitatingly spend their lives preparing for army service.<sup>9</sup>

What we see from the interviews below is that Vollmer was able to transmit that vision to many others.

From this enthusiasm emerged the finest police training programs and selection procedures in the country. In 1908 Vollmer began the Berkeley Police School, at a time when most departments did not even have informal training: officers were merely assigned to a beat and told to maintain "law and order."<sup>10</sup> This first school, which deputy marshals attended while off duty, had classes in police methods taught by Vollmer and an Oakland police





inspector; first aid; photography; and courses in sanitation laws and criminal evidence, taught by professors from the University. By 1930, two years before Vollmer retired, recruits were receiving 312 hours of work within the police school, in a curriculum that included, in addition to technical police subjects, Criminal Law and Procedure, Police Psychiatry, Criminal Identification, and Police Organization and Administration.<sup>11</sup> Vollmer himself taught police administration courses during summer sessions at the University between the years 1916 and 1931, and after his retirement from the department was appointed a research professor in Berkeley's political science department.

The "college cop" program began around 1919 when Vollmer placed an ad in the campus newspaper inviting students to earn extra money by becoming Berkeley police officers. This was a period of economic recession and many students responded, perhaps also attracted by the challenge of passing the intelligence tests that the department was using to screen recruits.

There is a gap between the image of the "college cop" that emerged from Berkeley, and the actual reality in the department, for college graduates never did comprise a majority of the force. They did, however, dominate the character or image of the department, especially in those early years. O.W. Wilson was to be the most successful of Vollmer's college cops, and a number of others had successful careers within the department or, more frequently, left for leadership positions in other police agencies or police education programs. Many college students worked in the department until graduation, at which time they left to pursue other careers.

During the years when he developed the Berkeley department, Vollmer was sensitive to the importance of using the press, both to maintain communications with reform elements in his own community, and to influence police reform throughout the country. This was a period when the press was a strong factor in California reform movements.<sup>12</sup> For several months early in his career, Vollmer was the subject of bitter attacks in the local paper, because of a disagreement with the editor over police policies. Vollmer never replied publicly to the attacks, nor did he criticize the newspaper in an attempt to gain support. The editor respected Vollmer for his restraint and soon initiated a reconciliation, and thereafter supported the department strongly.<sup>13</sup> Vollmer later used this incident in cautioning his junior officers against warring with the press, and he had a keen appreciation of the process that we now refer to as "image-building." His police/community relations were so successful in Berkeley that the mayor described the city's policemen in 1940 as "among the most popular individuals in the community, and every citizen (is) an ex officio champion of the police department...."<sup>14</sup>

Crime news was a more important part of newspapers then than it is today, and the Berkeley department had five or six full-time reporters assigned to it from Berkeley, Oakland and San Francisco newspapers.<sup>15</sup> Before a new building was built in the mid-1920s, the press shared the squad room with working policemen, and throughout Vollmer's term as chief he granted the press open access to police records, so long as they respected the department's decision not to publicize certain stories.



Vollmer was making news in the Berkeley department, and his innovations soon gained a nationwide audience. But he also valued more scholarly and professional forums than the daily newspapers, and became a prolific contributor, writing in support of his ideas about the upgrading of policing through technology and personnel reform. Vollmer was well-acquainted with the important literature in criminal law, criminology and social science, as reflected in the curriculum of his police training school, and had a long association with the Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology. He was the only police chief to be a member of its advisory board during the early period. He developed ties with academic communities outside of Berkeley, and wrote about policing in publications where researchers and scholars would read his ideas. No other police leader reached such an audience, and Vollmer soon became the primary spokesman for those who worked in policing. He acquired the important "face validity" within the academic community of a person who could claim to be doing as well as observing and criticizing. His critics within the police establishment were seen, often with justification, as reactionaries, or merely jealous of the favorable national attention that Vollmer's department received. Working at a time when most police leaders were impatient and resentful over what they felt was an overemphasis on the social conditions responsible for crime, Vollmer succeeded in getting the International Association of Chiefs of Police to pass a resolution pledging cooperation with various national research and reform groups.<sup>16</sup> In effect, the resolution called for a redefinition of the police function to include work with the intangibles of crime prevention.

For Vollmer, control of crime was the first role of the policeman, and was to be accomplished by giving him better organization and techniques than were available to the criminal elements. The other principal role of the policeman is discussed in a 1919 article that Vollmer wrote for a police journal, entitled "The Policeman as a Social Worker," in which he outlined his ideas about the importance of crime prevention, especially with juveniles.<sup>17</sup> The policeman was to work as part of a social team to identify and help children who might become social problems. During the same year Vollmer and a Berkeley psychiatrist initiated a study in Berkeley's Hawthorne elementary school, in conjunction with community social work and education groups, that tested all the children in hopes of predicting future delinquency.

This was a period -- immediately following the First World War -- when crime actually was increasing at an alarming rate,<sup>18</sup> and Vollmer's emphasis on crime prevention was a response, with the tools of the day, to a legitimate public concern. It also reflected his long-term interest in the use of psychiatry to explain the nature of criminality. Vollmer's book The Criminal, written in 1949, was the culmination of a lifetime of study in this area and he considered it his best work.<sup>19</sup> Although his theories of criminality seem dated today, they had a profound effect upon his concept of policing.



The Berkeley department also served as the training ground for new Alameda County deputy district attorneys, and it was in this connection that Vollmer came to know Earl Warren, who received his early experience as a prosecuting attorney in Berkeley. Warren has said that Vollmer "excited his interest in a host of problems relating to law enforcement and the need for improvement."<sup>20</sup> When Warren became District Attorney and began the "gangbusting" raids against gambling that brought him fame throughout California, he used Berkeley policemen and equipment to supplement his own small staff, and locked up his prisoners in the Berkeley jail. Vollmer's department had already developed the techniques of investigation and photography that Warren needed to gather evidence that would hold up in courts which were often unsympathetic. In later years, Warren and Vollmer worked together to set up police education programs in the state colleges and to develop state law enforcement agencies.<sup>21</sup>

It is relevant here to mention Vollmer's attitude toward the "third degree" technique of obtaining confessions. As might be expected, he was strongly opposed to such police methods, which were in common use at the time and were extensively documented in the 1931 Wickersham Report.<sup>22</sup> Although Vollmer opposed the third degree for many reasons, including the violation of individual rights, the core of his objection was that third degree techniques were the poorest method of collecting sound evidence that would hold up in court. The ultimate result of using evidence based on "third degree" confessions he felt, was that suspicion was cast on all police testimony, whereas he believed that the trained professional policeman should be viewed as the most reliable and neutral witness available. Critics of police excesses who welcomed Vollmer as a voice of enlightenment were right in perceiving that he agreed with their stand against the third degree and other brutal techniques, but essentially they and Vollmer came to this agreement from different perspectives: most of the critics were reacting against the very fact of excessive police power; Vollmer was reacting against its inefficiency as a tool of law enforcement.

Vollmer's enthusiasm for scientific lie detection was a natural outcome of his stand against the third degree, and he never lost faith that new breakthroughs would eventually correct the inadequacies that plagued the use of the lie detector in criminal investigation. John Larson, a "college cop" who built the first lie detector in the Berkeley department, later said that he felt the technique had been turned into a form of "psychological third degree," and confessed that he sometimes regretted having had a hand in its development.<sup>23</sup>

Although Vollmer conducted management surveys of numerous police departments during his long career, he served as chief in only one other city, Los Angeles, for a year in 1921-22. In Los Angeles he quickly recognized that the reform elements were far too weak to sustain a Berkeley-style department, and he concentrated his efforts on upgrading middle-management personnel, creating a cadre of committed officers who had a long-term impact as they rose to positions of leadership. This was typical of Vollmer's approach to personnel management, for although he constantly stressed the importance of training the line officer -- the patrolman on the beat --, he



devoted most of his own energies to training police executives. He worked to instill within police leadership a commitment to professional ideals, probably because he sensed that the internal pressure for reform and high standards would have to be strong enough to counteract the competing external political demands that he regarded as illegitimate.

August Vollmer worked for police reform throughout the first half of this century. His ideas were promulgated through the police executives he trained; through professional groups like the International Association of Chiefs of Police; through scholarly journals and societies; and through government surveys and reports, most notably the Wickersham Report. Both the regional and national press publicized the advanced practices of the Berkeley Police Department, and urban crime commissions and police departments requested Vollmer's services as a consultant.

Vollmer's professionalism was rooted in the freedom of the police from political interference; it stressed technical innovations in patrol, communications and investigation, and required a skilled, dedicated police officer. It also offered more for the working policeman, by emphasizing improved wages, modern facilities, and the dignity of performing an important service. The police field was rich ground for the application of new technical advances which met the needs of Americans living in an urban environment. Crime was increasing, institutions were being reshaped, and a better organized, honest and skilled police could protect important community interests from social turmoil.

Vollmer's true impact can best be understood by reading through the following interviews. His influence touched not only his "college cops," but also several generations of police leaders and writers in the field. Don L. Kooken, Rollin Perkins, William A. Westley, James Q. Wilson and A.C. Germann are among those who have acknowledged Vollmer's importance in establishing standards for professional policing.

Many of his innovations were based on ideas that may be traced to others, ideas that came from his associates, from police experiences in other countries, and from academic sources. Vollmer recognized the potential of these ideas and unified them into a working whole, using his energy and dedication to set a pattern for police reform that continues to this day.

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June 1972





FOOTNOTES

1. Biographical material on August Vollmer and the history of the Berkeley Police Department is taken from the following sources: Albert Deutsch, The Trouble with Cops (New York: Crown Publishers, 1954); J.D. Holstrom, "Supplement: Some Sources of Information," prepared for the August Vollmer Historical Project, Oral History Section, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley, 1971; Alfred E. Parker, Crime Fighter: August Vollmer (New York: Macmillan, 1961); and unpublished interviews conducted for the August Vollmer Historical Project, op. cit.
2. National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, Report on Police (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931).
3. In the Introduction to August Vollmer's The Police and Modern Society (Montclair, N.J.: Patterson Smith, 1971), p. v.
4. Bruce Smith, Police Systems in the United States, 2nd Rev. Ed. (New York: Harper and Bros., 1960), p. v.
5. See George E. Mowry, The California Progressives (Quadrangle Books, 1963), p. 86.
6. See R.M. Brown, "The American Vigilante Tradition," in Graham and Gurr, The History of Violence in America (New York: Bantam, 1969), p. 162.
7. John D. Holstrom, interview with the August Vollmer Historical Project, op. cit., 1971.
8. V.A. Leonard, Police Organization and Management, 2nd Ed. (Brooklyn: Foundation Press, 1964), pp. 93-4.
9. Letter written from Chicago to Acting Chief Jack Greening, Oct. 15, 1930, Bancroft Library.
10. For example, see the story related by Deutsch, op. cit., p. 226.
11. Allen Gammage, Police Training in the United States (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1963), p. 9.
12. Mowry, op. cit., pp. 21, 87-88.
13. Holstrom interview, op. cit.
14. Frank S. Gains, Mayor of Berkeley, "Berkeley: Athens of the West," in Western City, XVI, 1, (January 1940).
15. Rose Glavinovich, interview with the August Vollmer Historical Project, op. cit., 1971.



16. Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology, XI, 2, (August 1920), pp. 168-70.
17. The Policemen's News, June 1919.
18. W.P.A. Writer's Project, Berkeley: The First Seventy-Five Years (Berkeley, Calif.: 1941), p. 129.
19. See Fred P. Graham, "A Contemporary History of American Crime," in Graham and Gurr, op. cit., p. 490.
20. The Criminal (Brooklyn: The Foundation Press, 1949).
21. John Kenney, The California Police (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1964), p. 24.
22. Ibid., pp. 23-5.
23. National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, Report on Lawlessness in Law Enforcement (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931).







University of California

Bancroft Library/Berkeley

Regional Oral History Office

August Vollmer Historical Project

John Holstrom

VOLLMER AS A MAN: MEMORIES OF A CLOSE FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE

An interview conducted by

Jane Howard Robinson







John Holstrom



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

John Holstrom was interviewed by Jane Howard as part of a series on the personal and professional life of August Vollmer. Mr. Holstrom was a close personal friend and professional colleague of Vollmer's for many years. He followed in his path, serving as Berkeley Police Chief from 1944-60. Mr. Holstrom also served as project supervisor for this interview series.

Interviewer: Jane Howard

Time and Setting of  
the Interview:

Two interviews were conducted with John Holstrom, on June 29 and June 30, 1971. The interviews were held with Mr. Holstrom in the School of Criminology, University of California, Berkeley, Office. The first session began at 1:30 p.m. and ended at 3:30 p.m. The second started at 4:00 p.m. and ended at 6:00 p.m.

Editing:

Editing of the transcribed tapes was done by Jane Howard. Punctuation, paragraphing and spelling were corrected. Blanks left in the draft manuscript by the typists were filled in.

Mr. Holstrom also reviewed the manuscript and eliminated some brief sections where the same material had appeared twice in the interview. He changed some phrases and words for clarity, and corrected some misspelled names. The changes were not major.

Narrative Account  
of Mr. Holstrom and  
the Progress of  
the Interview:

John Holstrom was a police professional for forty years. Born in Minneapolis in 1909, Holstrom received his B.A. degree from the University of California at Berkeley in 1930. He joined the Berkeley Police Department in 1931 and worked his way up to Chief by 1944. He served as Chief of Police from 1944-1960.

Concurrent with his term as police chief, Mr. Holstrom served on the University of California, Berkeley Political Science Department faculty and, after it was formed, the University of California, Berkeley School of Criminology faculty. He also worked as a police consultant serving a broad range of federal, state, county, and city departments and community agencies.



John Holstrom (contd.)

Mr. Holstrom is currently a partner in the firm, Associated Law Enforcement Consultants, Berkeley.

Mr. Holstrom begins the interview with brief biographical sketches and an account of how the August Vollmer project got started. He reviews the contents of his reference guide to the project.

The interview then follows the questionnaire outline. In response to the question on how he became acquainted with Mr. Vollmer, Holstrom explains that he decided to take a summer session course from Vollmer out of interest in a subject about which he knew little. He was so impressed with Vollmer that he switched career plans and went into policing.

Mr. Holstrom describes many of Vollmer's outstanding characteristics: his athletic abilities, his compassion for others, his integrity, his commanding presence, his creativity and intelligence.

In recalling anecdotes, Mr. Holstrom remembers many occasions when meetings and parties would be interrupted by children who came to visit Vollmer. Holstrom speaks of Vollmer's lack of prejudice, and his way of encouraging people to use their abilities fully. He remembers the many Chinese police officials who studied under or visited Vollmer.

Mr. Holstrom also recalls a grudge carried by San Francisco Police Chief Dullea toward Vollmer, and a later reconciliation when Vollmer broke the silent feud to help Holstrom gain entry into the inner circles of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

The interview turns to a brief review of Holstrom's personal history. There is discussion of how unusual Vollmer's "college cops" were for their time, and resentment toward the Berkeley Police Department by other bay area police departments. Mr. Holstrom then talks about Vollmer's unusually good relationship with local press.

Mr. Holstrom discusses Vollmer's mental qualities, particularly his creativeness and ability to innovate. He emphasizes that Vollmer did not care who got credit



John Holstrom (contd.)

for the innovations his department introduced; his concern was simply to see that new ideas were developed. He mentions Vollmer's firm opposition to the use of force to gain confessions and discusses his policy prohibiting his men from taking any gratuities.

Mr. Holstrom turns to the question of Vollmer's impact on policing, and discusses his surveys. He also explains the history of the establishment of the University of California, Berkeley School of Criminology.

The tape then includes Holstrom's recollections of phrases for which Vollmer was known, such as "kill them [the public] with kindness".

Holstrom discusses Vollmer's influence in Berkeley: his successful crackdown on gambling and prostitution within Berkeley and his ability to respond to what the community wanted done. He explains that August Vollmer trained many of the men who later became leaders in Alameda County policing, and, in fact, in law enforcement throughout the country.

Holstrom explains techniques Vollmer used to accomplish some of his legislative goals. The tape then includes discussion of Vollmer's participation on the Wickersman Commission. Brief mention is made of an incident involving the International Workers of the World. Holstrom describes Vollmer's use of psychiatrists and psychiatric diagnostic techniques in the Berkeley Police Department.

The tape closes with a lengthy description of Mr. Vollmer's death and the months preceding it when Holstrom and others began to suspect Vollmer would commit suicide. He recounts Vollmer's thoroughness and orderliness in preparing for his death.

Jane Howard





HOLSTROM: This is a recording concerning the August Vollmer Oral History Project. It is an interview by Miss Jane Howard with John D. Holstrom on the afternoon of Tuesday, June 29, 1971.

Under the caption of introduction I should like to say that I am considerably heartened that at last such a renowned institution as the Bancroft Library has prepared to undertake a history of August Vollmer. I would like to contribute to it in any way that I can.

For personal identification as concerns my own career, I should say that after being graduated from the University of California in 1930, I became a policeman in Berkeley in 1931; a Sergeant in 1934, a Lieutenant in 1937; then was Chief of Police from 1944 to 1960, when I retired for length of service. Concurrently, and afterwards, I have been a part-time Lecturer in the Political Science Department and then in the School of Criminology at Berkeley, beginning in 1945; and I will end 25 years of that service in June 1971. I have handed Miss Howard a very detailed sheet of personal biographical information which could be used if desired for reference by anyone interested in my identity as a speaker on this tape.

By way of introduction also, in preparation for this interview Mr. Carte and Miss Howard handed me a suggested outline of subject material that might be included in this interview. In the week or so which has intervened I have prepared for reference for this interview and, as a matter of fact, for this project, the draft of a paper which is identified as DRAFT on June 29, 1971, which is some 27 pages in length plus appendices and is titled



HOLSTROM: "August Vollmer History Project, Supplement: Some Sources of Information by Holstrom, June 1971." Copies are being made for the Bancroft Library, by way of Miss Howard and Mr. Carte, for Mrs. Fry in the Regional Oral History section of Bancroft and one or two copies for reference by the Berkeley Police Department which is involved in this total project.

By way of description, the paper contains a forepage with a "Who's Who" description, probably written by Vollmer himself, which is biographical. The important dates are that he was born in 1876, was Chief of Police in Berkeley from 1905 (when actually he was City Marshal until he came Chief of Police with the 1909 incorporation), his retirement in 1932, his year as Chief of Police at Los Angeles in 1923-24, the fact that he retired from Berkeley on June 30, 1932 and that he died on November 4, 1955 at age 79. These are milestone dates for initial references. Besides the forepage there is a preface about the Bancroft Library and the things which led to the initiation of this project by Mr. Carte. Then, there follow six chapters:

- I - An introduction describing the Project.
- II - Sources of Information -- which contains a list of some 23 or 25 living retirees of the Berkeley Police Department who served with Vollmer.
- III - A list of some 26 or 27 living ex-members of the Berkeley Police Department who served with Vollmer.
- IV - A list of some living friends and associates of Vollmer's.

These three chapters could be used as a base for deciding who might be most useful for oral interview. It should be emphasized that for every day, week or month that goes by each of these people is getting older and their memories are becoming more dim with the passage of time: and, as with all of us, none of them will live forever.

Section V - Refers to other sources of information; that is, a collection of hundreds of photographs in the Berkeley Police Department with a suggestion of those people who might be most useful in identifying the subjects of these photographs.



HOLSTROM:

VI - A selected list of publications and documents which are immediately relevant.

There are three appendices in this draft. A list of deceased retirees and former employees which might be useful as memory aids and identifying photographs. Another appendix contains an exchange of memoranda initiated by Gene Carte and a preliminary budget for this phase of this project and then there is a third appendix for the Berkeley Police Department copy containing internal communications and memorandum.

This is recounted so that there may be a minimum of reference to some of the things contained herein in the narrative which follows on the tape.

It should be said also that there are at least two or three publications listed to which there might be reference. One of them is Parker's "Crime Fighter: August Vollmer," a book. One is Jack Kenney's "The California Police" and one is "The Preceedings of the 1922 Conference of IACP in San Francisco," the year that Vollmer was President of the Association. Other publications are listed in Chapter VI.

For this interview Mr. Carte and Miss Howard prepared a preliminary outline of general questions for an interview such as this. There are eight general questions and I shall refer to them by Roman Numerals as they are set forth in the outline.

- I: My personal relationship to Vollmer. In the summer of 1930 as an Under-Graduate I took a summer session course from Vollmer simply because I knew nothing about policemen and thought that it might be interesting. It turned out to be so and as a student I was tremendously impressed with the personality of the instructor and highly interested in his presentation of a subject about which I knew nothing. In addition to his own presentation, even as long ago as 1930, he, as professors today, used a visiting lecturer. I clearly recall that one of the highlights of that six-week summer session was the visiting lecturer who was a recently released inmate of San Quentin whose subject was "safe burglaries." We were fascinated by a live safe burglar, who was an able speaker and much more interested in the professor's remark that later in the afternoon he was going to arrange for this man to open a safe, about which we probably would read in the daily paper. This turned out to be so; he went down in the afternoon and was able to easily manipulate the City Clerk's impregnable safe and open it.



HOLSTROM: Needless to say, as young people we were impressed. After graduation in 1930, and based entirely I think on the personality of Vollmer, I finally, and very much contrary to the advice of my family and all of the family friends they could marshal, I decided to become a policeman and did so in 1931. The only opposition I did not have was from my girl, who I later married; and who has stayed with me through this career now for some 40 years. I said to her and anybody who was interested that I intended to go and stay for a year and see what happened. I stayed for 29 and happened to be at the right place at the right time so it was a modestly successful career and it was interesting.

After this first relationship with Vollmer, he was the Police Chief from the time I entered the Department until his retirement in 1932. From the relatively lowly viewpoint of the policeman I had some considerable exposure to the Chief of Police, mostly in the weekly meetings he traditionally held for the whole department on Friday afternoons. Thereafter, while he was Professor of Police Administration at the University of California, from 1932 until his retirement in 1938, I really saw very little of him. Sometime about 1938, after I had become a Lieutenant, I reestablished a relationship with him, which grew progressively closer in the years which followed; particularly beginning with 1944 when I became the Chief of Police in Berkeley. It really became an intimate relationship, both professionally and socially with our wives in the ensuing years and after Mrs. Vollmer's death. Until the week of Vollmer's death I saw him frequently.

As to the impact he had on my life, I suppose that I would summarize it by saying that the 1930 summer session completely changed the course of the career I thought I was going to have with a shipping firm in San Francisco. So, the impact was almost immediate and there followed; my whole career.

As a young policeman I learned from him a great deal about his standards, his honesty, his integrity, his ideals of service. Professionally, I benefited from knowledge gained from him and his associates. Certainly it is true that not everything that is attributed to Vollmer was done by Vollmer alone. Much was done in no small measure by the people around him and the people with whom he associated. This was the case for a number of other people, particularly former members of the Police Department and retired members of the Police Department. If oral interviews are accomplished you will find that these men will tell you that Vollmer, by his strength of character, his strength of personality had a very substantial impact on the lives of many people; because he was a true leader. One of his greatest attributes was his





HOLSTROM: ability to encourage other people to do things that they were not really aware that they had the capacity to accomplish.

II: Asks, "What kind of man was Vollmer?" To me he was a truly impressive personality. He had a commanding presence. He was an athlete. Walter Gordon will tell you that the Friday meetings were often preceded in the police squad room in a short boxing match with gloves with the Chief before the meeting started. Others will tell you that before my time he frequently at noon-time walked from the City Hall to the Berkeley waterfront, which then had purer water than it has today. Mostly because Berkeley had outhouses instead of a sewer system. So he swam a good deal, he was interested in the out of doors. In his later years, he was one of the leaders in the development of the Regional Park, where maps will show that one of the tops of the hills is named Vollmer Peak because of his interest in regional parks.

He generally impressed others favorably, because of the type of personality he was. I would describe him as a compassionate man and I have very clear recollections of one of the stories he told indicating his compassion for other people. He had a young woman acquaintance who had a small child, probably pre-school age, who for some reason I don't now remember didn't happen to have a husband. At one period she needed to go to work in the mornings to support herself. She asked the Chief for help and his reaction was to agree to do what he did and that was for a three-month period he entertained the little boy in his office, letting him sit on the floor at times when there were international visitors and play with the key collection in his lower desk drawer for recreation. He sometimes took him out and dropped him over the fence at the playground which was then in the backyard of the City Hall, retrieving him only occasionally for bathroom purposes; eventually turning him over to his mother at noontime. This is a commentary on the demands or lack of them on an active chief of police and the willingness of a man to be helpful.

He didn't, however, impress everyone favorably. It has been said that perhaps he was fifty years ahead of his time and of the many innovations in the police service, many were strenuously resisted by police officials in the neighboring communities in California and of the nation because police administrators then, as now, tend to be status quo people. This is understandable because their jobs are sufficiently contentious without having anybody unnecessarily rock the boat for any purpose whatever and we see this today. I'll come later to the things that he did have to do with in developments, but it was not always easy.



HOLSTROM: He impressed the people of Berkeley when he was a mail carrier. An oft recounted story that appears in Parker's book which was referred to in the first section of this tape: when he was a mail carrier he was sponsored for the election of City Marshal by Friend Richardson, then editor or publisher of the Berkeley Gazette, later governor of California. Interestingly, in a matter of a few years, he and Richardson had a falling-out and Vollmer practiced then what he taught us later, which was never to fight a newspaper. He's told me the story of maintaining a painful silence for a period of many months in the face of critical newspaper stories in the Gazette until one day Richardson on the street said, "Vollmer, you're a bear for punishment. I admire your silence, your forbearance; I think I was wrong and you were right and you'll have no further trouble with the Gazette." He didn't.

I think that the personal characteristics that made him influential were his commanding personality, his pleasant manner, and his absolute integrity. Although I have never seen a report on the level of his abstract intelligence taken from testing sources, I believe that his abstract intelligence probably was very high indeed. That fact accounted for his extremely fertile imagination. Within recent years in circles interested in the administration of justice there has been emphasis on one word that we have heard repeatedly. That is, what is badly needed in this country is innovative ideas. Vollmer, 50 years ago, probably was more innovative than almost all of the police administrators in active service in this field put together. I think it was these things that made him influential and I think that he was influential because his colleagues and associates had confidence in his integrity.

III: "Anecdotes and Stories from My Own Relationship with Him." Question 3 asks for anecdotes and stories from my own contacts about what kind of man Vollmer was. I've already described his personality in part in a preceding paragraph or two and I suppose I think most about his personal relationships. Let me say incidentally that he really had no family after his brother died, and then after he lost his wife. There were no children, there was only one niece at the time of his death. He, for example, gave his house and its contents to his long-time housekeeper in gratitude for her long and faithful service while he was a widower.

JRH: When did his wife die?

HOLSTROM: I'm not sure of the year in which his wife died and you would have to ask another source. Dr. George Oulton, one of the suggested sources of information in the paper I have given you, would know from memory.



HOLSTROM: He made up, however, for this lack of children of his own by his obvious interest in children over the years. I think, for example, of the nineteen-fifties when I frequently visited in his study at home or when I had occasion to take a visitor to see him and there were so many of them, incidentally, that they literally wore a path to his door from their visits at the Hall of Justice. On many of these occasions whatever was being discussed was interrupted by a knock at the door and it would be one or a half dozen of the neighborhood children who came to see Uncle Gus. There were two attractions: one was that the children trusted him, they knew that he loved them and, besides, he had a jar of candy for them and so there were lots of children from the neighborhood whose mothers were glad indeed that their offspring were visiting with Uncle Gus instead of being underfoot at home.

I think of an occasion of a dinner party at our house when there might have been four or five couples; he obviously at that point was the guest of honor, but he wasn't talking to his contemporaries or the other guests during the cocktail hour preceding dinner. He was seated in the middle of the floor teaching our son and one of his friends some string tricks instead of talking to the adults.

What kind of a man was he? I think of today's interest in the so-called minority groups and I think uncharitably of people I know who have made an opportunistic career out of professing deep interest in the disadvantaged (as sociologists call them) members of the community. Some of these people seem to me to be entirely insincere or to be charitable, ineffective, really, in what they are doing either for personal or political gain. I don't recall in all of my conversations with Vollmer or in anything that I have read about him ever hearing any reference to ethnic background. As I thought about this, I think of the many Jewish people I happen to know who considered Vollmer a very close and personal friend. By way of illustration of his Jewish friends; just to name a few, I think of three who are listed in the source book I have handed Miss Howard: one is Ernest Block, the San Francisco author; one is Dr. Milton Cherrin, who was Vollmer's reader and then his Administrative Assistant and who today is the Dean of the School of Social Welfare. I think of a delightful mutual friend the late Albert Deutsch, whose name is also listed and who wrote "What's Wrong with Cops?" Al Deutsch was perhaps as Jewish as a person could be and yet Vollmer and he considered themselves the closest of friends.



HOLSTROM: I think of the professed interest today of some people in the Mexican or Spanish-American segment of the population and I'm reminded that in the 1920's one of Berkeley's outstanding policemen was a man by the name of Joe Chavez. Joe later had problems and it was necessary to separate him from the police department, but it didn't happen during Vollmer's tenure.

In the Negro community, I would simply mention Walter Gordon, who earned his way through college, as will be perfectly evident in the Gordon interview, by being a Berkeley policeman, including Judge Gordon's law degree. And I think of what then took some courage on the part of Vollmer in the face of community opposition to insist that Gordon should be placed on the patrol beat immediately south of the University campus, an area not then frequented by Negroes. Vollmer has told me that he put him there for only two reasons. One was in Gordon's interest, to help him gain confidence in his own self-development and the second and overriding reason was simply that he was the best policeman he had available for the assignment. I'm quite sure in my own mind that Vollmer did not even subconsciously relate his relationship with these representatives of minority groups to their ethnic backgrounds, but that he looked at a man for what the man himself represented and that was his total interest. In any event I have never heard of any reference to ethnic background from him nor did I to the day of his death.

One of Vollmer's great attributes was his extraordinary ability to encourage other people to develop ideas and to develop practices. He didn't care very much who got credit for doing something so long as it was done. He had the faith in people. To send O.W. Wilson, a young patrolman, to a California city to become a police chief and that sort of confidence in people was evident time and time again. I remember asking him on an occasion when I saw a very flowery letter of reference that was given to only a mediocre Berkeley policeman recommending him for a position. I asked the Chief how he could possibly in good conscience give this man the kind of recommendation he did. His response was, you never can tell what a man is able to do, but even though I recommend ten, and nine of them may disappoint me and fail, the tenth one may surprise me. He said, "that percentage is good enough for me, because it is in developing people that we make real progress in our own society."





HOLSTROM: Another anecdote about Vollmer in my personal experience as a very young patrolman was to be called into the Chief's office because he wished to inquire about something that had happened. I'm reminded in recent years there's been a very popular television series produced by Jack Webb entitled, "Dragnet" which is filmed around the Los Angeles Police Department and one of the frequent phrases that Jack Webb has put in the mouth of Sgt. Friday is, "All I want are the facts, ma'am," I know that this was hardly original with Jack Webb because I so clearly remember the young policeman either standing before the Chief's desk or sitting in a chair and having him say very pleasantly "John, I'm interested in such and such, just tell me the facts" and then lean back in a relaxed manner, but looking directly at the young policeman with his very clear eyes and patiently awaiting the answer and even showing no sign of impatience when the young man finally ran out of conversation and realized that he was repeating himself and stopped. Then the Chief's rejoinder would be "Thank you." All he wanted were the facts, and the young man learned early that if he wanted opinions he would ask for them and the young man learned a very valuable lesson. Facts are most useful in our everyday relationships as well as in professional relationships.

Hardly in the area of anecdotes but perhaps related more to minority groups, I'm reminded that today I have a number of personal friends in the Chinese community in San Francisco, and some in Taiwan. All of these stem from early visitors from the Mainland of China who came here as sub-officials in the police system of China. Often as the top graduates of the National Police College, which was located at Nanking and before World War II in Chungking and then later in Taiwan. The earliest of these was Yukon Feng, who became a prominent Chinese police official and whose name is listed in the source supplement to this tape. There were a number of others, one of whom succeeded in earning a PhD. here in Political Science, others who earned their Master's degrees, some of whom returned to the police or governmental field in China, some of whom did not. So, there has been as much identification with the Chinese police in this relatively small police department and in this great University, perhaps more than any other single place in the world. A few of them did go to England, some to Germany before World War II.

Anecdotes: When I think of the impression made on other people I think of a dinner party at the home of Dr. Douglas Kelley, the psychiatrist who was a member of the School of Criminology faculty and was also the police department psychiatrist in Berkeley, where the guests were a mixture of



HOLSTROM: people from the academic field and the police field, an interesting combination in itself. My wife reminds me that at one stage of the evening the men all found themselves talking to each other, the women were all clustered about Vollmer, who was seated on a coffee table playing a guitar softly and talking to them. My point is, that he was attractive not only to children, his male friends and associates, but to their wives as well.

Anecdote about this man's constructive look to the future. One day when he was about age 75 and we happened to be visiting in his study, the question arose "What was he doing beside writing and carrying on a voluminous personal correspondence?" His answer was that he hardly had time to do all of the things that he wanted to do, that in his spare time he was taking guitar lessons again and although fluent in Spanish he was taking Spanish lessons to brush up on his Spanish just in case he needed it and because he happened to be interested in it.

Perhaps not an anecdote but this is recounted by Parker and others and I know it of my own knowledge. Here was a man with about a sixth grade education formally, who was truly a self-educated man, a man who despite his educational handicap was a full professor before 1932 at the University of Chicago and who left that attractive post to accept a full professorship at the University of California, a position which was terminated only for health reasons in 1938.



HOLSTROM: [Well, Jane, this is the afternoon of Wednesday, June 30, 1971 and we're going to continue a recording as we did yesterday. On Gene Carte's suggestion it will be an attempt to make this more of a conversation than what he chose to call something that sounded like pure, cold dictation, so we'll see if we can keep him happy this afternoon. We've had a little preliminary session, where do you wish to start? Do you want to take this back to Roman numeral III and talk about anecdotes?]

JRH: "Sure, we may as well just outline some of the things we want to mention under each of the items. So why don't you just go ahead with III and mention the anecdotes that you're thinking of, and then I told you the notes that Gene would be especially interested in, and just keep on going."

HOLSTROM: I'm not sure that this is a straight anecdote, but about one of my great professional friends, who was a Chief of Police in San Francisco, by the name of Charles W. Dullea. I repeat we became very close friends and remained so up to the time of his death which was perhaps three or four years ago and just after I became a police chief. I suppose it came from some insight of Vollmer's, some of his influence, I could tell you about as follows. It happened that I was assigned to detached duty in 1939 to San Francisco for a year, as a Lieutenant. I took with me three inspectors, i.e. detectives. The stated purpose was to assist their pickpocket detail at the San Francisco Fair in 1939 and the reason for it was that at the 1915 Exposition they had a lot of trouble with pickpockets. The San Francisco Police Chief, whose name was Bill Quinn, asked the East Bay Police departments to furnish a limited number of detectives motivated by the fact that in the 1923 Berkeley fire a group of 40 San Francisco policemen at Vollmer's request came over here and helped the police in Berkeley. This was the 1939 Chief's effort; J.A. Greening's to repay San Francisco and so he responded.

JRH: When did you become Chief of Police?

HOLSTROM: In 1944, this was 1939 and I was a Lieutenant then, having been one since 1937. So we went to San Francisco and Charles Dullea then was a very influential, powerful Captain of Inspectors; he headed the Bureau of about 200 detectives or inspectors in the San Francisco Police Department, which was the elite unit of that department. He and his Chief Quinn



HOLSTROM: were not on speaking terms and, because Chief Quinn had asked for us, we were unwelcome in the Inspector's Bureau. But there was a second reason and this has to do with Vollmer. I heard the story after we'd got the cold shoulder for the first painful six weeks in San Francisco.

JRH: There were three of you?

HOLSTROM: Four; me and three Inspectors. It was explained that what had happened was there had been a meeting in Sacramento which had to do with police selection. This was after Vollmer's retirement. Vollmer had asked to come to this conference and I have no idea now whether it was legislative committee or what it was, but it was a meeting. There was a contingent led by Captain Dullea and of course, Vollmer was there. In the course of the afternoon they got into debate about qualifications for policemen. Vollmer had made a proposal about upgrading the standards for entrance and Captain Dullea got up and said that was a fine theory, underscoring the word theory. Reflecting one of his predecessor's points of view, that predecessor being a Captain Matheson. Duncan Matheson had said some years before that Vollmer might be a very interesting and effective man in Berkeley, but he was so full of theories that he wouldn't know how to get a practical police job done, thus reflecting the kind of thing you're interested in about who didn't really admire Vollmer all the time.

JRH: Yes, obviously he did get his job done. In Berkeley, anyway.

HOLSTROM: Well, Captain Matheson didn't happen to think that some of Vollmer's ideas were really suitable for San Francisco, which he considered to be a much more sophisticated community than anything in northern California.

JRH: Why weren't they suitable?

HOLSTROM: Captain Matheson didn't think so. Yesterday I used the word status quo. I didn't know Captain Matheson but I assume he was afflicted to some extent with this status quo position, and which I said yesterday is understandable to me. Having said at the Sacramento meeting that these things wouldn't work, Vollmer slipped one of the few times I'm aware of, the only time I'm aware of publicly and he made the unfortunate statement that he wasn't much interested in what was





HOLSTROM: acceptable in San Francisco because he said, "San Francisco Policemen are a bunch of morons, anyway." He shouldn't have said it, he deeply offended Captain Dullea and by 1939 Captain Dullea hadn't gotten over it.

JRH: This was how many years earlier? Two or...

HOLSTROM: Just a couple of years, or more.

JRH: That's a long time to hold a grudge.

HOLSTROM: No, it isn't. That isn't a long time to hold a grudge if you're interested in that facet. This man who I consider to be a great Irishman and who was, I repeat, a great personal friend in later years. Dullea, among his other characteristics he had a personal system for taking care of people he didn't like and didn't admire and his system was very simple -- they simply didn't exist. He didn't see them, he didn't hear them and he refused to discuss them. When I got to know him real well in later years and happened to mention a name that was objectionable to him the most that he would ever do was say "Yes, I've met him," that was Dullea.

In addition to or following the San Francisco thing, not only was Dullea very unhappy with Vollmer, but that meant he was unhappy with Berkeley, the Berkeley police force and unhappy with Berkeley. I've been told by one of his drivers that as a Captain and later the Chief of Police of San Francisco, if he could, he would attempt to detour Berkeley because Berkeley was one of those things he wanted to ignore. This was a characteristic of that very strong man.

Bring it back to Vollmer again. I don't recall that Captain Dullea himself ever did acknowledge that four of us spent a year in San Francisco, but we became acceptable to his elite squad of elites, which was the Robbery Detail where we gained very close friends. I don't recall that I ever spoke to Captain Dullea the entire year of 1939. To begin to relate this to Vollmer, I became a Police Chief in 1944 and went to my first State Police Officer conference, attended mostly by Police Chiefs in Fresno. I was thirty-five years old



HOLSTROM: which was strike one, very young. I presume, that I probably was the loneliest fellow in Fresno, because this was simply the way it was. This what we used to call a closed corporation and these men were interested in each other. They knew each other and nobody extended himself to say hello to me. So I attended the meeting for about three days feeling very much like a forgotten orphan. I came home and happened to be talking to Chief Vollmer in his home one day and he wanted to know how the first meeting went in Fresno and the year possibly was 1944 or '45. So I told him about this experience and he said, well, that's regrettable. I'm sure that it wasn't deliberate, you must realize that these men are friends and have associated for years and nobody was thoughtful enough to take you under his wing.

I was told years later by Dullea what happened. Mind you now, they hadn't spoken since 1937, mind you of the allegation of detouring Berkeley by this Irishman. Chief Vollmer called him on the telephone and said, "Charlie, there's something you could do and I think this has gone on long enough. We have a fine young man who is the Chief of Police in Berkeley and the outlook is he's going to be there for a long time. This is ridiculous and I think the first thing that we'd better do is admit that it is and I have a direct request to make of you because I know that your interest in the police service will transcend any personal feelings that you may have. It is a constructive interest and I believe it to be. Charles, I would appreciate it if you would call Holstrom and invite him over to your office and make up your own mind about him and if you are at all favorably impressed there are ever so many things you can do for him, for the Berkeley Department, maybe perhaps for your own Department in the process and you can do it and nobody else can. And so it happened.

The result of that was and we're talking about what did he mean to my own career -- Charlie Dullea, next to Vollmer and Greening, and perhaps next to Vollmer had more of an effect upon my career than anyone else. He, Dullea, had been a President of the California Peace Officer's Association. Once the Irishman decided to forgive, by 1950, I was President of the C.P.O.A. under Dullea's sponsorship, by 1957 at Honolulu I was elected President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police and Dullea before me had been President of both of them. When I went to my second IACP conference in



HOLSTROM: Duluth, Mr. and Mrs. Dullea saw to it that I was never alone, either at the time of the meetings or socially in the evenings. Mrs. Dullea because of her age became something like a second mother to my wife. This all happened because Vollmer thought it should and Dullea was willing to do it. I became a member of the Board of Governors of the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation. I inherited Dullea's position after his retirement. This was traceable to Dullea and Vollmer.

JRH: Of course, you got to know him too.

HOLSTROM: Well, I got to know him very well, but it was the breaking of the ice that did it; something I probably never could have accomplished. I'm sure my Chief Greening could not have accomplished it and I don't know anybody else who could.

JRH: Did he try to get Dullea earlier, like in '39? What happened? Did Vollmer try to intervene for you in 1939?

HOLSTROM: No! Only after I became a Police Chief. Well so much for that anecdote. Another one about Vollmer when you talk about did he try to do anything? One of the positions that he took after his retirement was that retired police chiefs should never, except under extreme circumstances, go back and appear at their own police departments. This distressed me, after 1944. I once asked him why and he said, "For the very simple reason that I don't believe that people who have no responsibility should take it upon themselves to kibbitz on the other fellow's operation. I'd never come into the Hall of Justice unless it's at your insistent invitation."

JRH: But, you mentioned that at some point, I'm not sure if it was when you were Chief or not, that he did sometimes talk to potential police candidates after he left the force or before they would be put on the force.

HOLSTROM: He talked to lots of people and I think I would like to leave the response to that to a later section of this report about influences he had. This will have to do with the people he saw after retirement. Is that all right?

JRH: Yes, because apparently he did have an influence even after he left.

HOLSTROM: Tremendous influence!



JRH: You said he wouldn't supersede somebody's authority, but he still would influence.

HOLSTROM: I said he wouldn't visit the Berkeley Police Department. His favorite phrase was "John, if there's anything you want, just ring the bell." I heard this up until the week of his death. So much for that. I guess, Jane, we're still on the subject of anecdotes and there was something I wanted to be sure to say to you, I have in my hand, and it's in the list of publications of the supplement that I prepared for you, a reference to a book, which is "The Crime Fighter: August Vollmer," by Alfred Parker. I must say, if I didn't say yesterday, that this book was disappointing to some people, probably including me. However, it is a collection of anecdotes. I have heard if not all, most of them from Vollmer himself, so there's little point in repeating what Al Parker said in the book.

There are the anecdotes there about Vollmer, in answer to one of your off the tape preliminary questions about Vollmer's early days -- his youth, his background, his military service in the Spanish-American War, his being a mail carrier in Berkeley, how he became elected City Marshal, the clean-up platform that he stood on then. As he used to say, to chase out of town the gamblers, most of whom were Chinese; the prostitutes, many of whom vacationed here, some of whom worked here; and to do something about the 1905 controversy about what we today politely call alcoholic beverages. This is all related in Parker's book, I've heard these stories before, I could read the book to you, but why should I; it would take up too much time on the tape.

I have no ideas, as I said yesterday, what will be contained in Parker's forthcoming book, The History of the Berkeley Police Department or The Berkeley Police Story, as I think it's going to be called. I assume there will be more of this kind of thing, and so I'd just as soon drop the anecdotes at this point. I really don't have any others that occur to me at the moment.

JRH: You don't know, you're saying, about the early period of his life. You don't know anything, anymore stories essentially, but what's contained in there.

HOLSTROM: Essentially, I do not. Now, I have two or three documents here, that are referred to in the supplement also. The most reliable one probably is titled "The History of the Berkeley Police Department," the revision





HOLSTROM: of which was developed by then Lieutenant Tom Johnson in 1956. There are in it some brief statements under the caption of "Law Enforcement in the Pre-Vollmer Era," and then there is another major caption "Law Enforcement in the Vollmer Era" and what he did then. These supplements tend to validate what Parker has said. As a matter of fact Parker's material probably came from two sources; one was Vollmer himself to Parker, and the other was Berkeley police training outlines, which I am sure that he must have used for the book that is forthcoming.

JRH: You mean the course outlines for training?

HOLSTROM: One of their courses is on the history of the Berkeley Police Department. They were used in their basic training school and still are.

JRH: We'd only be interested in that early period if you knew something more than Parker has given us, from your own experience and things that Vollmer had told you. Things actually that -- for instance, you talked with Spenger. You said he might give us an idea of what Berkeley was like at the time that Vollmer was elected Marshal, or something.

HOLSTROM: I'm sure as I mentioned to you yesterday that Frank Spenger Sr., who is at least in his 80's has a clear memory. Of course, he can tell us a great deal about that period. We mentioned this yesterday when we were reviewing the chapter in the supplement that I keep referring to about friends and associates of Vollmer who are still alive.

JRH: You didn't come to Berkeley until -- Well, you were born in 1909 and didn't come until after that, after high school or something.

HOLSTROM: No, I went to school here from 1926, here at the University to 1930.

JRH: That's what I meant, you weren't a child in this area, so you wouldn't....

HOLSTROM: Well, I was brought up in the South, in Tennessee, and the last two years of high school my family returned to California, lived in Oakland down by the lake and I finished high school in Oakland. Then I came to Berkeley and during the years I was in college I took a summer course from Vollmer. I didn't know anything about policemen and I'd never seen one around



HOLSTROM: my house and I probably was never west of Ellsworth Street the four years that I was in college. The only policeman I knew was Officer Browning who put traffic tags on my Model-T Ford for parking it down at Sather Gate. I had a running contest with Mr. Browning for four years trying to talk him out of traffic tags. This was all I knew about policemen; I had no interest in them. They didn't bother me and I wasn't aware of them. They didn't mean a thing in the world in my young life.

JRH: You mentioned that your family was opposed to you becoming a policeman.

HOLSTROM: I just found that out last Sunday when my 91 year old mother was over for dinner and I told her what I was doing and she said your father and I were opposed. I said, you didn't ever tell me, and she said that wasn't the way we did things. We had your uncle tell you, but we didn't tell you. We weren't very happy with you until your career turned out all right in our opinion. I never heard that one before.

JRH: Gene said that when you were a college student it wasn't so common to become a policeman.

HOLSTROM: It was not at all common. However, Vollmer and his so-called college cops began before the era of Walter Gordon, for example, and before the era of General Dean; around 1919-1921 or so. I learned in San Francisco, as a patrolman when I used to go over with one of the inspectors and go to the detective line-ups, that there were two things you didn't talk about over there and I'm not reflecting on San Francisco today, I'm talking about the 1930's. I was a very young man. I was in my twenties. Two things you didn't say, one was you didn't emphasize you were from Berkeley and you certainly didn't emphasize that you went to the University, even when in the City of Oakland. I learned this in my '20's as a young policeman.

JRH: Well, things haven't changed too much, have they? Was it the same kind of, in a sense there's some kind of rivalry with Berkeley being some kind of intellectual center?

HOLSTROM: No, not anymore I think. San Francisco's Director Ed Comber was a member of this faculty of the School of Criminology.

JRH: I wasn't thinking so much in terms of the P.D., just in general.



- HOLSTROM: I was speaking generally, too. Oakland has had great emphasis on education and we've had any number of Oakland policemen as students in the School of Criminology. The incumbent Chief Charles Gain is interested in education and as a matter of fact is a member of the Advisory Council of the School of Criminology today, as is the police chief of Berkeley. If there is resentment in some police circles today, I think it isn't a matter of being concerned about the Berkeley police department, those days are gone. What used to disturb people was the publicity Vollmer got and the reputation led to the invidious comparisons that were made.
- JRH: I don't get in what sense they were critical, that they were because they were training college kids?
- HOLSTROM: No, it was because there was so much publicity worldwide about Berkeley and sometimes comparisons were made with San Francisco or Oakland.
- JRH: Unfavorably!
- HOLSTROM: Unfavorably and, right or wrong, people don't appreciate being compared with somebody who some people think are better than they are. If there are resentments today in police circles then that's a different story, that runs to the whole University. A lack of sympathy or even understanding about the University and what is regarded as extreme premissiveness of the University administration and faculty. The disorders that go back to 1964 on this campus. There are some feelings statewide about the University of California; right or wrong, it's a fact. Then, there are other people beside policemen who are unhappy about the University of California. I don't want to make a speech about this but everybody knows who pays attention to anything on this campus. This runs to the incumbent state administration and to the legislature and such things as faculty salaries. A very long story, which has nothing to do with Vollmer.
- JRH: The resentment in those days was more specifically related to the fact that they were considered an elite cop corps getting so much attention.
- HOLSTROM: That was their worldwide reputation for which Vollmer was responsible. An extraordinary amount of national publicity, even international about this little police department in a small town.
- JRH: Why do you think it got so much publicity?



HOLSTROM: Because of Vollmer!

JRH: Did he promote the publicity? It was unusual, I guess.

HOLSTROM: He had a greater sense of publicity than anybody I ever met and I suppose now maybe we're talking about Vollmer the man; I don't know what subject matter this falls under. In the days of Vollmer's incumbency and even to right around the time of World War II, we didn't have television. We had some radio, some newscasts, some special programs, but the media, the channels, were newspapers; and Vollmer really understood how to get along with newspapers. The Berkeley Gazette supported him tremendously and I inherited that support. I didn't invent it, the Oakland Tribune under J.R. Knowland, Sr., who was the publisher and during all of the years that Rose Glavinovich, a very capable newspaperwoman was the dean of the Berkeley Press Corps. The Police Department in Berkeley for many years got a good deal more column inches in the Oakland Tribune than did the Oakland Police, for example, because Vollmer knew how to get along with the press.

JRH: It's sort of surprising if there was so much resentment, say, of the Oakland Police, of Berkeley Police, that they would print this stuff about what he was doing.

HOLSTROM: It was a metropolitan newspaper and it wasn't owned by the City of Oakland. It was owned by J.R. Knowland.

JRH: How did he, he just got on well with Knowland? He'd always send his stuff down to him or what?

HOLSTROM: He dealt through Rose Glavinovich who was one of his proteges, even though she was a newspaper woman.

JRH: She was what? Dean of the Berkeley press?

HOLSTROM: Police Press Corps. Rose was extremely capable. People trusted her. I did and Vollmer did. She was based in the Police Department in the Press Room.

JRH: She was paid by the City or by the Berkeley P.D., or she was a member of the paper staff?

HOLSTROM: No, she worked for the Tribune and her first loyalty was to her publisher and boss Mr. Knowland.

JRH: But her office was in your, in the Police Department?





HOLSTROM: The Police Department furnished a Press Office.

JRH: That was handy!

HOLSTROM: Yes! Way up until the time I retired and perhaps later, full time representation from the Tribune, the Gazette, the Examiner and the Chronicle, and in the days when it was published, the Oakland Post Inquirer, they were housed right in the middle of the Detective Division.

JRH: So you had five press people working, stationed at the P.D. full time.

HOLSTROM: With open access to the files.

JRH: That's important to the press people too. That's something they always complain about -- they don't have enough action.

HOLSTROM: This was an extraordinary unique press relationship that went on well into the early part of my administration. It was such a feeling of confidence, not always honored, but most of the time, so that Vollmer was able, my predecessor Greening was able and I was able, on an extremely selective basis, to record a case, give it a serial number and put a notice on what we call the daily bulletin, which carried a synopsis of every case we handled; we were able to put on it a notation "no publicity" and this was honored by the press. We had to be very careful not to overdo it. Times changed and it was no longer handled in that fashion. They have now a Berkeley Police Press Officer. They no longer have access to the files.

JRH: They no longer have office space in your....

HOLSTROM: I don't know whether or not they have office space. I don't think so. I haven't inquired in the last four or five years when this change came about.

JRH: Did Vollmer request that all of these people come and be stationed there?

HOLSTROM: No, the newspapers sent them because this was a source of news.

JRH: Normally a police department is not a real big source of news or maybe it was more so...

HOLSTROM: It was more so maybe five, ten years ago than it is today. All you have to do is pick up the newspaper and read the crime news and interested people still do. The only difference is today that homicides very frequently tend to be on the inside pages. Five years ago they were on the front page. Rose can



HOLSTROM: tell you more about the press than I can; she lived with it. I've told you my relationship with her was and is very close.

JRH: That was very interesting because it shows how he got his ideas across. He had all these people there and they wrote up all his press releases for him.

HOLSTROM: Oh, he didn't write them, they wrote them. If he thought there was something that they might be interested in or that he was interested in, then he'd call them in and tell them. He was meticulous that if one newspaper reporter knew it, all of them should know it; because he knew enough to get along with City Editors. They're not always easy people to get along with, I'll tell you from experience. Well, the press thing is a subject you can get Rose to talk about, she can tell you.

IV: "What was Vollmer's Professional Impact? What were the major ideas and principles that Vollmer stood for? What were the major influences Vollmer had on Police in education and training or in other areas?"

JRH: I think that what we want here is the same thing you said about the Parker book; I don't think there is much need for us to go over what has already been printed or what you know that's written somewhere else, but from your point of view either to give a sense of... Like the last thing, the publicity, it gave us an idea of how he got his ideas across. Something in relation to that or how his ideas came from his personality. Not so much what is recorded in writing elsewhere.

HOLSTROM: Well, what was Vollmer's professional impact? Again, I would refer you to that book The Crime Fighter by Parker. I would also refer you to what I consider to be a not very good book, which is listed in the supplementary, by V.A. Leonard titled The Police of the Twentieth Century. Leonard is really not precisely accurate all the time, but you can gain from Leonard's book some of Leonard's impressions, and they're essentially correct, of Vollmer's professional impact. I would say simply, and it cannot be honestly challenged by anyone, that he was often called, as most of who know believe it today, the father of modern police administration. I say this without qualification or exception of any kind. That was his broad professional impact.

JRH: Some of the things he stood for, I guess and what you've told me, like training, educating them, the use of fingerprinting -- where do you think he got the ideas? What I'm interested in is how he got to thinking that way.



HOLSTROM: How did he get to thinking the way he did? Let's see, first I'm confident that his abstract intelligence level was very high. I believe that people of that kind have very high imaginations; I believe that his high imagination led him to the things that one could call his own innovations. He didn't really care whether he thought them up or somebody else did. If he didn't innovate them, to use that word, then he adapted them or he adopted them and he didn't much care who got the credit for them; it didn't make any difference to him. He was only interested in whether something was useful; if it was he would use it. If he attempted it and found out it wasn't useful he dropped it. It didn't disturb him that some things didn't work for him or somebody else. He took the view that if out of several ideas one was useful that was worthwhile; it was his same view about people. If someone he recommended was successful, if one out of ten was his score, there was a certain satisfaction for him.

JRH: Sometimes, though, if he recommended things that don't work, people you didn't think were too competent?

HOLSTROM: What he was able to do though that some of today's innovators that I spoke disparagingly of yesterday do not, is that some of these latter-day people who are trying desperately to innovate and who are unable to apply those innovations successfully are quite different from this man. The things that he attempted in the main and carried through proved to be practical, useful.

JRH: So he got usually a better than one out of ten average.

HOLSTROM: The score was good enough so that he was the father of modern police administration. It wasn't all Vollmer, it was Vollmer and the people around him and the people he encouraged. This was by no means a one man show, from the start. That's reflected in Parker's book.

What were the major ideas and principles that he stood for? I suppose that this can be answered in several ways, though one is that he believed in almost absolute honesty and integrity as concerned himself and his people. Of course, this gained him respect, even among people who would have like to have been less than honest as he would have liked.

That reminds me of another anecdote. One of the interesting series of things that some of us observed over the years. A number of people he communicated with by letter, the number of people who came to see him who were actually inmates of the big prisons or were ex-inmates. Dean Chernin will tell you that, it used to disturb him even in the years that Vollmer was on the campus in the 1930's, by the number of ex-inmates of San Quentin who came to call on the Chief.



HOLSTROM: I have no difficulty in recalling that his inspectors carried on correspondence with people that they had sent to San Quentin and I think the Leonard book indicates that among the other people he encouraged were two people who wrote books while they were in prison. I have now forgotten the titles. One of them was "You Can't Win" by a man by the name of Jack Black, who wrote this book before that summer session who was in San Quentin and another one was a man, I think his name was Sutherland. In any event this is in Leonard's book.

He was a kind man, a compassionate man and he was the author of the statement, "Everytime the doors of San Quentin, which was then our leading prison, opened to admit somebody, they also opened to release somebody." So these people are not put away forever and you can't ignore them. There was another relationship that he maintained. Interesting one!

JRH: How would he get to know the inmates? When they were released from San Quentin, they would come to talk? Or they would be...

HOLSTROM: Sometimes they'd come and talk to him. He had it arranged, so the Record Bureau was notified about all releases from state prisons.

JRH: Gene said he had quite a time arranging that, that was resisted. The first notices were just to San Francisco, Oakland or something.

HOLSTROM: Berkeley had the first arrangement of this kind in this area so far as I know and that was somewhat before my time. By the time I got there this was routine; it no longer happens. It doesn't fit in with modern penology for a policeman to know who's been paroled. That's a different subject too.

Let's talk about principles. He had another principle that was firmly established by 1931, the time I got there, and this has to do with the use of force. We were talking about the third degree and most people relate this to physical force. Every Berkeley police recruit became aware immediately about that one. We had rules and regulations, but some of them were flexible. There were some that were not flexible. Dishonesty was inflexible! On force, the rule was very simple. I heard him refer to it more than once. I heard it from him when I was a police recruit. It was that no Berkeley policeman should ever strike any person, particularly a prisoner, except in extreme self-defense; and then he said, if you ever do, you have just resigned. You needn't bother to come in and discuss it and this one he meant.





HOLSTROM: I remember his returning perhaps in 1932 from the University of Chicago and Captain Lee had been the acting police chief. I think I remember this, but I may have read it in departmental meeting minutes. He took occasion to say at this departmental meeting; they wanted a comment about an incident that occurred while he was away that he had discussed with the Captain upon his return. It might have been possible to rationalize it, he said, but it was necessary, so I just want to tell you that, first, the Captain made the decision. I wasn't here, and so his decision stands. All the Captain did was to admonish the policeman. He said, "Had I been here, if he had not immediately resigned, I would have fired him. I want no one to misunderstand my position. I've said enough about that. I'm sure you understand me." We had no difficulty understanding.

This was as late as the 1930's. The physical third degree, the beating, perhaps for no real good reason, perhaps to extract confessions, was not uncommon in this country. It probably was touched upon in the Wickersham Report, which Vollmer worked on in the 1930's.

Today Berkeley police have what they call their Police Regulations. Current police regulations were produced under my administration in 1950 when we updated the old 1924 regulations because we couldn't apply them. It's true that these were developed by a committee of policemen representative of all ranks with me, the Chief, reserving the final decision on what would go into it and what would not go into it. By and large, while Vollmer had nothing to do directly with these regulations they were the product of people who had been taught the Vollmer ideals and the Vollmer principles and reference to those police rules today would be a very fair reflection of Vollmer. They were so carefully discussed and carefully written that this is 1971 and although they've been modified necessarily because of the passage of time, they are not only enforceable, but they're almost self-enforcing. Everybody understands them and they're not just a set of regulations that people ignore, which so often happens to rules and regulations. These are the standards of the Department today and this is a very direct product of the Vollmer influence, written by those of us who either served with him or followed him and were subjected to his ideas.

JRH: I'm curious about one aspect, and I think Gene's interested, and that is how a man gets that sort of mind. Was it from his family?



HOLSTROM: I don't know! C.W. Wilson, who you and I are going to see in San Diego this Friday, may know about this. I think it's just the kind of man he was. I have no idea. I don't know who influenced him. I am quite sure that his parents did, but to what degree I don't know. He was a man of high principles.

I'm sure that you have seen cartoons or heard about the policeman taking the apple from the peddler's stand. The policeman and gratuities. I've heard dozens of stories. It may be true today about policemen taking advantage of what is supposed to be their position -- free cigarettes, free cigars, free liquor, free meals. This is just the beginning of the whole thing, of pay-offs of various kinds. Vollmer had a very clear and firm policy on this from the very outset and that is that no Berkeley policeman could accept gratuities. Gratuities may have been the rule rather than the exception when I became a policeman in 1931, but not in Berkeley. You did not accept even a free cup of coffee. You paid for it. You didn't accept anything else and I'm confident that it's true today. I know that it was true up to 1960, through my own period of service. This was carried to the point that some people thought was the extreme.

On those occasions where gifts, gratuities were sent to Berkeley policemen or given to them, the rule was clear. It was promptly reported; the material, whatever it was money or goods, was promptly turned into the Personnel Officer. The recipient was given the opportunity to return it to the donor; if he didn't chose to do so the Personnel Officer did, with thanks and an explanation that it could not be accepted even though it was given in good faith by someone who thought the policemen did something extraordinary and it was a gift from the heart. Sometimes, and I had to do it myself, people were not always happy about getting gifts returned; but they were returned with the best explanations that we had.

I think of one or two occasions where those things were not promptly reported and the policemen found themselves in difficulty and it was major difficulty. Do you want me to give you an illustration or are we wasting tape? After Vollmer retired we had a policeman, I had a telephone call from the then Superintendent of the very large Heinz plant in Berkeley, who had grown up in Berkeley,



HOLSTROM: and he said, "Chief, I want to tell you something. You have an officer who's been very friendly with my people and we're glad to have him around." The Superintendent said that, "The other day he approached one of my foremen and said it would be nice if he had a case of catsup and so my foreman gave it to him." A case of catsup means nothing whatever to me or the Heinz Co., but I didn't think it was in conformity with the Berkeley policy and he said, "I don't want to get this man in trouble."

The result of this was that we interviewed the policeman, we had a staff discussion about it and we applied what we thought were the principles that we'd learned from Vollmer. We decided not to fire him; we suspended him for two weeks and we reduced him to the bottom of the seniority list which affected his assignments, required him to work nights, he lost his vacation selection. We did everything to him short of separation. He stayed at the bottom of that seniority list for a year on good behavior. At the end of the year we restored him. We had made our point.

JRH: To everybody else too!

HOLSTROM: Well, certainly! Whether this was reasonable or unreasonable, at least this was an adherence to what we thought we were taught.

JRH: I guess the guy said that's the important kind of thing to discourage.

HOLSTROM: Well, so much for gratuities! We were not permitted to accept witness fees. We went to Court in the early days on our own overtime and in latter days we were paid by the City. The witness fees were paid by the Court. They reverted to the City Treasury. On this subject, of not accepting things, in my early years it was a rule rather than the exception for there to be police balls, dances, that is. Policemen sold tickets, going out and selling them to people under some duress. There was never a police ball in Berkeley, although there certainly were in neighboring cities. The principle was simple -- that you simply don't seek favors and then you have no obligations to repay them. He was attempting to professionalize; an attempt that is still going on. I think that's about all for the moment on your subject about ideas and principles.

You asked what were the major influences that Vollmer had on policing? A subject that would require considerable development; again, I refer you to the Leonard and the Parker books.



JRH: Well, I guess we can skip most of that because most of it is recorded in the books.

HOLSTROM: One thing that isn't recorded and that was a major influence that continues right up to this month, was that Vollmer in these books and elsewhere was recorded that he did a number of administrative surveys, administrative studies to re-organize. And these ranged from all kinds of places, Japan, Kansas City, Chicago, Havana. Inspector Woods going to Nanking. On the subject of surveys, because this had a major influence, it really is not recorded, I have it recorded in a term paper that a police officer from the Philippines did for me in the School in a Criminology course in 1963. He came here, he was interested in administrative service and asked me if I wanted to undertake a special project and what I knew about Vollmer and he developed a book, a term report which I have in my possession. It's titled, "An Analysis of Organization and Administrative Surveys in Police Departments in the United States." The Phillipine National's name was Vivencio Austero. The largest collection of police studies of this kind exists in the combined collection of the Institute of Governmental Studies on the Campus here, in the Berkeley Police Department, and in my own very much less extensive collection.

Sometime about 1944, a Lieutenant by the name of Bowers and I spent every Tuesday night for a year with him in a two-man seminar on the subject of police surveys. Out of that grew some extensive activity in this connection. Then, Vollmer himself had sent people out to do surveys.

JRH: You mean in the sense of management studies?

HOLSTROM: Yes, management studies! We called them surveys, for better or for worse. O.W. Wilson did some and there were other people under Vollmer who did. Captain, later Chief, Greening did a 1932 study of the Honolulu Police Department following the Massie case, a famous case in the way of history. In 1932, Greening did one that I recall in San Rafael. Then my memory really carries me to my own incumbency as the Police Chief and then subsequently my own staff which I used as an advisory group. We decided on a number of policies. One of them was that we would attempt to see that every officer from the rank of Lieutenant and above, and there were only a handful, would have the opportunity to do at least one of these and I think of any number of them that were done. Captain, then Lieutenant John Lindquist, a simple one in Walnut Creek; later a complicated one at Anchorage, Alaska, which is a very involved story.





HOLSTROM: There was a lot of local difficulty, undone at the request of the City Manager, whose job was in jeopardy at that time. Lieutenant Whaley at Des Moines; I think of Lieutenant Sickler at perhaps Manteca, and some in Eureka. These are in addition to the ones that are recorded about Vollmer himself. At one point most of these studies in this country were done by Vollmer and then by O.W. Wilson based on what he had learned from Vollmer. I think of then Lieutenant, now Chief of Campus Police, William Beall at Medford, Oregon, in 1951. There were others.

JRH: There were a great many people.

HOLSTROM: Yes, a lot of them. Now, the outgrowth of this, was that these ranking officers had these experiences and they came back to us broader people for having thought about these things, for having to apply the Vollmer principles. In the year that I was president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police we established the Field Service Division of IACP which today does the bulk of these studies with a highly competent staff.

JRH: Field Service Division of what?

HOLSTROM: International Association of Chiefs of Police. It's an interesting commentary that today's director of the Field Service Division of the IACP is a man by the name of Roy McLaren; Roy was a Berkeley policeman and a student of mine for a year. There are several other people on that IACP staff who came from Berkeley or from Oakland. This is traceable directly to Vollmer. Captain Greening, incidentally, did one of Santa Barbara in 1937. V.A. Leonard in Seattle. There are a number of them, that's my point. The present Police Chief of Alameda, formerly Berkeley Police Captain Richard Young surveyed Klamath Falls.

Now in my own case after I retired in 1960, I began to do a number of these. My own bio-sketch of which you have a copy of will reflect this. That bio-sketch lists perhaps a dozen or so and if you're interested in this, the smallest one, (I've had to answer this question before -- "What was the smallest one you ever did?") I hold an international distinction. I once spent two months studying the two-man police department of the exclusive community of Ross, California. The largest one I have done alone was 1967 on Honolulu with a complement of 1105 people. The most extensive thing I've ever gotten mixed up with was not a survey, but a study of law enforcement agencies of the Treasury Department. That, I felt I was not capable of doing alone so it was done for the Secretary of the Treasury by me with Bruce Smith, Sr. and O.W. Wilson



HOLSTROM: in about 1953. What I knew and what Wilson knew derived principally from Vollmer and his ideas, probably embellished by our own thoughts, adapting to whatever the situation was.

We're on the subject of his influences on policing, I need not relate here because it's in the books about the influences in the field of transportation, the Berkeley innovation or adaptations of the use of the bicycle as early as 1906, the use of the motorcycle, the early use of the automobile. The early developments in Berkeley, although not the first in police radio, in the area of communications for example.

Influences on education, you ask? Awhile ago we were attempting to establish a date and the current bulletin, the 1970-71 bulletin of the School of Criminology says in its opening sentence that the study of criminology in Berkeley began in a summer program in 1916. A program designed by Vollmer and Alexander Kidd, who was a professor of law, evolved into a group major; which was in political science in 1933 and was still in political science when I began teaching in 1945; that grew into the School of Criminology which was established in 1950. Now, this is education, as distinguished from training.

You asked me how the School was developed? Vollmer had dreamt about it for more than thirty years, as he explained to me one time, when I became relatively impatient before 1950, and I was attempting to help, in a modest way, Dr. Paul Kirk who was making the necessary arrangements with the Academic Senate to get the School established. It was established because Vollmer had dreamed of it and it was established directly in 1950; its establishment was possible because there had been enough development behind it at that time and because two close friends of his were in the positions they were. One was Robert Gordon Sproul, who was president of the University and the other was a close personal friend of his, Monroe Deutsch, who was then what they called the Provost of the University and was in charge of this campus. It was with the support of Sproul and Deutsch that Vollmer was encouraged to direct the efforts of Paul Kirk and my contribution was very modest indeed! I was on the faculty and did not have the academic stature that Kirk did, but I was highly involved and it was I instead of O.W. Wilson, only because at the time that the ground work was done, in about the period '46-'47, O.W. was still on duty with the Military Occupation Forces in Germany.

That's how the School of Criminology got started. Summer sessions and the early Berkeley Police Training School are described in Parker's book. I've referred so many times to the utilization of people in the academic disciplines in the University and their incidental utilization in criminal



HOLSTROM: investigations. People in all kinds of endeavors up here in the natural sciences, in forestry, for example, because of the interest in woods, in evidence in wood. In any event the training school by the middle of the 1930's had evolved into something that Vollmer had long thought about and that was the establishment of some kind of a school in an educational institution of higher learning.

There was a man who was president of San Jose State College, it escapes me at the moment, but Brereton or Schmidt can tell you, was sympathetic to this idea. Earl Warren, who was then District Attorney of Alameda County and Vollmer were close friends. Warren, of course, because he was a lawyer, knew about the value of education and it was due to the efforts of these three men in the middle 1930's the first Police School -- the School of Police Administration at San Jose State began. That was the nucleus of police education and training -- these are two different words -- that have evolved into courses variously titled Police Science, Police Administration, or even Criminology today, in over seventy State and Junior colleges in the State of California. This is more than is given in the other forty-nine states combined. It's directly traceable to one man whose name was Vollmer and this is no exaggeration!

JRH: I know Gene is just going to be one of the people starting the undergraduate program at this college and ---

HOLSTROM: That's right. Gene is getting ready to go to some place like Trenton State College.

JRH: They've never had a Criminology program.

HOLSTROM: No, they've never had one. There is substantial expansion in the country in the last very few years. It was brought about in no small measurement because the national and state administrations are concerned about crime in the streets. As everybody knows Congress has appropriated millions of dollars and there are grants available. Money is attractive to the university administrators. This has quite a bit to do with the establishment of some of these programs in many colleges and universities in the country today.

JRH: I'm interested in moving on, it's getting later and I'm interested in hearing what you have to say. Especially I'm interested in the community and state activities.



HOLSTROM: Alright, you want to talk about community and state, and I insist on reading this because I went to all the trouble of writing it down. "What kind of man was Vollmer and what did he believe in?" Let me just give you some things that I chose to call Vollmerisms. These are short sentences. You have to remember who they were beamed to; policemen in those late afternoon departmental meetings. I just jotted down three or four of them. This will show what kind of man he was! "Kill them with kindness," teaching his policemen this, you see. "Never hit a person except in self-defense; if you do, you have just resigned." "Never argue with a drunk or a nut, you'll only lower yourself to his level, and you never strike either one of them under any provocation." "There could be more fair justice disposed at the curbstone than in some of the highest courts." "Keep them indebted to you." And then I had another one in the area of anecdotes. Did I tell you about the Jack Webb program?

JRH: Yes!

HOLSTROM: Alright, then I don't have to tell you that one again. Now you want to move along because of the hour. In what ways, you asked, was Vollmer influential in the community in Berkeley? Well, at the outset he was elected to clean up Berkeley and he did so. At least up to 1960, bearing in mind that Berkeley has been a changing community and the mores in some elements of this community are different. But in the prohibition era as a college student I knew that a bootlegger, unless he was stupid, wouldn't come to Berkeley. The lads in the fraternity houses on Piedmont Avenue met them on College and Claremont because that was outside of Berkeley. There were no prostitutes in Berkeley. I only remember two who were living here, but working some place else, when I was a Lieutenant. I required them to come in at ten o'clock one night and told them I expected them to depart Berkeley at eight o'clock the next morning and they did. That year might have been 1938, just for example. Prostitution, we didn't have; gambling, we even succeeded in stopping card games in the Catholic church. Nobody has ever done this except us that I know of, except Bill Parker, who was Chief of Police of Los Angeles, and got the Archbishop to give him a hand.

JRH: You were saying, though, over at the Oral History Department that Warren was more interested in cracking down on illegal bootleggers.

HOLSTROM: He was! He and Vollmer were of the same mind. What Vollmer did was not to eradicate these kind of things, he simply pushed them north and south. So when I was in college and





HOLSTROM: when I was a young policeman, there were bootleggers, gamblers, and prostitutes, in Emeryville on the main street, Park Street. In the early 1930's Warren went down with a raiding party and not only put out of business the Chinese gambling establishments. Under the direction of a man who was head of his corps of investigators, legal or not, they chopped up the gambling tables as well as some of the doors and windows in those places and physically arrested scores and scores of people. They were brought to the Berkeley jail because it was considered a little more secure than some other places in the neighboring communities. Answer, yes, Warren had something to do with community problems.

Now, was Vollmer influential in Berkeley? I think so! I think he did initially what he thought the community wanted done. I think that this continued into my own incumbency. I think I did what I thought the community wanted done. I won't take the time to recount anecdotes about gambling at the Elk's Club and other places that happened just once after I became Chief of Police and never happened again. Nor about taking the slot machines out of the Elk's Club, but these all stemmed from things that I thought Vollmer taught me, what I thought the community wanted at that point. At that point, for example, the Council of Churches was influential. I'm not sure of this today. I think the community tended to follow his leadership in these things rather than his attempting to follow the community. He certainly was not permissive about vice. I really don't know his total involvement in the community. I know that in 1931 he was the recipient of the Benjamin Ide Wheeler award; which is given biannually to the Berkeley citizen who had made the greatest contribution to the community. Named after a famous president of the University it still is awarded. Vollmer, for the things he had done, was given this award in 1931. I have the original letter that was written by the City Manager then, who was Hollis Thompson to Dr. Herman Swartz who was Chairman of the committee.

Influence on Alameda County! Well, today the Chief of Police of Alameda is a recently retired Berkeley Police Captain. One of his predecessors in Alameda, Vern Smith, was a Berkeley policeman. Now, Berkeley has had a major influence on what has happened in Oakland in the last 15 years because a man by the name of Wyman Vernon became a Police Chief of Oakland and we, he and I, had a very close relationship. Many of the things he did to modernize Oakland grew out of what he knew about Vollmer ideas, grew out of what he learned from O.W. Wilson who he engaged as a consultant, and learned from his informal conversations with our staff. Chief Vernon was only interested in results and he didn't care where he got his ideas as long as they were useful. He was not so proud that he couldn't ask



HOLSTROM: somebody else. This is a little different than the way some people react. Vollmer had a major influence on policing in Berkeley and Alameda County, in California, in the United States and to some extent internationally, just to summarize it.

JRH: Gene mentioned that he and Warren worked together. I don't know whether it was when Warren was the District Attorney or when Warren became Governor.

HOLSTROM: Warren was District Attorney of Alameda County. He was Attorney General of California and he was Governor of California; then he was the Chief Justice.

JRH: At some point at any rate, did they work together to get legislation passed for progressive police activity? Was that during the time when he was Attorney General or Governor?

HOLSTROM: Warren was not Attorney General until after Vollmer's retirement. My own relationship with Warren as Attorney General and Governor was a very close one. This is something, out of all these things I did, I didn't invent, I inherited. I used to say to people I didn't invent the Berkeley Police Department, I inherited it. All I wanted to do was to try to leave it as good as I found it, I like to think I did.

The development of the State Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation is recounted in Parker's book. The development that led to the establishment of the Federal Bureau of Investigation grew out of Vollmer's activities, actually preceded by activities of others ahead of him in the National Bureau of Identification which was in existence at the time of the landmark conference of the International Association of Chiefs of Police in 1922 when Vollmer became its president. Probably that's a landmark conference because there were established some study groups of police chiefs dedicated to improving the police service and it was unquestionably due to Vollmer's leadership at that conference.

I think I said it yesterday that he often spoke with some pride about the accomplishment of the 1922 conference and I think I said yesterday that we have here on the desk a copy today of the proceedings of that conference.

JRH: Some of these groups kept working together for awhile and then came up with recommendations and then they managed....

HOLSTROM: Continue to today and the California Peace Officer's Association has been an influential factor in legislation in Sacramento.



JRH: Would you say that this was his major interest, that he worked through in getting through this much through these associations?

HOLSTROM: No, he worked through any channel that he felt was productive. It might have been the legislature, members of it, a governor or colleagues who worked on these various things, both at the state and national level.

JRH: You mean other police, say in a state level, or somebody that he had worked with that was in Sacramento?

HOLSTROM: Somebody from most any place. Today you may find during the period of legislative meetings the police chiefs of the principal cities of California. You will find that the Peace Officer's Association has a what's impolitely called a Lobbyist, and is politely called a Legislative Representative, on salary in Sacramento. This is the way it's done; it's done through your own legislators, the Assemblymen and the Senators in California. Today it's done in the current administration and it's true of all of Governor Reagan's predecessors that I know anything about. It goes back to Warren in my own personal relationships with the Governor's staff. These are simply channels.

JRH: You mean the Governor's staff would help you get, help get the legislation they wanted to get through.

HOLSTROM: They might! It works the same way that national things are done, through your Congressmen. It's done by policemen too through their Congressmen. It's done by police, police chiefs, police groups, Senators; all of them have staffs. It's done through White House staff. This President has had groups of police chiefs in to talk to him. The most recent one was a group from the International Association of Chiefs of Police of large cities. This is the way it works.

JRH: He used those sorts of channels.

HOLSTROM: So did his successors, including this one.

JRH: Well, it's the same as social work.

HOLSTROM: You asked, if you want to move along, how did he relate to the people with whom he dealt, to his friends. You will find these people that you interview, his employees and his professional colleagues had tremendous respect and admiration for this man, mostly. Not everybody agreed with him. As I said yesterday, he might have been a half a century ahead of his time, but that creates problems, being ahead of his time.



HOLSTROM: Now your final one here. But I have one other one about relating to friends. After his death, his friends established the August Vollmer Memorial Scholarship Fund which is a scholarship fund here for undergraduate students in Criminology. That's just about the size of it.

JRH: I want to ask you one more thing that we noted up here. You mentioned this Wickersham report. I know Gene mentioned it and I was kind of interested in that.

HOLSTROM: We today have a significant series of documents which are the results of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice. This is about a 1966 or so effort of a Presidential Commission out of which grew the Office of Law Enforcement Assistance and today's LEAA, which means Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. It administers these millions of dollars appropriated by Congress for grants of various kinds. The only other national commission that has been of this kind, bearing in mind this was 1966, was the Wickersham Report which was published in 1930 or '29, based on efforts in the preceding three or four years. Vollmer probably wrote most of the section on police and was a member of the Commission.

JRH: Was that a national or state commission?

HOLSTROM: Presidential! Named after its chairman whose name was Wickersham who might have been an Attorney General. But for years authors cited the Wickersham Commission. Out of curiosity whenever I read a book, I used to thumb through it rapidly and look at the footnotes. I did this as late as 1960. In 1960, if the footnotes consisted of mostly references to the Wickersham report I concluded the author was just a little bit out of date because 1960 was thirty years after 1930. At least I don't see so many footnotes about the Wickersham report any more, because now the President's Commission of 1966 is cited.

I have one final comment about the Wickersham report that I can't resist. One of the Berkeley police captains was the author of the statement that he had been studying a great deal of sociology in the 1940's and the 1950's. He said that his observation was that every time, and he was uncharitable about sociologists although I don't have this feeling about them as a class, a book that came out there was a rehash in the book about the causes of crime unchanged since the Wickersham report was written. He rather suspected that the Wickersham report said all there was to say about it or that had been thought out. That's all I have to say, ending on that sort of a note.

JRH: You have nothing else? You mentioned something about the KKK.





HOLSTROM: I know nothing about Vollmer and the KKK. There is an incident about World War I involving the IWW. It stood for "I Won't Work!" I don't know what the story was, but there was a trek to Washington. Part of it originated in Emeryville where a group of these people, (I suppose today we would call them radicals, I don't know what they called them then), gathered at the racetrack in Emeryville and they were going to go to Washington and I have a very dim recollection that this was a big event in Vollmer's professional career, but I cannot tell you, I don't know, what the circumstances were. Some of these older men that you're going to interview, Gordon or Wilson may know.

I really don't have anything else. I have a number of papers here and, as you know, they're listed in that supplement.

There is one other thing I should say, though, and this is on the subject of Vollmer utilizing professional assistance very early and I'm not sure whether it was a first or not. Along about 1931 when I came into the department there was a police department psychiatrist, and this has been a very slow development in the country. An old friend of Vollmer's whose name was Hubert Fowell, an M.D., was the psychiatrist when I got there. He's had a number of successors and I think it had some influence on Berkeley and Los Angeles in later years. The successor to Dr. Rowell was a very extraordinary man, the late Dr. Douglas Kelley, who was a member of the faculty in the 1950's and then his successor was a David Wilson. These men were all medical doctors, all psychiatrists, all certified or diplomates. David Wilson was also a faculty member. These men were used for two purposes. Not to be psychiatrist for policemen, as a matter of fact I prohibited it. They were used for screening applicants for the police department. And how successful was it? We thought it was so successful that it persisted for a period at least from 1930 to 1971. That's a fair period of time. There was an early one referred to in Parker's book, whose name was Ball, and I can't recall the unusual combination of first names he had.

The second purpose they were used for, and this was particularly true of Kelley because he had an ability in this direction was to advise a policeman faced with a practical problem. The policeman in the field is the man who has the problem. Something occurs and the policeman sometimes has to make a decision -- How emotionally disturbed is this person? Whether he's committed a crime or not, at least he's come to police attention. If he's committed a crime, then a choice has to be made by this uniformed patrolman (this is why you need intelligent people to be policemen). Do you take this man the criminal justice route, do you



HOLSTROM: lock him up, do you prosecute him, or do you, through an arrangement with the Alameda County facilities, take him to the County Hospital? Or if the family can afford it, do you see to it that he goes the private psychiatric route? This happens all the time, it's happening this week in Berkeley. It certainly is happening in the drug scene that we see here now. So these departmental psychiatrists have been useful to us.

How close was the relationship then? Close enough that at one stage in the 1950's at Dr. Kelley's invitation I appeared on the programs of two conferences of the American Psychiatric Association, not because I was a psychiatrist, because I wasn't. I was a layman, but because I had some insight as a layman into the potential value of psychiatry applied to, and I prefer this phrase, the administration of justice. I use the word justice in its very broadest and most proper sense. Justice to the individual and justice to the community.

JRH: That's interesting because I get these practical decision-making problems in my work too. It's a very difficult situation.

HOLSTROM: Very difficult to find a psychiatrist who's willing to serve at wages or salaries that can be paid by a city or a county and who is interested and who can communicate with policemen; because not all psychiatrists are easy to communicate with and perhaps not all policemen.

JRH: Having worked in them I know that County Hospitals do have a terrible time getting competent psychiatric people. The big problems come from poor working conditions and low salaries.

HOLSTROM: Extremely difficult! I know a number of psychiatrists and have had a lot of exposure to them. I've found a few that I can communicate with, and fewer than that that I have any confidence in, but I know some. I'm not one of those people that think all psychiatrist are peculiar. I have great respect for them if they are effective. That is if they can do some good for their patients.

JRH: The only thing you didn't mention but you said you were thinking of mentioning, and that was you associated with Vollmer up to the time that he died. I don't know if you want to talk about that.

HOLSTROM: You've asked me whether I wanted to talk about Vollmer's death and I don't see why not. I know about it. He was 79 when he died and I had seen him frequently. There were three other people who I know of who are familiar with the events that led up to it. One of them is Dr. George Oulton, a dentist, whose name you have in the summary. The other was the late Captain



HOLSTROM: Walter Johnson, whose widow is still alive and whose name you do not have. They were close friends. We were aware, because he told us separately, that he knew in his very late years that he had cancer, at least cancer of the throat. He knew and it was obvious even to a layman that he had Parkinson's Disease and had developed a tremor of the hands. There is another man who knows about this but he may be prohibited by professional ethics about talking about it -- you'd have to ask him. His name is Dr. William Marsh, who's still in practice. Probably one of my contemporaries, if not a little younger, who was told also.

Vollmer told each of us. He said that he would never become a bed patient, a person who would be helpless and a concern to other people. Why he said this, I don't know. I know that he was a man that had a great deal of pride. He had a great deal of pride in his athletic ability, in his appearance, in his mental and physical competence; but I don't know what his true motivation was. That's all he said to me at least. He didn't ever intend to be a bed patient. I've been trying to remember what the circumstances were and I don't exactly, but among the four of us, we thought he probably would suicide based on what he said about never becoming a bed patient. When he said something you could depend upon it and he usually meant it.

JRH: How long was he...

HOLSTROM: How long was he aware that he had cancer and Parkinson's Disease?

JRH: Yes.

HOLSTROM: I don't know, a year or so, but it wasn't bad. And so in some fashion, I was then the Police Chief and I don't think I did it personally, his revolver was removed from his study and moved up to my desk drawer. I had it for a matter of a good many days, maybe a few weeks. One morning the phone rang and he said, "John, you have my revolver" and I said, "Yes Sir." "I would appreciate it if you'd return it; it's mine." I said, "I'll bring it up myself" and I did and without comment handed it to him and all he said was, "Thank you."

Within a matter of weeks as she later told the story, he helped his long-time housekeeper make the beds and went down to his study, stepped out in the hall at the foot of the stairs and said to her, "You'd better call the police" and he shot himself. That was that. He was dead upon arrival at the hospital. I was immediately aware before ever the ambulance got there and said to then Captain Fording, "I'm not surprised." He said, "I'm not either."



HOLSTROM: We anticipated it and I suppose there are a couple of subsequent comments: this highly distressed some of my Catholic friends who knew him because it is contrary to some Catholic teaching to take your own life. The fact that he willed his body to the Medical Center of the University of California in San Francisco distressed some more people. The fact that there was no funeral highly distressed some of our mutual friends who were Chinese and totally unable to understand why there was no funeral.

JRH: Was he buried or cremated or...

HOLSTROM: His body went to the Medical Center. I didn't go over to see what they did with it. There was no memorial service. Then I remembered that I didn't ever know of his ever attending a funeral and I never thought to ask him why. But he had no funeral. My Chinese friends and his were upset.

The final part of this was he had totally prepared for this. I told you about giving his books to the police department. We had made arrangements so he would retain custody while he lived. His papers and documents had already been delivered to Bancroft Library because he had enough academic appreciation to know that that was the best place to put them if they had any interest to anyone.

Another thing happened which I suppose only a policeman would think of, but we had done it before and it's been done since. Invariably if we thought any of our people upon death had files which might have any information about individuals, personal intimate information, we'd always inspect them. The years I had any authority down there and since, it was one of our first moves to get hold of a witness and get permission to review those files. I personally reviewed Vollrer's files. They had been completely cleared. He had lots of correspondence with people and a world-wide correspondence continued to influence the field particularly young men with whom he was associated. Those files were clear.

JRH: You mean he didn't have anything confidential or...

HOLSTROM: He removed them before I got there. This has happened in the case of other people too, people I knew had extensive files. At least it was some consolation to me as a self-appointed searcher to know that no one was going to be hurt personally by any loose papers kicking around. He had prepared for this. He had spent months getting things in order.





HOLSTROM: Since, as I've told you, I've tried, not very successfully, to have a few students, in the limited time available do some term papers about the history of the department. None of them are very good. At least they're on paper and the department has them. You have a list of them.

JRH: There's just one thing briefly, because of my own background. I noticed that he was a Unitarian. My parents are Unitarian. I was curious whether he was active in the church? And did that influence his thinking?

HOLSTROM: I know nothing about this.

JRH: Because it would be in line...

HOLSTROM: I didn't even know he was a Unitarian until I happened to look at the "Who's Who" excerpt that you have accompanying the Supplement.

JRH: So he wasn't particularly a church-going man.

HOLSTROM: I don't know.

JRH: You just don't know, because it wouldn't be that, it would be much nearer to a Unitarians' philosophy the way he ended his life.

HOLSTROM: I know nothing about his religion. All I know is he was a man of very high principle. I'm not sure that that's very far away from religion. That's about all I can tell you, Miss Howard.

JRH: That's good enough, we'll stop it now.



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University of California

Bancroft Library/Berkeley  
Regional Oral History Office

August Vollmer Historical Project

O.W. Wilson

TRAINING BY CORRESPONDENCE: VOLLMER'S INFLUENCE  
ON ORLANDO WILSON, BERKELEY'S MOST FAMOUS "COLLEGE COP"

An interview conducted by

Jane Howard Robinson



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Orlando W. Wilson, born 1900, was interviewed by Jane Howard as part of a series on the personal and professional life of August Vollmer. Mr. Wilson, former Dean of the School of Criminology at the University of California, Berkeley, and protege of August Vollmer, brings the perspective of a long and distinguished career in law enforcement to the interview.

Interviewer: Jane Howard

Time and Setting of the Interview: Two interviews were conducted with Mr. Wilson on July 2, 1971, in his modern ranch house in Poway, California, a small town about 60 miles outside of San Diego. The first interview, conducted with Mr. Wilson alone, began around 11 a.m. and concluded at approximately 12 noon. The second, with co-interviewer John Holstrom, a professional colleague of Vollmer and Wilson and advisor to the project, ran from about 12:30 p.m. to 1 p.m.

Editing: Editing of the transcribed taped interviews was done by Jane Howard. Changes were very minimal on both tapes. Mr. Wilson reviewed and made only a few minor spelling and punctuation changes on both interviews. Mr. Holstrom also reviewed the joint tape; he made a few minor editorial changes.

Narrative Account of Mr. Wilson and the Progress of the Interview: O.W. Wilson, born in 1900, received a B.A. degree from the University of California at Berkeley in 1924. He served as a "college cop" part-time from 1921 and joined the Berkeley Police Department fulltime on graduation from Berkeley. After four years under Vollmer, he went on to become Police Chief of Fullerton, and then Wichita, Kansas, both on Vollmer's recommendation.

Wilson returned to Berkeley in 1939 as a professor of police administration at the School of Criminology and remained there, with time out for service in the army during World War II, until 1960. He served as Dean of the School of Criminology from 1950-60.

In 1960 he went to Chicago, at Mayor Daley's request, and was very successful in reforming the Chicago Police Department. He also did intermittent police consulting from 1948-67, conducting many police surveys throughout the country.





Orlando W. Wilson (contd.)

Mr. Wilson has lived in Poway, California, since his retirement in 1967.

The first tape follows the questionnaire outline quite closely; Mr. Wilson had prepared notes in advance in response to the questions. Additional questions were, however, raised during the interview.

Mr. Wilson reviews his reasons for joining the Berkeley Police Department and his rapid rise to the position, Chief of the Wichita, Kansas Police Department. He discusses the "crab meetings," Vollmer's weekly staff sessions, and other training provided to the Berkeley staff. Wilson states that he felt Mr. Vollmer's outstanding characteristics were administrative and leadership ability, racial tolerance and openness to all experiences, good and bad.

The interview turns to consider the relationship between Wilson and Vollmer. Wilson says he always felt he was a student of Vollmer's, and that he received excellent advice over the years, by mail and in person, from Vollmer.

Mr. Wilson tells anecdotes: about a visit to a burlesque house, about Mr. Vollmer's interest in the criminal world and psychiatry. He mentions Vollmer's first wife briefly. Mr. Wilson discusses Vollmer's honesty and integrity.

Mr. Wilson considers Vollmer's influence in the state, particularly in establishing the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation and the Department of Corrections.

The interviewer raises questions to Mr. Wilson on Earl Warren's relation to Vollmer, the Klu Klux Klan and J. Edgar Hoover; Mr. Wilson had limited knowledge about these connections. The discussion touches on Vollmer's second wife.

The second interview, with Mr. Holstrom as co-interviewer, is brief. Mr. Holstrom raises a number of questions to Mr. Wilson. He asks how Mr. Wilson came to join the police department, and about whether problems were created by using college students as policemen. Mr. Holstrom asks Mr. Wilson whether he felt his book, Police Administration, was his own thinking or Vollmer's.



Wilson: This is Orlando W. Wilson, July 2nd 1971 at Poway, California, reporting on my relationship with August Vollmer.

I came to know August Vollmer first when I took an examination for a job as patrolman in the Berkeley Department. This was in the early spring of 1921. Vollmer had inserted an advertisement in the Daily Cal, the University newspaper, urging college students who were interested, to make application for position of patrolman in his Department. I took the examination and in May 1921 was appointed patrolman.

JRH: I'm curious to ask you why you took this examination because I guess it was so unusual in those days for college students to become policemen. Why did you respond to the ad or what attracted you to doing it?

Wilson: It was an intelligence test and the University had administered an intelligence test to the freshmen class and apparently I came out of this test with good marks so I decided this would be an easy way to get a job.

JRH: You didn't have your career planned before this?

Wilson: Oh no, not at all nor did I have it set after having worked in the Berkeley Department for four years. But, my experiences as a novice policeman were interesting to me, probably to no one else and I worked with Vollmer and became well acquainted with him because of his friendly relationships with his employees. Not only did I become well acquainted with Vollmer, but also his wife Millicent, whom we all knew as Pat. The years I spent in the Berkeley Department, a total of about four, were not uneventful for me but of no great concern.

Following my graduation, Vollmer, who was eager to get college trained men into police service, suggested that I should apply for the job of Chief of Police at Fullerton.



Wilson: This I did and I believe in April 1925 I was appointed Chief there. This lasted no more than 12 months. He then, through his acquaintanceship with Lee Phillips, a high executive or perhaps President of Pacific Finance Corporation, got me a job as an investigator with this organization and I continued this until the City Manager of Wichita, Kansas, called Chief Vollmer and said he needed someone to serve as Chief of Police and asked Vollmer if he could recommend someone. Vollmer recommended me and I had some letter correspondence with this City Manager but this was too slow for the City Manager because he wanted someone right now and finally called Vollmer and explained the situation. Vollmer called me and said, "Do you want that job or don't you?" I told him yes I did. I felt that I should look the situation over before I accepted and determine if the conditions of employment were to my liking. I went to Wichita and before I left, was appointed Chief of Police of that city. Rather young for a city of that size, I had not yet turned 28, but I conferred with Vollmer on vacation trips that I would take and I corresponded with him regularly.

JRH: You mean while you were in Fullerton or at Wichita?

Wilson: Both, but particularly Wichita. He advised me and he was a prolific letter writer and would write two and three page letters in response to questions that I asked. I got a great deal of helpful advice from him.

(Turning his attention to the questionnaire, in response to question #1.) First, you may wonder what impact he had on my personal and professional life. I must say he had a great impact. On my personal life, as an impressionable youth, I was influenced by the philosophy of this great man. As I have mentioned, he did succeed in getting me the Wichita job and then later as his replacement as Professor of Police Administration at the University of California in 1939, after I had spent eleven years at Wichita.

JRH: I wanted to ask you as part of questions one and two, do you remember the first time you met him?

Wilson: Yes, clearly. He was an imposing figure, proud of his attire. He dressed almost immaculately. I don't mean that he was foppish in his attire but he was always well dressed. He never would smoke in his office because to do so might offend some woman or some person who was allergic to tobacco smoke.



Wilson: He would work at his desk and maybe at the end of an hour, get up and go to the Squad Room and smoke one of these small cigarillos. This is one evidence of the regard he had for other people.

He held what he called "crab meetings" every Friday afternoon and some of these were extremely interesting. He had a detective, Gus Mehrtens, who was a graduate chemist and apparently a very capable detective and a small man in terms of the height one usually finds associated with policemen. Vollmer would try to get into these crab meetings, ex-convicts, narcotic addicts or anyone that he felt would be helpful to the men to see and to discuss the problems, crime problems, and the life of the individual. On one occasion, a man came along who was a phrenologist and maintained that he could, by feeling the bumps on a man's head, tell his character. Chief Vollmer set the stage for this phrenologist by getting Gus Mehrtens dressed up in old dungarees and an old sweatshirt and he locked him up in the cell. When the phrenologist came and gave his little talk on phrenology, the Chief asked him if he would like a subject to work on just as an example and he said yes and Vollmer said, "Well we have a fellow that interests me, but he's locked up in one of the cells." He ordered the Turnkey to let this fellow out and Mehrtens came in. Of course, all of us were informed of this play so we wouldn't give it away. The phrenologist sat Mehrtens down in a chair and felt his bumps. Incidentally, he was just about completely bald so he was a perfect subject. He then told why this man was a confirmed criminal. That he would never be a useful citizen and just painted the most pessimistic picture with the diagnosis of the bumps on Mehrtens' head. We often laughed over this incident, but this is an example of some of the things Vollmer would do.

He would take students and some of his policemen to mental institutions in the summertime, students who were enrolled in some course during the summer session at the University, and they'd bring out various patients and the doctor there would explain the nature of what the difficulty was so that we got acquainted with various types of mental illness. Vollmer always urged his policemen to enroll at the University and study.

(Response to question #2.) This brings us up to the question of what kind of a man Vollmer was. I guess I could best describe him as being primarily an executive, a leader of men.





Wilson: He had the ability to win the confidence of not only his subordinates but all people he dealt with. He inspired in his subordinates a loyalty not only to him as a leader but to the organization and to the ideals of police service. He had courage. I can recall that he would always keep in the top drawer of his desk his service gun and anytime he left headquarters, he would slip this in his pocket. He was an excellent shot and was able to stand a playing card on edge and at ten paces, split it with a bullet, which is considerable shooting.

We had a prisoner who escaped in some way; I've forgotten the details. Vollmer and others at headquarters immediately ran out after him and this prisoner sought refuge in the coal yard. As they were trying to apprehend him he picked up pieces of coal and threw at the people. While I was not there, I was told that Vollmer shot a piece of coal out of the prisoner's hand but not before he had hit Vollmer on the side of the face with a lump of coal.

I learned something of his philosophy of life. He felt that life is nothing but experience and that whether it be good or bad, whether exemplary or filled with mistakes, Vollmer always typified it as being experience and in consequence, all for the good. He had a rule, never to say anything bad about a man. I heard him once say that if you can't say something good about a man, don't say anything. When he held a seminar at the University and lecture classes as well, he gave up smoking because it caused him to cough and he felt that was unfair to his students. He adopted the practice in his seminar of going out for coffee at the end of the seminar, I guess about 10 o'clock. The students would ask him to tell stories and he was an excellent raconteur. He could keep them spell-bound with stories of cases that he had worked on and of the lives of criminals he had known.

He was racially unprejudiced. Walter Gordon, one of Berkeley's football greats, was a patrolman at this time in Berkeley and Vollmer made this appointment because he recognized the fine qualities of Walter Gordon. There were in those days, no social pressures to appoint minority groups to police forces as there have been in more recent years. He worked closely with Gordon and I hope you can get Walter Gordon to talk about Vollmer.



JRH: Bancroft Library is supposed to interview him. I'm interested in two things. First, Chief Holstrom mentioned that Vollmer sometimes had boxing matches.

Wilson: I'm not aware of that. However he did have a yawara or judo expert who trained members of the department. I think this was done principally in the high school gym, not at police headquarters.

JRH: Apparently he was a very athletic man. Did he encourage athletics? I get the impression more from Parker than from Holstrom that this had something to do with the fact that he was proud of his appearance and very athletic. Did that seem so, or do you recall anything in relation to that kind of activity?

Wilson: Not in relation to his athletic activities that I am personally aware of, although I did know that he was a great swimmer and I think he played handball with Chief Dullea of San Francisco but I never saw any of his athletic activities.

JRH: So it wasn't something that dominated, something that was noticeable?

Wilson: No.

JRH: I'm also curious about the question of the impact he had on your personal life. In that time when you were working in the Berkeley Police Department, I want to get a sense of how he encouraged you because you weren't really set on a career in police work at all when you started working for the Department. Can you give me a better idea of how he influenced you to stay in that work? Did you meet with him socially a lot? Did you meet with him in his office a lot? How did he get you into it?

Wilson: Neither. I would drive Chief Vollmer and his wife Pat because he didn't drive a car himself.

JRH: How come?

Wilson: Never learned to drive and he had no desire to drive. I would drive them to places and I got a chance to visit with them, they would sit in the back seat. Until later, when I returned to Berkeley as a professor, I had no social life with him as such nor can I recall going into his office and sitting in a chair. The contacts and relationships were more related to activities in the normal routine day of work.



JRH: At what point do you think you were committed to staying in police work?

Wilson: After I got to Wichita and not before!

JRH: One thing Gene Carte was particularly interested in asking you about was that he has been reading some of the correspondence in Bancroft Library, they have a lot of his personal papers, between Vollmer and you, when he was urging you to go on to Harvard. One of the letters said that the future of policing is in having educated police and that you should really take this kind of academic post. He was interested in knowing a little bit about whether these letters between you and him had a lot of influence on your decision to continue on with police work and go on to Harvard. Was this relationship with Vollmer quite important to you in staying in the field or encouraging you to go on to a higher position?

Wilson: Oh yes, certainly it was. Anytime I was up against a decision such as should I go to Harvard, I would write him and he would advise me, as he did, to go. I had my year at Harvard but it wasn't really on the faculty, it was the Bureau for Street Traffic Research, then under Miller McClintock who I think later went to Germany and assisted Adolph Hitler in the construction of the Autobahn.

JRH: You mentioned that when you went to Wichita you wrote him on how to handle police problems.

Wilson: Yes. Anytime I was confronted with a problem I'd write him a letter. Administration by correspondence they'd call it.

JRH: I take it he gave you very thorough and thoughtful kinds of answers.

Wilson: Oh yes, two and three page letters.

JRH: Did you work with Vollmer and Leonard to some extent? What was the relationship between you?

Wilson: I was never closely associated with V.A. Leonard. He was Identification Officer in the San Diego Department after Chief Vollmer had made a survey and re-organization of that department. He returned to Berkeley I think about the last year of my service there. As I recall, he served as Identification Officer there so I didn't have close contact with him.

JRH: So mostly he was somewhat close to Vollmer but independently and not so much with you. Was it that Vollmer was about 20 years older than you? He was born in 1876.



Wilson: I was born in 1900, so he was 24 years my senior.

JRH: By the time you came back to Berkeley you were certainly an authority in the field in your own right and I was wondering if you always continued to consider yourself sort of a student of Vollmer's or whether you considered yourself more of his peer as time went on?

Wilson: I never reached that point. Upon my return to the University I was guided by him in the preparation of lectures. When I wrote police records and later on and more significantly police administration, Vollmer was a tremendous assistance to me in the preparation of this text. I would discuss with him at great length some of the problems that had to be dealt with in this book so the book, in a very real sense, is a reflection of August Vollmer's thinking.

(Response to question #3.) Now as to anecdotes and stories, Chief Vollmer loved fun, I found in later years, although I had heard some stories about his pranks -- I guess that isn't quite the right term -- as a younger man. When he was re-organizing the Kanaas City department in the early 30's, I was at Wichita and on a couple of occasions drove to Kansas City and visited with him. I can recall that on one occasion he and Pat took me to the 12th Street Burlesque which was a very famous burlesque theater. We all enjoyed this experience a great deal. This is the kind of thing he would do. Later, when he worked on the Wickersham Commission Report in Chicago and was then on the staff of the University of Chicago, I visited him there from Wichita and I can recall he and his wife and myself going out in the evening on the train and he would point out certain well dressed men in derbies, white silk scarves, velvet collars on blue topcoats and wearing gray spats, that here was a gangster! I expect he was right.

JRH: Is it true that he had a fascination with criminal elements and that he was very effective in dealing with crime, but that he also in a way was interested in it?

Wilson: I should have mentioned that as a small boy he was in New Orleans living with his then widowed mother when the Superintendent of Police of New Orleans was assassinated by the Black Hand. Shortly after that he and his mother came by train to Berkeley and on the train with them was the widow of the assassinated superintendent so I feel certain that this must have had a strong impact on him. I can recall his mother's home on Milvia Street and he lived there with her, I think up until the time that he married Pat, his wife, that I knew so well.





JRH: How old was he when he married, do you remember?

Wilson: It was his second marriage. That would have been about 1925 because I recall as a patrolman picking them up and driving them places.

JRH: So he was almost 55 when he remarried?

Wilson: Close to 50 I'd say.

JRH: I heard he married briefly earlier.

Wilson: Yes. To a concert singer. She was apparently more interested in the stage and concert work than she was in Vollmer and they separated.

JRH: Do you know how long he was married to her? Or when?

Wilson: No I don't. But I think rather briefly. They had no children nor did he have any with Pat.

After I joined the faculty at the University I can recall his telling that he and Captain Kidd, who was the criminal law professor at Boalt Hall and Dr. Don Juan Ball, a psychiatrist, went with their wives on a camping trip in the Redwoods and he was laughing about some of their experiences. He said they'd pick out a tree that seemed a little abnormal and decide that that was a schizophrenic tree and go on to another which would be paranoid, etc.

JRH: He was very interested in psychiatric problems?

Wilson: Yes he was and had psychiatric examinations for applicants to the department, when I was appointed at least. You mentioned his association with criminals. I can recall his telling me about how he would keep in his desk drawer at headquarters a bottle of whiskey and when they had some old drunk who had sobered up the night before and were about to release him without running him through court, Vollmer would bring him into his office and pour him a good stiff drink before turning him out.

JRH: Was he a social man; it sounds like he was. Did he like drinking?



Wilson: Yes, and he liked parties and he told me on occasion that he had never gambled because his mother, for some reason, was opposed to gambling and his mother apparently played some influence on his life because he went on to say that anytime he would call on his mother she'd get out the liquor bottle and they would sit there visiting and drinking.

I also recall his telling about his experiences at the time of the San Francisco fire and earthquake when hundreds and hundreds of refugees came to Berkeley and he had the responsibility of maintaining order.

JRH: It was right after he became Chief.

Wilson: Yes, it was 1906 I believe.

JRH: He was Town Marshal in 1905.

Wilson: I thought it was earlier than that.

JRH: Let me check. It was 1905 when he became Town Marshal.

Wilson: When did he become Chief of Police?

JRH: 1909 and I remember why because it had to do with passing the charter amendment but he was essentially Chief from 1905 on.

Wilson: (Response to question #4.) The question is asked what was Vollmer's professional impact? I wrote a forward for Al Parker's book on the Berkeley Police Story and I'm simply going to read from it as I think this states it much better than I could say.

JRH: Actually though, what we're interested in is what's not been recorded somewhere so if that's the introduction you used in the book we wouldn't really need to put it in.

Wilson: No, I'd just read a page and a half of it.

JRH: We don't need that particularly but what we want is what people have in their heads and we're hoping that someone may want to do a doctoral thesis or a master's thesis on Vollmer. They would have access to written material but we want to have tapes of what people have said about Vollmer.

Wilson: Well, then we'll just skip item 4.



- JRH: Chief Holstrom and I didn't go into that too much either, because it doesn't have too much to do with what the man was like, except in a sense a man's principles have to do with what kind of a man you are. For instance, Holstrom and I talked a lot about the sense of honesty people got from him or a sense of integrity and in that sense we'd be interested in knowing some of the principles that he stood for.
- Wilson: He certainly stood for complete honesty and I think this perhaps was one of the reasons he got along with the press so well. He was completely frank with them and if anything occurred, he'd bring them into his office and tell them about it rather than having them dig it out and getting it in a slanted way. I can recall, as a matter of fact while a patrolman...no, I guess it was while I was at Fullerton, I went with him to the San Francisco Department for some reason. He introduced me to a man there and he said, "O.W., if you took this man completely apart, you wouldn't be able to find a crooked bone in his body -- he's that honest." I was never sure then or since then whether he didn't make this statement with his tongue in cheek.
- JRH: What do you think made him that way? Why do you think he developed to be a man with such high ideals?
- Wilson: I don't know. I've never met his mother but he lived with her from the time they arrived from New Orleans until his first marriage whenever that was, and I think after his separation. I am confident that she was an influence to him and may have instilled in him concepts of honesty such as the one he did mention that he had never gambled in his life and I'm sure his mother influenced him to this determination. I presume she left other ideals implanted in his mind as well.
- JRH: This reminds me. You mentioned that his mother was opposed to gambling. In his biography they had in Who's Who in the West, that he listed himself as a Unitarian. That religion wouldn't usually exclude gambling, but do you know anything about his religious background or do you know if his mother was a Unitarian?
- Wilson: I have no idea. I also had no idea that Chief Vollmer had ever declared that he was a Unitarian. As a matter of fact, I had thought that he probably had never set foot in a church in his life.



JRH: Well, that's the least religious church, so maybe that's why he listed it. And maybe his mother's position on gambling was related to being a Baptist or something like that. Did you know his mother?

Wilson: No I didn't.

(Response to question #7.) Vollmer was influential and involved in some State events that had a strong impact on the development of the law enforcement agencies in California. Particularly in the enactment of legislation to authorize the establishment of the Bureau of Identification as it was originally called and the title later may have been the Bureau of Identification and Investigation. Vollmer played an important role in the development of this Bureau and again, as he did with so many people, he advised the head of the Bureau, I think a man named Clarence Morrill, on the development of this new agency and this relationship continued after Clarence Morrill passed away and his son was appointed to replace him as head of the Bureau.

JRH: We understand this was a new idea and we were wondering how he got it accomplished? Was he a charming man and how did he do it? Who did he talk to or influence?

Wilson: I have no idea. I could only conjecture that he must have talked to legislators, but whether he went to Sacramento for this or whether they may have called in his office, I don't know.

JRH: Do you know of other things that he got accomplished?

Wilson: I think he played a part in the development in the Department of Corrections. He was very much concerned with penology as such: correctional institutions, and the state prisons generally. He seemed to hold some hope for the rehabilitation of the inmates in much larger proportions than I was ever convinced of myself. In those years, after he retired as Chief, and I'm sure this occurred while he was Chief, he would have police officials and correctional officials call at his home and discuss problems much as I did in correspondence while at Wichita. I can recall a group from the Los Angeles Police Department coming to Berkeley in a Marmon automobile. I'm not sure of the date but they came to discuss problems with him and I'm sure he advised them on what they should do. He reorganized the Los Angeles Department in I think 1922 or thereabouts and he had a close working relationship with whoever was Chief and the men he worked so closely with in the course of this reorganization.





- JRH: We were interested in his relationship with Earl Warren both when Warren was Assistant D.A. and then when he became Attorney General and Governor and the Bancroft Library is also interested in this because they're doing a history of Warren.
- Wilson: I can recall my first sight of Earl Warren. He was the Assistant D.A. assigned to Berkeley and worked in the Berkeley Police Headquarters.
- JRH: He became Assistant D.A. in 1923. Was that where he was assigned for the two years, the whole time was Assistant D.A.?
- Wilson: I don't know how long, but about that time he was an imposing looking youngish man and he'd stand with his thumbs in his vest sleeves and had a gold chain across his vest. He wore blue clothes. He was interested in the success of the Berkeley Department in dealing with their criminal cases. Then he became D.A. of Alameda County and it seems to me that he served there eight years.
- JRH: 1925 to 1938 -- ~~7~~ years.
- Wilson: Then he became Attorney General and then Governor and then Chief Justice. We'll skip that because it's an unhappy recollection that I have of the last days of Earl Warren. It makes me unhappy everytime I think about them.
- JRH: When Warren was still D.A. in Alameda, from what Bancroft Library has learned, there was a difference in attitude between Vollmer and Warren on enforcement of prohibition. Do you know anything about that?
- Wilson: Prohibition went out about that time about 1933 and he became District Attorney in 1925. I could believe that there were differences and I don't know Earl Warren's views on prohibition but I think Vollmer was opposed to it. He felt that this was doing a great damage to law enforcement, as in fact it was, and it created a situation where police could be corrupted. As I say, I am not aware of Earl Warren's attitude toward prohibition.
- JRH: Had you heard Vollmer at any time talk about the Ku Klux Klan since they were still active in the mid-20's?
- Wilson: No, I have no recollection of this but knowing his complete lack of prejudice I am confident that he would be opposed to the principles of the Ku Klux Klan.



- JRH: Another thing he worked with Warren on was when there was gambling and an off-track betting scandal later on when Warren was Governor, like about 1942. Warren had a Crime Commission in 1948 against gambling and off-track betting. Do you know if Vollmer was at all involved in that Commission?
- Wilson: He would have been retired from the University nine years by then which meant that he was getting on in years. I have no recollection of this Commission.
- JRH: Do you know any more about when Warren was Governor? We're curious about the relationship between the two and generally did they become friends when Warren became D.A. and if they continued to work together and in what ways.
- Wilson: I simply don't have any first hand information at all nor any scuttle-butt.
- JRH: You just don't know much about how Warren and Vollmer were together?
- Wilson: No.
- JRH: One other historical event. There was a general strike in 1934 and do you know about Vollmer's involvement with that?
- Wilson: That was the waterfront strike. I don't recall his activities there at all.
- JRH: Apparently Vollmer was on good terms with Bill Knowland. Do you know about this? Chief Holstrom told me that the Oakland Tribune did have a reporter stationed at Berkeley P.D. Do you think that was due to Vollmer's initiative?
- Wilson: Vollmer would certainly have no protest but I'm sure the Knowland family, being aggressive journalists, would have initiated this, putting the reporters where there was news. There was news at Berkeley and readily accessible because of Vollmer's complete frankness in dealing with the reporters.
- JRH: I suspect that was very helpful in his gaining such a widespread reputation because of his attitude toward the press.
- Wilson: Yes, I'm sure it was.
- JRH: Apparently he influenced Hoover's attitudes toward setting up the FBI. Do you know anything about this?



Wilson: Not a thing.

JRH: One other historical thing that ties in a little bit with your discussion of the schizophrenic trees. Apparently in 1925 a number of influential people established a social welfare league in Berkeley and Vollmer was one of the people involved in that. They handled, in a more social work way, the problems of the community. Do you know anything about that, if he stayed in that?

Wilson: I'm sure he was interested in it, but he did have a policewoman, one of the early policewomen, Polly was her first name, she married Gus Mehrtens and after Gus Merhtens' death she continued on as the policewoman and whether she's still alive I don't know because she'd be a very elderly person by now. Vollmer was a humanitarian and was interested in social welfare, was interested in parole and was interested in the welfare of prisoners in the correctional institutions.

One thing he was always trying to do was to get his subordinates to write. To write and publish in journals and some in books. John Larson was a policeman at that time and he later became a psychiatrist, but he developed the lie detector and he did this with Vollmer's strong support and worked with some of the people at the University where he then was a student and wrote a book on the lie detector. Then later, and I'm sure it was at Vollmer's instigation, he developed a system of single fingerprint classifications and wrote a book on this. So here were two books in the field that Vollmer got a subordinate to write. He would urge individual members of the department to write something. He'd say, "Why don't you write an article and have it published in such and such a journal." He was constantly urging, apparently aware of the need for literature in the police field and concerned likewise with publication and it was because of this that he became acquainted with Charles C. Thomas, a publisher in Springfield, Illinois. Thomas was out after I was appointed Professor and we had several visits with Thomas and his wife and then later with Thomas' son, Payne Thomas. Because of Vollmer's urging the Thomas', who up till this point had specialized in medical literature, broadened their field of interest and started publishing in the police field. V.A. Leonard has had maybe a dozen books published by them. They are also publishing this new book by A. Parker. Here, for example, are books that V.A. Leonard has written.



JRH: So Leonard was greatly influenced by Vollmer in that respect?

Wilson: Oh, yes.

JRH: He became a Professor of Police Administration at Washington State. He was a patrolman to start?

Wilson: He was an Identification Officer but whether he came in as a patrolman I don't know. We had as the Identification Officer a man named C.D. Lee and I think Lee trained Leonard and Leonard then went to San Diego as Identification Officer then came back about 1924 or so.

(Response to question #7.) On the seventh point I can only say that he was invariably friendly to all his friends, helpful to his employees and was always prepared to give a great deal of his time to advising colleagues.

JRH: What about his enemies? He must have made some.

Wilson: I'm sure he did, but he never talked about them.

JRH: It would be hard to make so many innovations without making some enemies of people. You don't know too much about the people he may have aggravated?

Wilson: No.

JRH: What about his wife? What sort of a woman was she?

Wilson: A charming woman. He made a survey of the police in Cuba at one time and Pat was with him. She had short hair like they wore it in those days and her hair was gray but she was an extremely attractive person and personality and she enjoyed the things that Vollmer enjoyed. They would go out in the evenings for dinner somewhere and in those later days I had the privilege of being with them on some of these occasions.

(Response to question #8.) In addition to V.A. Leonard, there was a man named Gabrielson who, the last I heard, was a Sheriff in the northern part of the State. When Vollmer reorganized the Honolulu Department he arranged for Gabrielson to be named Chief, and Gabrielson served there a number of years until he finally left and returned to the mainland. Another one is Wiltberger, William A. The last I heard of Wiltberger he was living in retirement in New Mexico but Vollmer played an important role in the lives of all three of these men. V.A. Leonard is still alive and I don't know whether Wiltberger and Gabrielson are still alive or not. Walter Gordon and Bill Dean also.





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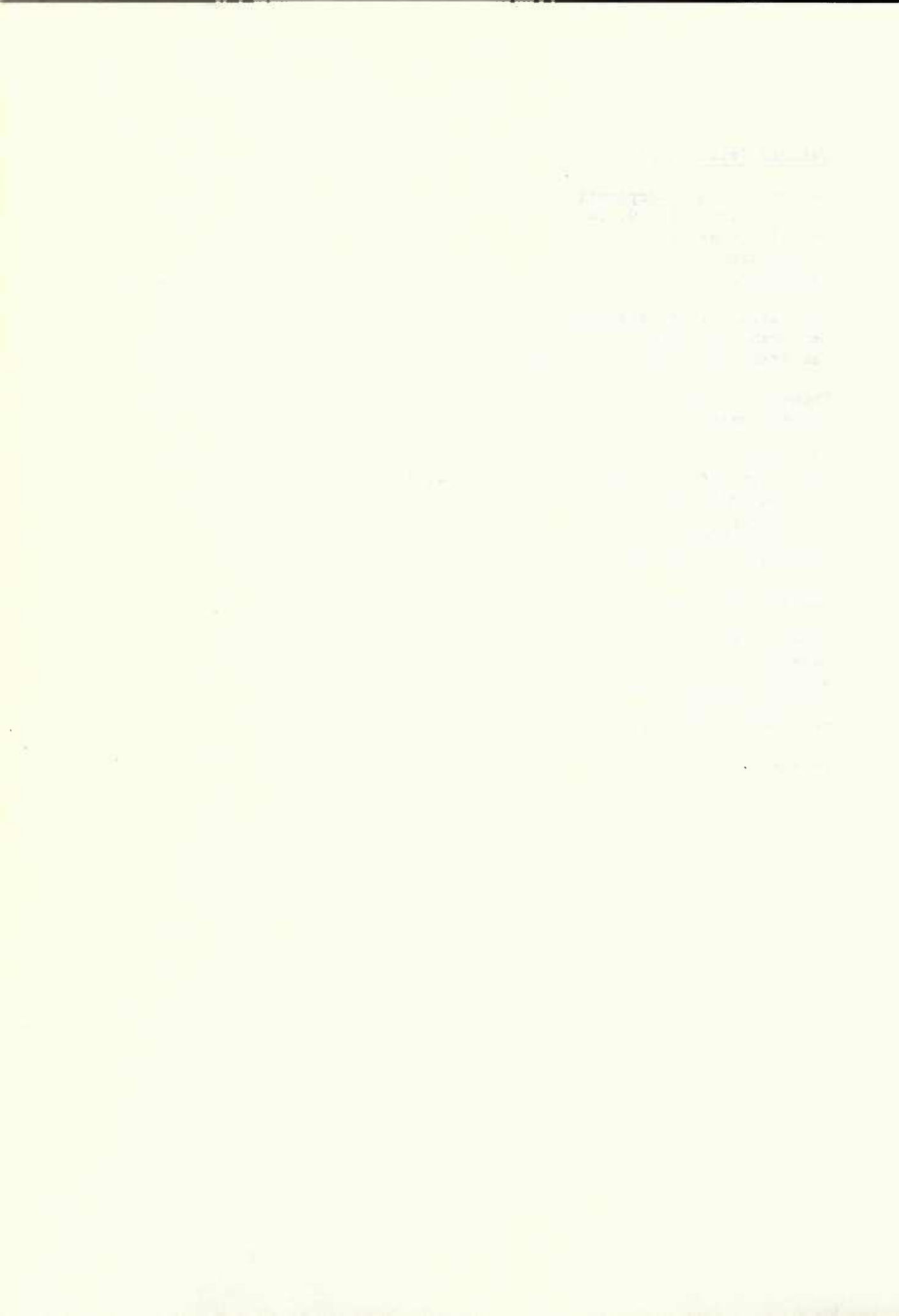
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# Criminologist Orlando W. Wilson Dies

Poway, San Diego County

Orlando W. Wilson, who gained a world reputation in criminology before cleaning up the Chicago police force after a burglary scandal, died of a stroke yesterday. He was 72.

Wilson, a former dean of the School of Criminology at the University of California at Berkeley, was appointed Chicago's police commissioner in 1960. He retired in 1967.

Earlier, he lectured throughout the United States and Europe and reorganized police departments at San Antonio; Texas; San Juan, Puerto Rico; Louisville Ky., and other cities.

He was appointed dean at Berkeley in 1939 after earning his undergraduate degree there in 1924 and a doctorate at Carthage College in Illinois, later receiving an honorary doctor's degree at Northwestern University.

During World War II he served as an Army colonel and on the staff of General Lucius in Berlin.

Wilson was hired to clean up Chicago's scandal-ridden police force and was given a free hand to do it by Mayor Richard J. Daley.

The department had been rocked in 1960 when eight policemen were convicted of committing a string of burglaries with the aid of a professional burglar.

The soft-spoken, slender, wrinkle-faced, scholarly Wilson methodically set to work restoring the tattered police image.

He applied theories of centralization and effective supervision, took men off the beat and put them into police cars that flashed blue instead of red lights, added a canine force, modernized the crime laboratory, increased promotions and boosted salaries.

He applied computer technology to police statistics, criminal identification and crime records. He made Chicago's communications network the envy of the world's police forces and a model to be studied.



O. W. WILSON in 1960  
Died Yesterday

Daily Californian  
Thursday, October 19, 1972

## Criminologist Dead at 72

Orlando W. Wilson, former dean of the School of Criminology here who achieved national fame as Chicago police commissioner, died yesterday at the age of 72.

Wilson worked his way through school here as a part-time Berkeley policeman, then went on to become police chief in Fullerton and Wichita, Kans. In 1939 he returned to the University as professor of police administration in the Political Science Department, and in 1950 was named dean of the newly-formed School of Criminology.

While teaching here, Wilson served as special consultant in the reorganization of thirteen police departments, including those of San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Louisville, Ky. From 1943 to 1947 he was a colonel of military police in

(from front page)

ances from Mayor Richard Daley of a free hand and a salary more than twice that he received as dean here, Wilson accepted.

The School of Criminology was at that time undergoing one of its periodic threats of being reorganized out of existence.

Under Wilson's rule, the Chicago Police Dept. was partially put

Germany and Italy.

Wilson held only a bachelor's degree while serving as a professor and dean here, but later received two honorary doctorates.

In 1960, Wilson was called to Chicago to head a special "blue ribbon" commission seeking a new head of the Chicago Police Department. The commission was appointed in the wake of a scandal implicating over a score of police officers in a burglary ring which among other things used police cars to transport stolen goods.

After examining 53 candidates for police commissioner, the other members of the commission asked Wilson to step down so that he himself might be considered for the post. After receiving assurance (see back page)

under the civil service merit system, and both open theft and some of the more blatant aspects of political patronage in the department were curbed.

There was, however, no noticeable decrease in either police brutality or "justifiable homicides" committed by police officers — a category in which Chicago continued to hold the national record.









JRH: I'm Jane Howard, with Chief Holstrom and Dean Wilson who are going to chat together. I guess Chief Holstrom is going to ask Dean Wilson some questions about his early career. It's the second of June in Mr. Wilson's home in Poway.

Holstrom: How did you happen to become a Berkeley policeman?

Wilson: I was a student at the University of California, a sophomore, and I decided that I should support myself. My father had given me a fairly liberal allowance at the time, but he had some reverses, and I decided that it was high time that I should be on my own.

Holstrom: There was a slight recession in 1921, was there not?

Wilson: I think so. But Vollmer advertised in the Daily Cal for college students who were interested in police service and stated that an intelligence test would be used in the selection of applicants. So I decided to take a fling at this and took the examination. I've forgotten now who administered the Army Alpha, which was the one we had, but I was selected and went to work in May 1921.

JRH: You left school then?

Wilson: Oh, no, I continued until I graduated. I worked the night duty, usually the second shift.

Holstrom: Isn't it so that Vollmer was interested in attempting to improve the quality of people in his own department and in the police service generally? One of his ideas was to attract college students and even when I was in college, in the late 1920's, I read a good deal about the college cops, who he encouraged to go to school and be policemen at the same time. They were such people as you, Ed Maeshner, Ralph Proctor, Walter Gordon, who went through law school; and Bill Dean.

Isn't it also a fact that the man who was really the operations officer in the police department was Jack Greening, who later became the Police Chief. The program really did not delight the Captain because he had some difficulty in getting those college cops to work overtime because they were supposed to be going to school. I believe that there was a period when Captain Greening was not very enthusiastic about policemen who went to school and worked as policemen at the same time, so when he became Chief he changed policies slightly. Isn't this so?

Wilson: This is true, but I don't know that it was because of the lack of availability of these men for overtime. My recollection is that this didn't interfere one iota with the overtime that they imposed on those college students who were working in the department. As a matter of fact, following the Berkeley fire in 1923, and while Vollmer was in Los Angeles, we worked 16-hour tours of duty.



Wilson: That year I flunked out of the University as a consequence of no time for studies at all, so I graduated in 1925 instead of 1924.

Holstrom: I have heard a story that one of your colleagues, Walter Gordon, solved his problem by reading his law books under a street light while on duty down on San Pablo Avenue. I don't know how directly this was connected with Vollmer, but he must have tolerated it.

Wilson: I never heard this in reference to Walter Gordon, but I know it's true in the case of John Larson. John would regularly park his car and study his books. Doc Rooney would go out in his car with a blanket at night and snatch a few winks of sleep and carried an alarm clock. He'd set the clock for the time when he was supposed to make a pull on the call box but I don't know whether Vollmer knew anything about this or not, and I rather doubt it, and I'm not at all sure he would tolerate it.

JRH: How many college cops were there, say, when you went in?

Wilson: There must have been a dozen out of a force of 28 or 30.

JRH: He was very successful in recruiting college kids. That was quite an unusual ratio?

Holstrom: Not only quite unusual; this was unique in the United States of America!

JRH: How long had he done it? Were you in one of the first classes of college cops?'

Wilson: I think a year or two before because Walt Gordon came on a year or two before I did.

Holstrom: I think Walter came in 1919.

Wilson: This was about the start of it because it was the end of the First World War and the Army Alpha grew out of the Army and this was the testing procedure he used and I think it was about that time when he started recruiting college men for service as policemen.

Holstrom: I've referred in my tape to the long utilization of psychiatrists by Vollmer which was an extraordinary thing to do. Do you happen to know who the departmental psychiatrist was in the early 1920's?

Wilson: Dr. Rowell.

Holstrom: He was a successor to a Dr. Ball. Did you know him?

Wilson: Ball came later. Because Ball did not examine me and Rowell did.

Holstrom: Dr. Rowell was still the departmental psychiatrist as late as the early 1940's so he and Vollmer were very close friends.



Wilson: Well, he may not have used Ball as a department psychiatrist, but they were friends.

Holstrom: I didn't realize that Dr. Rowell's connection with the department went back that far. I'd like to ask you about a different kind of subject unless something occurs to you.

JRH: Do you remember when you and other young college students were recruited to be police officers if there was community reaction against it? I suspect there might have been.

Wilson: I was never aware of it or heard of it.

JRH: They didn't say, "What on earth are they recruiting college men for?"

Wilson: Quite the contrary. The press was favorable to this because it was unique and it was a story, so I think the townspeople accepted it completely.

Holstrom: By the 1920's, regardless of what may have happened way back in 1905, wouldn't you say that Vollmer was in a very strong and respected position in the community with the townspeople and that this prevailed even down to my era when the department and I benefitted from the things that this man had done and the international reputation he and the department had. There was a carryover that I am positive is still going on in 1971.

Wilson: He was President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police in 1921-22. The conference was held here in San Francisco and Dr. John Larson with his lie detector put on a demonstration for the assembled group.

Holstrom: I'd like to ask you another kind of question and this probably touches on the man's influence. This morning Mrs. Wilson and I were in your study looking at your 1963 revision of Police Administration which I personally choose to call the "definitive text in the field."

Wilson: Thank you sir. Is that on tape?

Holstrom: I'm of course well familiar with the English edition, but I was aware from a previous visit and conversations about the translations which I know are in Chinese and Japanese, Arabic, Spanish, and Korean. I should tell you that while your back was turned Mrs. Wilson has presented me with a copy of the Japanese edition, the only extra copy she had, so I got away with that for the Berkeley Police Library. I want to ask you how much of the things you've set forth there and some of the principles that you enunciated, if that's a good verb, represent the Vollmer influence on your thinking about standards and ethics and procedures and so on. I know enough that a good deal of this is your own development



Holstrom: of your own experience and your own thinking.

Wilson: No, I think I'd put in a disclaimer there. As I told Jane earlier, this book, while I wrote it, reflected Vollmer's principles and philosophy and I went through the book thoroughly with him, chapter by chapter, so that I would say that it reflects August Vollmer rather than O.W. Wilson.

Holstrom: Well, I'm sure the tape recognizes this too. I was talking about the translations that indicate the international influence and the responsible publishing company, McGraw-Hill, felt it important enough to publish these translations into other languages than English. This leads me to another question. You'll remember that in the middle 1950's, there was developed the "Law Enforcement Code of Ethics". I don't think you and I can ever forget the problems of developing that. This code of ethics, as we know, has been adopted by many police departments in this country as a statement of ideals which is what you once called it. Not only that, but it's been adopted internationally and widely published and adopted by police associations such as the California Police Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police and others.

You will recall that initially this was proposed by a group of middle management people like lieutenants who were interested in professionalizing the police service mentioned so frequently by Vollmer. They were interested in developing a code of ethics or set of standards. You will remember that we were both there when a San Diego police lieutenant by the name of Gene Muelheisen presented to the Executive Committee of the Association the first draft. You will remember that those very conservative police chiefs felt it should be rewritten and you will also remember the long period of time it took to put this concisely on one page and we were involved. Our Dr. Douglas Kelley actually did almost the semi-final draft. So we had a Code of Ethics and we both know what it says. I want to ask you if it isn't true that that Code of Ethics represents in large measure the influence of the Vollmer philosophy on such people as you and me and Dr. Kelley. Is this a correct analysis?

Wilson: Yes, I would say that it is. The inception of the Code of Ethics came in Wichita and was outlined in the "Square Deal Code." We adopted it there in the very early 30's. If you read that code you will find that much of it is incorporated in this Code of Ethics that's been accepted by the IACP.

Holstrom: I now remember the "Square Deal Code" and I had forgotten it. Of course you developed it. I don't think I have any more questions and I don't want to go over the same ground that you went over.

JRH: I'd be interested to know if you remember occasions in which the three of you had been working together or socializing together?





Wilson: I can't recall.

Holstrom: Not so much together, but you had many associations with him, professionally and socially over the years. The span of years was longer in your case. I served under him, but really didn't have a close association with him until after he retired from the University in the late 1930's. Then the association in my case was progressive, personally and professionally, until it was quite intimate in the years preceding and at the time of his death.

Wilson: I have no recollection of the three of us being together at any affair.

JRH: Both of you say Vollmer was extremely influential in the community, both locally and in the professional community. I haven't gotten too much of an idea of his impact on Berkeley and the people he worked with in Berkeley. In what sense was he influential?

Wilson: I don't think I could recall anything that would bear on this. I can recall that he was friendly with Berkeley councilmen. I can recall some sort of a run-in with a Berkeley councilman, by me not knowing who the man was and I was somewhat chagrined when I found that he was a Berkeley councilman, but I have no information relating to Vollmer's relationships to councilmen individually or as a body. Nor the city government.

JRH: It was probably before your time that he had to get a charter amendment passed in order to become Chief of Police. Later on did he need any city council amendments to get any of his reforms?

Holstrom: That really was not a charter amendment. He was the Town Marshal under what I think was the charter of 1895. I think I saw this in some of the materials you had, and how much he did or didn't have to do with the incorporation work and the charter of 1909, I don't know. But it would be normal to believe that the 1909 charter simply ratified automatically the position of Chief of Police as one of the officials of the city since this is California practice.

I believe I mentioned to you when you speak of his relationship with the community that he was the early recipient of the Benjamin Ide Wheeler Award. This award was and is awarded biennially to the citizen of Berkeley who has made the greatest contribution to the community. The decision is made of a council composed of the presidents of the service clubs, such as Rotary, Kiwanis and the others, including the Soroptomists, the women's organization. So there's a broad base of community representation in this award. The year was around the early 30's and the document I have is a three or four page recommendation to Dr. Herman Schwartz who headed the Pacific School of Religion and



Holstrom: who was Chairman of the Wheeler Award Committee that year. There was representative community feeling about the recipients because this has always been true as far as my recollection goes and that precedes 1930.

Wilson: Jane, you asked about his interest in social welfare. I recall that someone made a study and published a thin book on, I think, juvenile delinquency in Berkeley. I can't recall the name of the author. Do you?

Holstrom: No, I don't.

Wilson: He was sufficiently interested and got this book published and he was always interested in community organizations and I think he developed some program that had to do with social welfare in Berkeley.

Holstrom: I wonder if what your thinking of is the Coordinating Council. This Council has representation from the social agencies in your community, including the people in the schools. This is a development he talked about in his later years. On one occasion he told me that he felt, and this may have been as late as the 1950's, that perhaps some of the people by that time had really forgotten the potential value of the Coordinating Council which in his view was not only effective but essential in coordinating the social agencies in the community. Perhaps touching on this too, and this was just after you left the department, O.W., but I'm sure you'd know, he brought to Berkeley an Elizabeth Anderson who later became Elizabeth Lossing. She certainly was not the first policewoman in the country, but she was the most prominent one in Berkeley police history because she served from 1925 to 1945 and she's no longer alive. I am sure that Mrs. Lossing was educated in some mid-western or eastern college in social welfare. Isn't that probably true?

Wilson: Yes.

Holstrom: Mrs. Lossing's function for those twenty years was to become involved principally in the disposition of cases and not their investigation. The disposition of cases involving women and children under twelve. So here was an awareness of social welfare.

JRH: Did he serve on the Coordinating Council?

Holstrom: Certainly.

JRH: What were some of the other groups represented on this Council? He served as a representative from the Police Department?

Holstrom: I remember clearly the schools. I remember his telling me that in conjunction with the local school system and I think a man by the name of Virgil Dickson was Assistant Superintendent of Schools. Some of these people and some of Vollmer's people talked



Holstrom: about a summer project and I think the name of it was the Hawthorne Project. These people on this Coordinating Council, or at least the police and school representatives, sat down before the spring term had ended and identified the people they thought might become community problems over the summer. Problems in the sense of personal, anti-social activities. Gently and diplomatically between these agencies, some kind of a program was developed for the summer in an effort to prevent these youngsters from getting into trouble. I'd like to tell you, too, in this connection that Mrs. Lossing's unit in the department was not the juvenile bureau and was not the women's bureau, but the crime prevention bureau. That title prevailed well into the 1930's, well after Vollmer had left. I probably changed it myself to Juvenile Bureau.

JRH: I'd be interested to know if you were in together in other groups like the Elks or other community groups.

Wilson: He was an Elk.

Holstrom: I really think that his personal correspondence files or the files in the Berkeley Police Department and in the Bancroft Library would reflect this because for his era a good deal of what he did was committed to paper and correspondence.

JRH: Gene Carte mentioned that there is quite a bit and Mr. Wilson has mentioned that he was a great writer and that he wrote a lot of people, but you mean the records of the Department more than that?

Holstrom: He was not only a great writer, but he thought that everybody who knew anything should put it on paper. One of my disappointments to him was that I didn't start writing books when I was 21 years old. I'll never forget when I was a young patrolman and I might have been all of about 23 years old and, as happened before and happened afterwards, he was the host to some international visitors. These were three or four English policemen of the caliber you later associated with Chief Constables of the larger cities. Vollmer invited them to California after an IACP conference so they came to see this great man and this great police department which was in the basement of City Hall in truly restricted quarters. I happened to be in the Squad Room working on some of that overtime we were still doing and he brought these men in to see his Squad Room which was adjoining the jail and was the place where the policemen changed their clothes, wrote their reports and where the newspaper reporters functioned. I stopped running the typewriter and turned around and he introduced me to these gentlemen and informed them that I had been graduated from the University a couple of years before and that I was writing a police book. This was untrue but it was the Vollmer method of encouraging other people to do things. This bothered me for quite a while until I came to the conclusion that I was not going to be an author of a police book.



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Regional Oral History Office

August Vollmer Historical Project

Milton Chernin

THE UNIVERSITY YEARS: VOLLMER AS A PROFESSOR

An interview conducted by

Jane Howard Robinson



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## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Milton Chernin was interviewed by Jane Howard as part of a series on the personal and professional history of August Vollmer. Mr. Chernin, Dean of the School of Social Welfare at the University of California at Berkeley, was selected in order to provide an academic perspective on Mr. Vollmer's career.

Interviewer: Jane Howard

Time and Setting  
of the Interview: A single interview was conducted on July 7, 1971, in Dean Chernin's office in Haviland Hall. The session began shortly after 2:00 p.m. and ended at approximately 3:00 p.m.

Editing: Editing of the transcribed tapes was done by Jane Howard. Minor rearrangements of the tape were made in order to maintain continuity of the discussion without interrupting its informal quality. Punctuation and spelling were corrected. Dean Chernin made a few grammatical changes to clarify and added a few comments to amplify his original statements. The changes were not substantive.

Narrative Account  
of Dean Chernin  
and the Progress  
of the Interview: Dean Chernin attended the University of California at Los Angeles where he received his BA degree in 1929 and the University of California at Berkeley where he received his Ph.D. in 1937.

Mr. Chernin has been on the University of California, Berkeley staff and faculty since 1931. He worked for nine years in the Bureau of Public Administration doing research, specializing in studies on welfare and corrections. He also did studies on the state prison and parole system which were used by the state in reorganizing these services. Mr. Chernin joined the faculty of the School of Social Welfare in 1940. After a leave of absence for service in the Army during World War II, he was appointed Dean of the School of Social Welfare.

Dean Chernin has served on numerous commissions and public bodies, including many in the field of law enforcement, notably, the California Crime Commission on Adult Corrections and Release Procedures, the Northern





Milton Chernin (contd.)

California Citizens' Advisory Board to the California Attorney General on Crime Prevention, of which he was Chairman from 1947-1949.

The tape follows the questionnaire outline quite closely. It begins with a discussion of Chernin's early work as a research assistant to Mr. Vollmer. Mr. Chernin continues with a lengthy and sophisticated discussion of Vollmer's personality, commenting on the sense of integrity and dignity that he conveyed. He also discusses his belief that Vollmer may have overemphasized the relevance of psychological theory for policing.

Turning to stories and anecdotes, Mr. Chernin recalls learning forgery and safecracking techniques from Vollmer.

Mr. Chernin discusses Vollmer's professional impact, stressing the fact that Vollmer's ideas had a worldwide influence and that although his ideas often met initial scepticism from his colleagues, the ideas he pioneered have become the basis of modern police administration.

The discussion turns to Vollmer's influence within the county and the state and Chernin discusses Vollmer's role in the development of the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation, and the Alameda County Coordinating Council and his police surveys throughout the state and nation.

The interview concludes with some brief comments on Vollmer's second wife and with Chernin's reflection that Vollmer's suicide, as he sees it, was completely congruent with his lifelong style of approaching all problems energetically and logically and acting on the basis of a rational evaluation of the situation.

Jane Howard



Chernin: I am being interviewed about my relationship with August Vollmer for an August Vollmer historical project.

First, what was my personal relationship to Vollmer?

I was Mr. Vollmer's research and teaching assistant for several years beginning here in 1929 or 1930 and continuing for several years after. I was a graduate student in political science, getting my master's and doctor's degree and working part-time as a research assistant in the Bureau of Public Administration. At that time the Bureau of Public Administration on the Berkeley campus had received a very substantial grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to start a program in the administration of criminal justice and as a result of this program, which it was carrying out in cooperation with the Political Science Dept. and others, there were added to its own research staff senior people in various fields, such as Herman Adler, the famous psychiatrist and state criminologist from the state of Illinois; a man called Hugh Fuller, who was an expert on criminal statistics; and August Vollmer, who became a professor of political science in our own Political Science Dept. on the Berkeley campus and a research associate in the Bureau of Public Administration, I was assigned to help Vollmer which I did for several years, both in his research work and in his teaching of courses on police administration in the Political Science Dept.

August Vollmer had a very decided impact on my own life, both personally and professionally. As a result of my working for him we became fast personal friends and this extended later to my wife when I got married because August Vollmer was one of those people who established warm and close relationships with people he worked with and who extended to them help and relationships in various aspects of his life. He also influenced me greatly in my professional career because, as a result of him and others, I did both my master's and doctoral dissertation in the areas of state correctional systems and for many years afterwards when I joined the faculty of the Berkeley campus, I taught courses in the administration of criminal justice in which police administration played a large part and much of my own philosophy about the police and the administration of criminal justice were influenced both by August Vollmer's professional opinion and personal education of me as his research assistant.

I shared an office in the basement of South Hall with August Vollmer for some years and continued my personal relationship with him long after our official relationship ended and when I had gone on to other work in the University and he had retired and ceased active teaching and research. I used to see him at home and kept in close personal touch with him until the time he died.



Chernin: As his research assistant I did various jobs; I helped him with several of the books he was working on. For example, at one point he stimulated the production of a book on police communication systems to be written by a man called Vivian Leonard who was a member of the professional staff, I think, of the Records Systems of the Berkeley Police Dept. As a result of that I helped Leonard organize that book and gathered material and actually wrote the chapter on "police communications systems under emergency conditions" around 1934 and 1935.

I also did a great deal of the library research for things that August Vollmer was interested in, writing on, or working on. I remember, for example, in one part of my work for him I traced the development of manuals of municipal police departments from the very first one that was ever produced in the United States when the city of New York professionalized its watch into a police department. I traced it through to the very latest manuals that we secured from various police departments and I remember to this day how much I was impressed by the fact that some of the provisions in the first manual of the New York City Police Dept. are still in the manual of current police departments almost unchanged and that these had been copied in large measure by the original New York City policeman from copies of the manual they had secured from Scotland Yard in London. Thus I learned that one aspect of administration is to recognize the importance of early developments and what a terrific long life some things can have because of the tendency of people to copy what someone else did rather than think through for themselves what their problems and what their solutions may be.

What kind of a man was Vollmer?

Vollmer was a complex person. He cannot be characterized in any simple terms. One of the outstanding impressions that I always had of him, and I still have of him, was that he was a man of great dignity and while he was a friendly person and a warm person, I can't remember that anyone ever treated him lightly or with a kind of light personal relationship which characterizes many of our relationships. Just recently, when talking about Vollmer with John Holstrom, I asked Holstrom if he could remember ever being on a joking and funny story or off-color story relationship with Vollmer, and he said no that he couldn't and that certainly coincided with my memory of Vollmer, that I couldn't. And yet Holstrom had said that he had heard stories of escapades and relationships that Vollmer may have had with other persons in Elk's Club or so on. I also heard anecdotes of this kind when Vollmer was the Marshal of the City of Berkeley and the kind of friendly relationships he had with some of the fraternity men in the University, but certainly I never saw anyone who felt on that kind of personal relationship with him. I saw Vollmer in relationship to many men whom he loved and who loved him and with whom he had worked and



Chernin: developed and yet everyone of them treated him with a certain respect because of his dignity that was almost similar to what I suspect must go on in close personal relationships with men who have become President of the United States and yet who probably have close friends or members of their family who address them as Mr. President. This of course was a tremendous reflection of this man's worth, his self-esteem and the fact that so many of the persons with whom he associated recognized that he was one of the great men of this century and perhaps in world history in the area of police administration and his contributions to it.

Another aspect that always impressed me about August Vollmer was the wide variety and heterogeneity of the people whom he knew, who came to see him, whom he associated with, and whom he influenced. I remember sharing his office in the basement of South Hall, which was also shared by Mrs. Muriel Hunter who for many years was his secretary. The three of us would work in that office and so we had an opportunity to see the wide variety of different kinds of people who came to see August Vollmer. These included all kinds of foreign visitors from the police administration field; they included people from local and other police departments in the United States; scholarly people from other universities who came to see him about the developments in police administration; students and other faculty members. But interestingly also, and what impressed me very much as a young graduate student, were the number of criminals and people whom Vollmer may have arrested or had something to do with their criminal careers, who came to see him after they had served prison sentences and so on because of their great trust in him and their need to get some guidance and possibly to hit him up for a loan and so on because he was not only able and willing to discuss their problems but was willing and able to help them by giving them money and so on. I don't know whether any of them thought of him as a soft touch but he was a man who believed in helping people in a wide variety of practical ways.

JRH: Vollmer's great dignity didn't tend to put people off?

Chernin: It was very interesting that his dignity did not put people off because his dignity was only one aspect of the man's personality. His warmth, his concern, his obvious integrity -- he was one of the most principled men that I have ever met. It would never occur to anyone that this man could ever be suborned or bribed, or prejudiced or in any other way influenced from what he thought was right. He had such a tremendous capacity to live his kind of a life and I think it came through to all kinds of people with whom he related, whom he helped in many ways, whom he inspired towards all kinds of work.

I recall another very important aspect of Vollmer's personality that always impressed me and which I say not in criticism but as an insight I think I developed. Vollmer really had, and displayed in much of what he did, a basic insecurity in his own knowledge





Chernin: because of his own lack of formal education which in some ways led him to respect formal education and to expect from men who had more of it than he did more than was really available in them. My own impression on this is that Vollmer probably had more faith in what psychiatrists could contribute to the understanding of a policeman's personality and character; what psychiatrists could do to help in the selection of policemen, the education and training of policemen and in the coping with various problems of police discipline, etc., probably Vollmer expected more from this area of knowledge and from the psychiatrists whom he employed, whom he associated with and whom he worked with than they were actually capable of delivering or that their knowledge base was capable of furnishing. It always seemed to me that in this one area and particularly the fact that August Vollmer did not have a great deal of formal education (my understanding was that he had a high school education plus a summer's work in a proprietary school of business at which time he went to work as a policeman and was elected Marshal), that this came through and formed some sort of a basic lead to understanding this man. I make this point because I hadn't heard it discussed by his friends and his admirers and yet because of my own background as an academic in the University, I think I was aware of this. I also think that it partly affected Vollmer's behavior in the University and affected partly his own conception of his place on a University faculty. I think in a subtle way he always felt a bit inferior on a faculty because of this lack of advanced education and not simply because he didn't have a doctorate and couldn't be addressed as doctor; it was much more subtle than that. I do believe that if someone were to write a penetrating biography of August Vollmer this particular aspect of him would have to be explored much more fully.

Having said this I think I must emphasize that it must be judged in the light of the fact that he was probably one of the most innovative, thoughtful, contributing men to the improvement of police administration, police science and basic ideas in police work. These contributions of his covered the whole gamut of the police field of which the following are a few examples; the use of psychiatric information and knowledge in the selection of policemen and in influencing his concept of how a policeman should behave and what a policeman's work should be; his developments and his contributions to the development of police communications systems because he was one of the first who utilized radio in communicating with policemen when they were on the beat; in transportation -- he was one of the pioneers in taking policemen off of foot patrol and putting them first on bicycles and then in automobiles in order to enhance their efficiency and the economy of utilization.

One of his greatest contributions was an idea that he pursued for years and that was to try to develop and analyze scientifically all of the aspects of the police patrolman's work and to weight the various duties and responsibilities that a policeman had on patrol



Chernin: in order to work out a more scientific basis for constructing a police beat. It was interesting that I learned from him and through the research I did for him, that the essential concept of the police beat had been worked out by Sir Robert Peel when he created the London professional police force in the early nineteenth century in which he had just taken a map of London and laid it out in squares which corresponded to the number of policemen he had. This particular simplistic idea of the geographic beat had not been changed in its essentials since it was introduced by Peel. Vollmer justly perceived that this was completely unscientific and irrational and not very productive and that it created a great many inequities in police work. He decided that one of the things that ought to be done was to analyze and break up the policeman's job into every kind of a specific task that it consisted of; then to get men to keep records of how many times they did these particular tasks and how much time it took to do each task and then to put these together into some sort of a formula. When you put it all together, a police beat would come out equitably, giving each man the same total burden of work to be done. This of course meant that in a crowded downtown area where there were high value property with many business doors to be shaken and so on, a man might have a very small geographic beat. Whereas in the outlying residential areas a man might have a very large geographic beat and still not be doing any more in total than the downtown man. This now seems to us to be a very simplistic kind of analysis and yet until Vollmer had developed this idea, nobody had thought of this. Vollmer devoted a great deal of his own research time to the scientific study of the beat; he stimulated many professional policemen and students to work on this problem; work which is still going on. It is a good example of the kind of scientific police administration he conceived of and stimulated.

JRH: I think most people don't bring this out and I think eventually Gene might be interested in writing a biography. You brought out that you feel that Vollmer thought that psychiatry could deliver more than it can; what about academically? What about his belief that education contributes so much to police work?

Chernin: I think not quite. Why I mentioned psychiatry is that one of Vollmer's most compelling intellectual interests was in this whole area of the selection of policemen, their education and training, especially in their personality areas. He had a conception of the policeman as being so much more of a social worker than a preventer of crime or the suppresser of criminals through their arrest and conviction, that he was inevitably led into this whole area of what are the personality attributes of a person who would make an excellent policeman in his own conception of the breadth of this man's responsibilities. During all his life, he read avidly and studied avidly in this area of personality development, including an attempt to find out what the biological, sociological, psychological,



Chernin: anthropological components of personality analysis and development were. In all of these areas it seemed to me that Vollmer suffered from the fact that his own formal education had never given him an adequate knowledge base; to feel absolutely secure in his own ability to understand what he read and sometimes I felt that he just didn't have the knowledge base to be able critically to evaluate what he was reading, and what the significance of these contributions were. I had the feeling often times that he was beyond his depth in this kind of study which he pursued relentlessly and that he often turned for guidance and counseling in these areas to men who might not have been the best minds in that particular area but whose advice and counsel he took perhaps with more trust than was justified. I didn't, however, feel that this was a handicap to him in such areas as the knowledge base for administrative organization and for the actual organization of police departments and so on because there, it seems to me, either the knowledge base was much more easily comprehensible to men without too much formal education or that it was the kind of knowledge which he was equipped much more adequately to grasp from his own experience and his own reading. Here I think he made a contribution about which every thoughtful analysis will come out in the same way; namely that he was thoroughly competent to make an outstanding contribution in those areas.

Vollmer, I am sure, made a deep and lasting impression on all kinds of people all over the world. He had a reputation which gave him great stature among practicing policemen and among police administrators both here and abroad. His reputation in England among police administrators there was probably almost as great as it was in this country. He had a very high reputation among the academic people interested in police science and police administration. As a matter of fact, many of the different college curricula in police administration which started to develop under his aegis were pioneered by the men he had educated both at the University of Chicago and here. Their content was probably more affected by August Vollmer than by any other single person that I know of. He impressed a wide spectrum of people with the fact that he was a great man and unlike what the poet usually says, that you have to wait until after death for recognition to come, he was recognized widely in the United States and all over the world as a great man in police administration during his lifetime. He impressed generations of students, he trained generations of students for leadership positions in police work and many of the men who became the outstanding professors of police administration after he retired, such as Orlando W. Wilson, are people who served with him in the Berkeley Police Dept. or whom he had trained and educated afterwards. Vollmer was one of these fortunate men who in his own lifetime was recognized and rewarded in many ways for the great contributions he had made in his work.



Chernin: When it comes to anecdotes and stories about Vollmer, most of what I remember I think he told me about himself. He used to tell me and others with a great deal of pleasure, some of the sort of escapades that he had lived through when he was the elected Marshal of the City of Berkeley; with fraternity boys and the escapades that they used to carry on around the University and with which he had to cope and how he used much more the idea of personal influence on them rather than harsh pressure. I'm not sure whether I heard from him or from others the fact that he would often join in a beer bust and so on and as a matter of fact I think I may be confusing these escapades during the time he was a Marshal with those when I think he was a mail carrier here in Berkeley and that some of these escapades may have been when he delivered mail to the various fraternities and perhaps joined them in a little escapade.

By and large I don't recall too much of the lighter side of Vollmer. I do recall that he was a man who had a tremendous amount of practical knowledge of criminal behavior and I still recall how he once taught me the elementary ways of becoming a forger. I still show this off myself with company as a parlor game. What Vollmer told me was that the essential thing if you want to become a forger is to break the writing habits that we have developed in the way we write long after any conscious concept of what we do has disappeared. If you wanted to forge a signature, you cannot forge it if you are trying deliberately to write the person's name because your own unconscious habits of forming the letters get into the way of copying this so what you do is you turn the signature that you're trying to forge upside down and then try to reproduce the form of the writing upside down and from back to the front and in this way the signature ceases to be letters and becomes a form. Then he showed me about it and asked me to try it and I was astonished that the very first time I tried it, I came up with a better facsimile of a signature than I could have made if I tried it the other way. These are the sort of things he had a wide fund of knowledge of and it impressed me. He told me, for example, how easy it was to get into a house if what it had was a hog-eye lock and key. It's really one of the old-fashioned types of household keys and he said that it was so simple to manipulate. He also told me other things about how you could get into a more complex lock with a little piece of celluloid and so on. Not having any mechanical skill I never really practiced this, but this was an example of a great many things Vollmer had and knew and shared.

JRH: Not necessarily light anecdotes -- do you recall more serious stories?

Chernin: Yes I do but I don't remember an awful lot of them because most of the time when I was working with him and so on we were doing other things but I suspect that others might have been on a different relationship and perhaps would know a little more about him than I





Chernin: did in those areas. I suppose there was also, in relationship to this whole matter, a generation gap between us and he may very well have shared more of this with men a little closer to his own age than I was.

What was Vollmer's professional impact?

My own impression was that Vollmer probably had greater influence on the development of police administration in the United States, its modernization, its introduction of what we would consider developments of the 20th century, both in the United States and elsewhere, than any other single person. I would suspect that he ranks in the twentieth century right along with the traditional concept of what Sir Robert Peel did in the modernization of police work in the 19th century. I know that he had a tremendous influence on how municipal and other police departments developed in almost every aspect of their work. His reputation extended to knowledge and influence on police departments of all sizes, from the largest metropolitan ones to the small, modest size police departments like Berkeley. This influence was extended not only through the example he set when he was developing the Berkeley Police Department into a national and international model which was visited by police administrators from all over the world, but his influence was spread by the fact that he was very influential in the International Association of Chiefs of Police in which he held high office and in which he had been active and which often times took his ideas and developed them after a good bit of lag because many of his ideas were threatening to established chiefs of police and conservative ones. Often they would pooh-pooh them when they first heard them and then a few years later when you were reading the proceedings of the International Association of Chiefs of Police you read of their acceptance. Incidentally, that's part of the job I did for Vollmer. I read every one of its proceedings from the time it was first organized until I quit work for him. It was interesting to see how influential his ideas were in that organization, over time.

JRH: What were people saying when his ideas were advanced and people wouldn't accept them at first? What were people saying against them?

Chernin: They were usually the kind of scepticism of new ideas and new applications with which almost all professionals involved in day by day administrative responsibilities react when they hear a strange idea. If you say "put policemen on bicycles" and policemen never did anything but walk on foot, your reaction is to pooh-pooh the idea of a bicycle or to say if a man was on a bicycle he would whiz by the things he ought to, as a police patrolman, see. We see that particular kind of a problem right now in the perennial discussion of whether police work hasn't really deteriorated now that policemen ride around in automobiles and very few policemen pound a foot beat. You can still read in police literature and in



Chernin: newspapers articles deploring the passing of the good old days when the police patrolman knew everybody on his beat and was able to prevent crime because of this.

Similarly, with the development of other sorts of police administrative innovations in communication. Vollmer's span of police work in police communications covered the development of police recall systems and improvement through call boxes and then went on to radio. The radio was first one-way radio and then became two-way radio and then again even three-way radio. Every one of these was met with scepticism at first and then technological developments came along and then pretty soon what was perceived as an impractical suggestion became the standard and acceptable way of doing things.

One of the things that Vollmer was influential in developing and which certainly met with a great deal of scepticism was the development of the modus operandi system: the idea that professional criminals would have developed a certain technique of doing their thing which, if carefully reported on and analyzed and coded and put in a file, might lead to the identification of a criminal beyond the development of fingerprints left and recaptured at the scene. This he helped pioneer and you can imagine the scepticism with which such an idea was first met. It would seem that it was either fantastic or much too complicated, etc. Now the modus operandi system, not only on the local level, but on the state and national level, is taken as one of the indispensable aspects of police work. When I worked with Vollmer this was back far enough so that modus operandi was still being developed and he was pioneering it. This is the kind of an example of a man whose constant questing mind always approached every problem of police administration from the point of view that said, "if this is the way it's always been done, that's why you should suspect it, analyze it and see whether there isn't a better way of doing it" rather than the approach that most of us have toward problems which is "this is the way it's always been done and so that's the right way of doing it." It never occurs to us that maybe there's a better way of doing it.

I would just summarize the question about what were the major influences Vollmer had on policemen education and training and other areas to say that in his lifetime he probably pioneered and developed new ideas in every one of the important areas. For example, in training, August Vollmer became identified with the idea that the policeman ought to have a great deal of education and training so that the college cop became identified with Vollmer's idea that a policeman was a professional person and that professional education and training of a policeman probably required as much formal education as a baccalaureate degree in college would require. This led actually to some false ideas about the Berkeley Police Dept. because nationally it became a cliché that the Berkeley Police Dept. required college education for its policemen. This



Chernin: never was the truth. It probably was true that the Berkeley Police Dept. under Vollmer's administration and that of his successors, had a higher proportion of men with either full college educations or part college educations than other police departments, but it never was true that the Berkeley Police Dept. required a baccalaureate in order to get on the force and that it ever tried to achieve a force with this kind of formal education. The college cop became inevitably associated with Vollmer's idea that police work required much more formal education than most policemen had.

I remember an incident in his life at a time when Vollmer was called to testify in a court case testing an attempt by the Oakland Civil Service Commission, probably instigated by the chief of police who was influenced by Vollmer, to set a standard for the recruitment of Oakland policemen which I think would have set the standard at two years of college education or perhaps of high school graduation. This standard was challenged in a court suit in the Alameda County Superior Court and Vollmer was called as an expert to testify on the basis of his expertise, this particular standard (whether it was high school or two years of college, I'm not sure, but it was higher than that which had prevailed till that time), was a necessary and reasonable standard related to the requirements of police work. That case was lost in spite of Vollmer's testimony because the judge found that it violated the provision of the Oakland City Charter which at that time said that a policeman had to have only an eighth grade education. Vollmer felt rather badly that old provisions were still effective when he was so convinced that nobody with only an 8th grade education was sufficiently educated and trained to do the complex and demanding work that a policeman's work demanded.

JRH: Were they ever able to get that provision changed?

Chernin: I think so, although I didn't follow it. Most police departments now probably are up to the level of a high school education but still I suspect that how much education and the idea that a policeman could be over-educated and that there really isn't anything that complex about a police department and the old cliches that police chiefs used to say -- Why, just give me the man and I'll give him his gun and his club and a badge and tell him to go out and enforce the ten commandments and by God that's all a policeman needs to know to be a darn good policeman -- I suppose there's still parts of the world and parts of the United States where practical men think that that probably is all that's required. Probably there are still places where policemen are recruited with no more education and training than that.

In what ways was Vollmer influential in the community -- in Berkeley and in Alameda County?

In Berkeley Vollmer had become during his lifetime one of the most influential men who had ever lived in the community, both in all of the work that he did as Police Chief and the things that he actually



Chernin: developed in the city of Berkeley in the way of how to do police work. Vollmer was one of the organizers and developers of the coordinating council idea in which he and Virgil Dickson, the Berkeley Superintendent of Schools, tried to develop, and did, an idea which swept the country and became one of the standard features of advanced municipal organization. In the coordinating council the police and the school people and the voluntary welfare agencies got together to work to coordinate their planning and their administration of different programs for dealing with young people and juveniles who were classified as delinquents. Vollmer developed this idea in Berkeley and it spread all over the country and became a national movement of coordinating councils. At the time, when I knew Vollmer, a coordinating council was perceived as a sort of a panacea. Now, with our greater sophistication we see that it couldn't possibly have the effect that people thought it could or should have. Nevertheless, this was just an example of the kind of thing that Vollmer stood for in the city of Berkeley. He was probably one of the most influential men who ever lived here.

Similarly, I suspect, he had influence not only in the city but also in the county, although it's harder to influence sheriffs and their police work than it is municipal policemen and chiefs and their police work. Vollmer was a great authority on how to improve rural police. He had ideas and wrote about how to improve jails. One of the things that he was very familiar with and introduced and popularized in this country was that our police system was derived from England and we brought over to this country, lock, stock and barrel, the English, the Anglo-Saxon, common law basic ideas of how to organize police. Yet, the English were far ahead in reorganizing their police departments and doing away in the middle of the 19th century with the sheriff as a significant law enforcement officer in rural areas and replacing him with a much more professionally oriented rural police set-up. We in the United States still cling to the elective sheriff as a law enforcement officer long after the country from which we borrowed the institution has recognized it as an anachronism.

Vollmer, I remember, used the English model for nationwide setting of standards for both urban and rural police departments and enforcing these standards through grants-in-aid from the National Treasury to help pay for the costs of local police administration based on the local police administration living up to the standards and based on a periodic review of their performance. He used this English development as a basis for calling the desirability of similar developments in the United States to the attention of American police officials and political leaders. From that point of view Vollmer was always interested in the development of a state police system and he had me do a great deal of research for him on the origins and the development of state police systems, state highway patrols. He also had a man who did a great deal of writing in the police field, a man called Alfred Parker, who started out by being a teacher in the Berkeley High School I think but who developed an interest in writing and who wrote a couple of books on police, state police and police administration





Chernin: with the encouragement and help of August Vollmer.

Vollmer had this kind of state influence on the development of police. I can't recall what relationship and activities Vollmer actually had with the FBI. I may have known that and he must have had some but I can't remember that with any accuracy. My own scepticism about the FBI and my own tendency to try to avoid being taken in by the massive propaganda of that outfit may have come from my relationship with Vollmer and whatever he may have told me about the reality of the FBI performance, etc., but I'm not sure of that.

JRH: But wasn't he supposed to have some influence on some of the ideas Hoover may have used in setting up the FBI?

Chernin: That may have been, because Vollmer had some very good ideas. The FBI's idea that their men ought to be college-trained and either lawyers or accountants, etc. would have been consonant with Vollmer's idea of adequate training for specialized police investigators. One of the things that I now recall that Vollmer was very influential in was the development of scientific criminal investigation and the use of science, biological and physical and chemical, to aid in the investigation and detection of crime. He did this through his close association with a man called Heinrich who developed into probably one of the best known scientific police investigators and lab men in the United States. This was closely associated with Vollmer's knowledge of and interest in the application of science to the investigation of crime. Vollmer's reputation in this area probably actually exceeds the reality of the application of science to the investigation of crime because this is something which the public eagerly bought which was highly publicized by newspapers and magazines and articles, which lends itself to Sunday supplements. I remember there are lots of anecdotes about people and crimes that are solved and it has a fascinating interest for scientific writers. Vollmer was serious in his belief that science could be and should be applied to criminal investigation and I suspect that this too is one of the areas in which he made a very significant contribution to the development of police administration.

Question: You asked how did Vollmer related to the people with whom he dealt with on a frequent and close basis. I think I've said more or less most of what I can recall here.

JRH: You didn't mention anything about activities on a state level.

Chernin: He must have been very influential with men like Earl Warren (formerly District Attorney of Alameda County, then Attorney General of California, Governor of California and Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court) whom he must have known very well.

JRH: During the time you were working for him you don't recall his meeting with Warren or anything like that?



Chernin: I don't recall it specifically but I do recall that he must have done this because in the first place Warren's terms as District Attorney of Alameda County must have overlapped in some way with Vollmer's functioning as a police chief. I'm not sure about the dates. The other thing is that at one time in this period, we organized under the Bureau of Public Administration in the Political Science Dept. teaching in the area of the administration of criminal justice and there developed a seminar on the administration of criminal justice which for many years was taught by many different people being brought in to participate. For awhile Professor May or someone taught this seminar and August Vollmer would participate in the police part of it and Earl Warren, who was then District Attorney of Alameda County, would come in for two or three sessions relating to the prosecution function in the administration of criminal justice. I'm sure that there must have been very significant influence that Vollmer had with Warren and perhaps other governors. I'm almost certain that Vollmer had a very great deal to do and influence in the development of the Division of Criminal Identification and Investigation, the statewide bureau of criminal investigation and identification in the state and the development of a statewide police communications system which we still have, and in the development of the state criminal records system. He must have had influence on the activity in these areas because for example I know that the man who became the head of the Criminal Investigation Division, George Brereton, was a man who had his start in the Berkeley Police Department and must have had a good deal of his career influenced by Vollmer with whom he served and studied and who probably brought him to the attention of the authorities. His influence in the state must have been very great.

Evidently one thing that was very interesting in Vollmer's career is the fact that he became one of the great police analysts. He became a great authority on making police surveys and he went all over the United States surveying municipal police departments, analyzing their problems and making suggestions for their reform. I remember the reports he wrote, copies of which he would put in libraries which became the origins of police textbooks. His police survey techniques and the kinds of principles he applied in formulating and diagnosing the problems of municipal police departments and in making recommendations for their improvement were the fundamental bases out of which the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the International City Managers' Association produced a series of textbooks in municipal administration. Their textbook on police administration which became a bible and still is I think for police administrators, really had its origin in the kinds of police survey techniques and principles that Vollmer developed and that people like John Holstrom used. John told me recently that he had learned how to do these police surveys from Vollmer and that he now in some sense has taken Vollmer's place in making these surveys. Certainly O.W. Wilson, who had been Chief of Police in Wichita, Kansas and who started in Berkeley, was for many years the Dean of our School of Criminology on the Berkeley campus, must have learned the technique of police surveys from Vollmer



Chernin: and applied them so that he too is known for the number of police surveys that he made.

As a result of this, in the 20's, I'm not sure what the date was, Vollmer was asked to come down and survey the Los Angeles Police Dept. at a time when it was steeped in corruption. This police corruption stemmed from the fact that the Mayor's office of Los Angeles was corrupt and the police department there had developed a kind of close political domination and corruption which is often associated with a political mayor and the incursion of vice and gambling interests into a metropolitan police force. Vollmer went down there and did the survey of the L.A. Police Dept. and became, for awhile, the acting Chief of Police of L.A. I remember him telling me that he was framed down there. The gambling and vice interests deliberately tried to frame him with a woman, to make a scandal so that he would be driven out of town and they could destroy the reforms that he had recommended and had instituted. This didn't work and the fact is that the Los Angeles Police Department even to this day remains among the most professional, efficient and honest police departments because of Vollmer's reforms. He instituted a civil service system of selection and promotion that extended upward, even to the Chief of Police. This stemmed directly from recommendations that Vollmer made of how one should go about taking a corrupt police department and making it into a very efficient police department. He had similar influences on many of the police departments of the world and it was on this basis that he had developed an international reputation because of his surveys. I remember distinctly that he did a survey of the Honolulu Police Department.

August Vollmer was married; we knew his wife. His wife died before August Vollmer did. He didn't have any children. He did have a niece, who was, I believe, the daughter of his brother. I can't remember very much about the niece except that I do know that she came up in our conversations. I don't remember having met her but she did have some meaning for Vollmer. This may be why he enjoyed the company of young students so much because they filled a need in a person's life -- to be related to younger people. He was a very hospitable man in that regard.

I also remember now an anecdote about Vollmer that I think has some significance. For many years August Vollmer had problems that all great men have and that is, he was just flooded with invitations to speak, serve on committees, to sponsor worthy causes, to appear at all kinds of events on every level of the community and on the state and national levels. He had a very interesting way of coping with this flood of demands on his time. Sometime before I got to know him and all through our relationship, Vollmer was supposed to have been convalescing from a heart condition and it was widely known that he was a man who had had a heart attack, was convalescing under a doctor's care, and he had to be careful. He used this particular condition as an acceptable screening device for turning down most of the things that sheer volume forced him to turn down.



Chernin: He could be very selective and do the sorts of things and join the sorts of organizations, attend the sort of meetings, give the sort of speeches etc. that he wanted to. He could turn down all the others in an acceptable and perfectly sociable way which left the requester with the impression of his graciousness and interest, but that he couldn't do it. He had his own value system as to what he wanted to do and what he didn't want to do. The reason I mention this is that rather late in our relationship I noticed that Vollmer had taken to smoking again because for many years he didn't smoke. I used to smoke and I had asked him whether he had ever smoked and he said yes, he smoked a great deal but when he had this heart attack they told him that he had better lay off smoking and drinking and he had done so. Then I asked him about it because I noted that he had started smoking again. He smoked small cigars, and he laughed and said, well, I just decided that I'm well enough now to indulge mildly in a habit; that I like to smoke and I don't do it in excess. I had the impression then that maybe his heart condition had not actually been so serious as I had always assumed it was and that he had developed this very nice way of coping with one of the great problems of the well-known and of the great in an acceptable way.

I think I ought to mention the most enigmatic thing about Vollmer is how he died by his own hand and about circumstances I don't know in detail except that after he lost his wife he was obviously a lonely man. He lived in his house on Euclid Ave. in Berkeley and we went to visit him. He had a very nice house on the upper hilly side of Euclid Avenue. His study was on the basement floor and he would receive people there. He had a housekeeper, but towards the end when we went to visit him it was obvious that he was lonely; that his social life probably wasn't very great. Then he developed this incurable illness. I don't recall what it was. I think it may have been some form of cancer and probably towards the end of his life he was in great pain although he never shared this with a person like myself. As is known he shot himself. This has always been sort of puzzling to me because I don't think as a person I have sorted out my own feelings about suicide. Not that I have any religious scruples about it at all, because I don't, but of course it was very regretful that this great man came to a premature end. I guess I really end up by admiring the courage of the man because I think it takes a great deal of courage to end one's own life. I probably wouldn't have such courage, I guess in a sense I've developed the view that this was one last aspect of the greatness of this man in coping with problems and coming to their solutions. In our society in which suicide is frowned upon it also meant that his end in some ways was a bit of a cloud on his reputation. I mention it because I'm sure there are other people who will and I wanted to note that if sometime or other Vollmer gets an adequate biographer, who will write a book explaining his life the way it ought to be done, he will have to cope with this particular problem of how this great man, and his great life came to an end.





JRH: Are there other people who would give a different perspective on his life?

Chernin: If Mrs. Muriel Herock Hunter is still around, and if you haven't interviewed her you should. She was his secretary for about 5 or 6 years during the same period I was in his service. The last I knew of her, she was the social worker on the staff of the Alameda-Contra Costa Medical Association with offices on Piedmont Avenue near College. She may have retired by now. She would give you a glimpse of him from the view of a secretary and a close friend.

Eric Bellquist, Professor of Political Science, is still here. He certainly knew him because Eric and I were friends at the time when I worked with Vollmer. I don't know how much he would know.



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August Vollmer Historical Project

General William Dean

VOLLMER'S INFLUENCE ON THE CAREER OF AN ARMY GENERAL

An interview conducted by

Jane Howard Robinson



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

William Dean, born in 1899, was interviewed by Jane Howard as part of a series on August Vollmer. Major General Dean brings the perspective of a man who served under Vollmer only as a "college cop," but who carried out Vollmer principles in a very distinguished military career.

Interviewer: Jane Howard

Time and Setting of  
the Interview:

One interview was conducted with General Dean on July 8, 1971, in his Berkeley Hills home. The interview began around 10:30 a.m. and concluded at approximately noon.

Editing:

Initial editing of the transcript was done by Jane Howard; corrections in grammar and paragraphing were made.

Jane Howard and General Dean held an editing session on January 22, 1972. At this time General Dean dictated extensive changes in the interview. The changes made were largely directed at improving style and grammar. General Dean also eliminated a fairly long discussion of John Larson's contributions to the Berkeley Police Department and a number of comments on other ex-Berkeley police officers.

Narrative Account  
of General Dean  
and the Progress  
of the Interview:

Major General Dean was born in 1899 in Carlyle, Illinois. He graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1922. During his years at Berkeley, he served (from October 1, 1921 to November 15, 1923) as a Berkeley Police Department "college cop" on the graveyard shift.

General Dean resigned to accept a commission as a second lieutenant in the Army. He rose through the ranks to become Military Governor of South Korea in 1952. He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor after his service in Korea.

General Dean is now retired and now active with Boy Scouts of America.



William Dean (contd.)

The interview begins with Dean's explanation of how he came to work for the Berkeley Police Department. He discusses Vollmer's principles, particularly his emphasis on preventing rather than judging crimes. He compares Vollmer to General McArthur and Marshall. He talks about the salary and benefits in the Berkeley Police Department in the 1920's.

General Dean continues, with examples of Vollmer's foresight: "college cops", school boy patrols, radio communication, the State Bureau of Identification and Investigation, modus operandi. The General then recalls his continuing contacts with Vollmer over the years, and tells an anecdote on how the fact that he had worked with Vollmer served to improve his relation with the Japanese National Police force when he was part of the Occupation Forces after World War II.

He discusses Vollmer's integrity and his influence on his own life. He discusses some basic Vollmer principles that he carried into his military career.

General Dean recalls Vollmer's application of his ideas to the solution of burglary problems, and remembers he was one of the earliest people to recommend treatment, rather than punishment, of drug addiction.

On questioning, Dean recollects that Vollmer fought efforts of the Klu Klux Klan to organize in Berkeley, and that he and Earl Warren worked together with mutual respect.

The interview concludes with mention of letters received from Vollmer by Dean during his captivity in Korea and with comments on drug and fraternity problems in the 1920's.

Jane Howard



Interview with Major General William F. Dean, July 8, 1971.

JRH: How did you first get to know August Vollmer?

Dean: When, on July 19, 1921, I joined the Berkeley Police Department.

JRH: How did you get recruited to the force?

Dean: I saw in the paper that they were giving intelligence tests to Berkeley students who had to be at least seniors and who would like to go into the Berkeley Police Department. So I went down and took the examination and was informed that I had passed and was on the list.

That summer I was working up at the Hetch Hetchy San Francisco Water Project and I received a telephone call from my parents that I was to report to the Berkeley Police if I wanted the job, so I reported to Berkeley and took a physical, and passing that....There were four of us -- Taylor, myself, Thayer, and one other whose name I've forgotten.

We were sworn in by August Vollmer himself. We'd met him and learned to respect and admire him as a man and in the work he was doing. The papers publicized everything he did. When you met the man, he had the qualities of two other men I've known: George Marshall and Douglas MacArthur. All three had the capacity to look through you and you'd think they knew exactly what you were thinking. You didn't feel uncomfortable but you felt you'd better not try to tell anything but the whole truth when you spoke to them. August Vollmer just mesmerized you; at least he did me.

When we reported for work, we didn't have a training school in those days, we were sent out for two or three days with a patrolman on the beat and then when the patrolman thought that you were okay, you were put on a beat. But, before we were put on a beat, August Vollmer talked to us. He impressed me so much then; he said that we should remember as police officers we are not the court. "You're not to judge people; you're just to report what they do wrong. Better still, you can prevent people from doing wrong; that's the mission of a policeman." He also stated: "I'll admire you more if in the first year you don't make a single arrest. I'm not judging you on arrests. I'm judging you on how many people you keep from doing something wrong. Remember you're almost a father-confessor; you're to listen to people, you're to advise them, you may be called in on marital difficulties and you go in and do your best. This will always be a thankless job because both sides will be against you." He gave us an insight into police work we hadn't had.





Dean: He said, "Whatever you do, don't bawl a person out. Tell them they're doing wrong, but don't bawl them out. Don't raise your voice, because you can't punish them yourself. That's not your mission; your mission is to protect and safeguard the property and the lives of the citizens."

He stressed this policy and we knew he meant it. He didn't mean by that that if someone were committing a crime we didn't step in and arrest him, but that we could not just make arrests for arrest's sake. He stated all this so much more clearly than I have here, but that was his creed and he lived by it. He didn't push anyone because he had not made more arrests than his fellow officers. Word got back to him whether or not you were following out his policy, not by hired spies, but people would tell him and he'd call you in and say, "I hear you did so-and-so and I like that" or, in another case, he'd say, "You were a little rough with so-and-so," and he'd say, "Explain to me, tell me how it was." He was understanding, tolerant and inspirational.

JRH: What was the population of Berkeley in those days?

Dean: 85,000, as I recall.

JRH: Quite a number of people even then. People would still call and tell him how things were going?

Dean: Everybody knew him. He was living at the Elk's Club at the time when I was on the force.

Somebody once ran a stop sign. They put the first traffic light in right after I left Berkeley, located at San Pablo and University. San Pablo was like the freeway then because freeways were a dream of the future. I stopped this individual and he pulled a press badge. I was just going to warn him. He said he had a press badge and I said that, "That makes no difference, you're endangering lives and there's no story that hot." He said, "I'm a good friend of August Vollmer." "Oh," I said, "If that's the case the Chief wouldn't like it if I didn't take you down and book you." So I booked him. The Chief called me in and said that was just the thing to do. He said that if anybody says he's one of my personal friends, you just tell them that my personal friends don't do that, then you do what you think is right.

That's the kind of a man Vollmer was. He was a man of the highest integrity; he was thinking of his responsibility, not his own personal glorification. He was thinking all the time of adding to the prestige of the police profession. If anyone had to have an education it must be a police officer. He must have an education and he must be paid accordingly.

When I went on the force in July 1921, we got \$170 a month and \$30 for the use of our car. You made out on that because you got all your oil and gas and the use of that car. You didn't get service or



Dean: insurance. I bought a brand new Model T Ford, five passenger, and it cost me \$415.00 with everything except a self-starter.

JRH: Can you compare your salary to say a plumber or an electrician?

Dean: We made more than a plumber did at that time. Engineers getting out of college went to work for \$90 a month. It was an outstanding wage. Young lawyers were graduating and working for coffee and doughnuts the first years and here we were going to school and getting paid. August Vollmer said we were on duty for 24 hours a day so the city furnished our oil and gas for the entire 24 hour period. So during your time off you were riding on city gas and oil but, as Vollmer said, "I expect you to be on duty continuously. If you see any transgressions, don't look the other way because you don't have your uniform on."

The Chief always seemed to know what was happening in Berkeley and if an officer happened to be present when an incident occurred in which the Chief felt the officer should have taken action as a police officer, despite the officer's not being in uniform, he'd call that officer in and explain he had failed in his duties.

I especially admired August Vollmer because of his foresight; he was always thinking ahead and of the future role of the police officer. Just prior to recruiting John Larson, originator of the lie detector, he brought in Walter Gordon as the first U.C. student as a full-time police officer while he was still a student in Boalt Hall. The experience of the Department with these two men, Walter Gordon and John Larson, as full time officers concurrent with their academic work to obtain a J.D. and a Ph.D. respectively, was so successful that August Vollmer initiated his "college cops" program. Bill Wiltberger, Orlando Wilson, George Brereton, Clarence Taylor, Henry Hoar, Kenneth Thayer followed Gordon and Larson.

Another thing I would like to mention about August Vollmer is that he was the initiator of the State Bureau of Identification located in Sacramento. The first man that went up to organize it was one of Vollmer's officers that left Berkeley to take this job shortly before I joined the force.

August Vollmer also established one of the earliest school boy traffic patrols. It was established either in early 1923 or late 1922. I have lived in other cities that claim to have an earlier patrol, but I do not personally know of any established prior to that date. In any event, I believe that the school boy traffic patrol is a great opportunity for boys to learn real responsibility and develop leadership. And, best of all, it teaches their peers to obey constituted authority.

When I joined the force, August Vollmer was intent on establishing a radio communication system. He hoped to have direct communication to each officer via radio, and he also hoped later to make it a



Dean: two way system. When I left the department, November 15, 1923, his dream had not been fully realized, but he did have a pilot vehicle that was able to receive signals from the station.

But in the meantime, he was one of the first police chiefs to institute the Gamewell red light system. This consisted of red lights at major intersections throughout the city and some up on the hills that could be seen from most places within the city. Police officers on the street would go to the nearest Gamewell box and call the desk. If you didn't answer the light within three minutes, you had to write a report why you didn't. This was an excellent method for getting the officer to the scene of the crime or incident expeditiously. They didn't have radios and it wasn't until several years later they had crystal. I'm talking about 1921 to 1923.

JRH: They signaled you from where?

Dean: If you'll look down Shattuck there is a light between Shattuck and Vine right in the middle of the street, real high. There's one at Shattuck and Cedar; Shattuck and University; Shattuck and Bancroft; Shattuck and Dwight, etc. You go down Telegraph, it's the same way, almost the same intersections. Some up on the hill we could see. Sacramento the same way; San Pablo and 4th Street the same way, etc. They were in quadrants so if they wanted an officer in that quadrant the light would just go on in that quadrant. If you wanted a particular officer, and not particularly in an emergency, each officer had his number. If it went on steady in one section they wanted every officer in that quadrant, which was usually one officer. If they all went on everybody rushed to the Gamewell box. There was a Gamewell box at all these places. There are still boxes at many of those places. There's one at Dwight and Warring.

JRH: What about after you left the department? Did you stay in touch with Vollmer?

Dean: When I left the Department the Chief was on a year's sabbatical reorganizing the Los Angeles Police Department. Soon after leaving I received a letter from him in which he expressed his regret that I had given up police work in favor of the military, but stating that when I tired of the military he would have a place for me in Berkeley.

Then, a couple of years later after he had returned to Berkeley and I happened to be home on leave I called to pay my respects. During this visit he said, "How about resigning from the Army; they want a Chief in a small town (it was Burlingame). I'm certain if I recommend you the position will be yours. You've had a taste of army life, how about trying police work again?" I was quite flattered naturally.

Then there was a time he wrote and asked me, after he had retired and was establishing the School of Criminology, asking if I had



Dean: any ideas on courses that should be prerequisite for the School of Criminology. What courses I thought had helped me with my police work more than any other. I gave my views on that.

I never came back on leave that I didn't see him, either at the Police Department or the University. He always had time to see me. He amazed me once when he and his wife were coming through and he called me from Salt Lake City. He had that personal touch with every officer, and if an officer made a mistake he didn't crucify him. He felt that if that officer had anything in him he gave him support and help. He never stood in an officer's way. Many of the officers he would have liked to have stay in the department, if they had a chance for a better position, he encouraged it and made it possible. For instance, O.W. Wilson was first down in southern California, then at Wichita.

Now I mentioned the traffic police. That was his idea, to show you how versatile he was. He was thinking in all ways. He put John Larson to work on the single fingerprint system. Some man with a Russian name, a convict over in San Quentin, came out with one just before John finished his; just beat him. In fact, when they set up the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Hoover had a graduate school and they had two speakers back there that year who were both from the Berkeley Police Department. Hoover recognized what August Vollmer had done. He was so far ahead in, for instance, M.O.S. He was the daddy of the modus operandi.

After the war, I was the Senior Officer of the occupation forces on Okinawa and Kyushu and they were installing a new police chief there at Kokura and I was invited to attend a dinner honoring him. They have a national police organization there and the Deputy Chief from Tokyo was there for the occasion. I met him, and I had to say a few words. I recalled that I had been a police officer myself and had the great privilege of serving with the great pioneer in criminology, and the internationally-known Vollmer. After the dinner, the Deputy Chief came over and said, "Oh General, do you know that I've got reprints of August Vollmer's paper on M.O. and it's required reading throughout the national police department. I spent six months in your Berkeley Police Department under August Vollmer and there are so many things that I learned there that I have installed here." It was so genuine and sincere. I had met the Deputy Chief before, and he just thought I was one of those damn Army Occupation people, but it was a different relationship when he heard I had too served under August Vollmer.

Dean: (In response to question 1): Now you say, in what capacity did you work with Vollmer? I was a patrolman the whole time. Usually I tried to be on the 12 to 8 a.m. shift because I had a chance once in awhile to get enough sleep. I was going to school and doing a full eight-hour shift and had to appear in court and so on, and this all took a lot of time and I needed my rest. When they moved me down to the second shift from four to eight, I never had a chance to see my girl. I asked if I couldn't stay on





Dean: the midnight to eight in the morning and the chap whose place I took was very happy about it. Most of my service was from midnight to eight.

What effect did Vollmer have upon your life? August Vollmer has had a great effect on my life. His example of enthusiasm for his job, his integrity and his loyalty to the city, the mayor, his subordinates, and the citizenry was outstanding. He epitomized what I consider the prerequisite qualities for leadership. I've always felt and believed this, and that's why I have his photograph hanging up in my study. I owe him a great deal for the examples he set and I've tried to follow; not well, but I've tried.

General Dean (In response to question 2): What kind of a man was Vollmer? How did he impress you? I think I've already told you and I know he impressed others. The personal characteristics that made him an influential man are just what I've said: integrity, loyalty and enthusiasm. You can't be enthusiastic without knowing your job, that's what makes you enthusiastic. Your enthusiasm makes you better with your job and being better with your job makes you more enthusiastic. They're part and parcel. Hours didn't mean anything to him. We didn't have overtime in those days and no one resented it. We got one day a week off, but the hours we spent we didn't worry about.

I think we've answered questions are and two and, as to what was Vollmer's professional impact (question 4), I told you a little bit when I was speaking about this Japanese senior officer. One of the major ideas that comes with police work that Vollmer stood for was to study the problem and react accordingly. Even in those days he had maps up for every accident that occurred, with the little pins, and he knew and made us all look at it at the weekly meetings. We were having more traffic accidents at the corner of Allston and Milvia than any place in town in those days. He wanted a study made on how we could improve this. He was a pioneer in traffic safety.

JRH: Did you carry over some of his ideas into your military career?

Dean: Yes, I tried to. He had one which is basic in the military and I really learned it from him. Plan to have your major forces, a concentration of forces, where you want to hit. Don't dissipate your forces; don't try to get every place.

We were having people coming over on the trains. I mean this is hard for you to realize, but people didn't all travel by auto then. There were so few automobiles that between certain hours -- between 1 and 3 a.m. -- if you parked out in front of your house all night without using the garage, you got a ticket. You weren't



Dean: permitted to park all night on the street. Cars were still quite uncommon in the '20's.

Vollmer had a chart where all the daylight burglaries were. We had a great many daylight burglaries then because the thief would come over from San Francisco and ride the train and the street-cars. Many of the very well-to-do people who worked in San Francisco, and now drive cars and now live further out in the country, used to take the streetcars and get off at Benevenue and Hillegass. There are some beautiful homes in that area, but a lot of them are housing communes now. That's where the junior executives and then the big executives lived. Also thieves would come up Claremont Avenue and get off and hit all those homes up in the Claremont District. They would just hit those areas, and the stuff would be pawned in San Francisco. We knew they were coming from there and they were taking those trains, getting off, walking down and knocking over a couple of houses and taking the other train home. He pulled people on my shift, for instance, and the burglaries were happening between one and four so we had to ride our cars. We had unmarked cars and most of us had Fords and they were suspect in themselves, but that's the way we caught a number of these burglars. Vollmer had planned to have a mobile force that he could use where he needed it; he planned ahead.

Vollmer developed the idea of drug addiction being an illness. He said "Let's get them treated." This shows his foresight.

JRH: We heard he was very active in fighting the Ku Klux Klan while they were big and that might have been around your time.

Dean: I know that they were attempting to organize the KKK locally and on one occasion the embryo KKK was scheduled for a meeting. We all had to stand by. He didn't send me when I was off duty, but I was supposed to get up there in civilian clothes and assist if anything came up because they were going to have a meeting on Cragmont at Cragmont Rock. I know he was opposed to any secret organization like that that wanted to take the law into its own hands. He was prepared for it and I'm certain he discouraged them.

JRH: Do you know anything about Earl Warren? Warren apparently was District Attorney about the time you were here. Did he work with Vollmer?

Dean: Yes. He worked very closely with Vollmer and Earl Warren handled several cases that I had preferred charges on. He was an Assistant District Attorney while I was on the force. I thought he had forgotten me, because I didn't know him well but he's quite an individual in this respect, he doesn't forget people. After World War II, I hadn't heard from him and he'd been Governor and I wasn't living here. That was in 1947 and I was suddenly sent from Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas to Korea as Military Governor when General Lerch died suddenly. I'd been ordered to replace him and damn if I didn't get a letter from Governor Warren almost immediately,



Dean: congratulating me and saying he remembered our association when I was on the force and he was Assistant District Attorney. Frankly, I had just forgotten all about that, but since then I've seen him and he's always been very pleasant. I do know that he and August Vollmer had mutual regard and respect for one another.

JRH: Do you remember anything they worked on together in particular?

Dean: No. When I had a case the District Attorney, Earl Warren, showed he had a high respect for the Department by the way he worked with the Berkeley Police Department.

JRH: Do you remember any stories he told about starting out the police or anything like that?

Dean: If I tell you I wouldn't know whether they were stories I'd read or heard about. He wasn't one with a big ego telling about what he did. He was telling what we were going to do. I've read Parker's book and I've heard about him from men like old Frank Waterbury and George Kohler, the father of the ex-postmaster here who just died recently.

JRH: Here's another event I see was around your time and I'm interested in asking about it. Apparently there was a scandal in 1925 about bail bonds. Do you remember?

Dean: No. I left in 1923. I hadn't heard anything about that.

You know, the Chief was very quick to act in an emergency of any kind. I remember somebody tried to escape one time and ran into a coal yard across the street and Vollmer went in after him. He was faster than the old Desk Sergeant so after he went in after the fellow, a hunk of coal hit him in the head and cut his head but he went right in and grabbed the escapee and he wasn't a young man then. I didn't see it, but I saw the cut on his head. I'll tell you somebody I think could give you a lot of dope about Vollmer as a man. That would be Rose Glavinovich. She was the daughter of the Marshal of the City of Albany, but she was also the police reporter for the Oakland Tribune assigned to the Berkeley Police Department. She has a very retentive memory and I know we felt that she was a member of the Department. That was her beat. I'm certain she knows a lot of interesting incidents.

JRH: I don't know if you want to put this on tape, but you mentioned that Vollmer wrote to you during the time you were a prisoner of war.

Dean: I received two nice letters. I have a secretary that comes on Mondays and she might be able to find the letters. They were just pleasant letters telling me what O.W. Wilson was doing and what Ralph Proctor was doing.



JRH: Was it pretty quiet here at night when you were on the force?

Dean: It was. We thought we had problems but we didn't.

JRH: You mentioned that Vollmer was one of the people trying to cure people with drug problems. What kind of drug problems did they have then?

Dean: Using cocaine and heroin. It wasn't marijuana. I never heard of marijuana until I went into the service and I was stationed in Panama in 1926 to 1929. We had a number of men smoking marijuana. Evidently it was grown very plentifully in the tropic areas so for almost nothing they'd try it and then we'd have a goofy man sometimes. That was in the service and the first I'd seen it.

JRH: I guess the fraternities were the big thing on patrols in those days.

Dean: Nothing really vicious happened. Only the freshmen or new members and candidates for initiation had to do certain things and they'd tell them to go steal a tombstone or something like that. They'd usually have to go to San Francisco because they had to bring back an ancient one. Or an intoxicated fraternity boy would stagger across campus at night on his way home and get rolled. They sent me out to stagger along on campus at night a few times but I never was rolled. Maybe I wasn't convincing enough.





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Rose Glavinovich

COVERING THE BERKELEY POLICE DEPARTMENT:

AUGUST VOLLMER AND THE PRESS

An interview conducted by

Jane Howard Robinson





April 21, 1992

## Rose Glavinovich

Rose Glavinovich, a reporter who covered Berkeley for the Oakland Tribune for 42 years, died Saturday night at Alta Bates Hospital in Berkeley at the age of 101.

Services are pending.

Ms. Glavinovich was born in San Francisco and moved to the East Bay after the 1906 earthquake and fire destroyed the family home.

Her first newspaper job was as a society reporter with the old Berkeley Gazette. She moved to the Tribune's Berkeley bureau in 1919, where she covered police news, the courts, the university campus and general city affairs until her retirement in 1961.

Ms. Glavinovich was known to instill fear in young reporters entrusted to her care. Those who passed muster called themselves "Rose's Boys."

There are no immediate survivors.



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Rose Glavinovich was interviewed by Jane Howard as part of a series on the personal and professional life of August Vollmer. Since Miss Glavinovich served as a press reporter for the Oakland Tribune stationed at the Berkeley Police Department for over 30 years, she brings the point of view of a journalist to the interview.

Interviewer: Jane Howard

Time and Setting of the Interview:

The interview was conducted on July 15, 1971, in Miss Glavinovich's comfortable Berkeley Hills home. The interview began at around 10 a.m. and concluded around noon. Editing of the transcribed tapes was done by Jane Howard. Minimal changes were made, in spelling and punctuation; paranthetical comments were added to provide clarity. Miss Glavinovich reviewed the transcript and made only minor revisions.

Narrative Account of Rose Glavinovich and the Progress of the Interview:

Rose Glavinovich, daughter of an Albany, California, Chief of Police, worked as an Oakland Tribune reporter for over 30 years. She was stationed, during most of her career, in the Berkeley Police Department. She rose over the years to be Dean of the Berkeley Press Corps. On her retirement she was made an honorary policewoman. Miss Glavinovich became a close friend of Mr. Vollmer's and provided the Berkeley Police Department with very extensive news coverage over the years.

The tape begins with an account of two of Mr. Vollmer's contributions to law enforcement: introduction of scientific principles and of the "golden rule" principle.

Rose Glavinovich then talks about her relation to the police department and how she became a reporter at the Berkeley Police Department and of the unusually open and close working relationship between bay area press and the Vollmer police department.

She recalls the day of Vollmer's death and the difficulty she had managing to fill her responsibilities as a reporter when the suicide was of a man she had worked with so closely.



Rose Glavinovich (contd.)

The dialogue turns to the encouragement Vollmer gave to many employees, friends and city officials. Miss Glavinovich closes with a few comments on Vollmer's wives.

Jane Howard



RG: Vollmer was a young letter carrier in Berkeley when he was persuaded to run for town Marshal on a reform ticket.

JRH: Was that before the Progressive Party or what kind of a reform ticket, Republican reform ticket or just non-partisan?

RG: Non-partisan. Not a formal party -- just people who wanted a change. I'm sure it was just before the San Francisco fire. I only moved to this side of the Bay after the fire in San Francisco -- a couple of years after we lost our home. So I am not too conversant with that, but he became interested and told me once that he went to bed election night and said we've won because they made a very intensive campaign throughout the city and contacted people, so he practically counted votes.

After he took over this very small police department, he became interested in police techniques. He started what was then called "The Golden Rule Police Department," where everybody had good manners for everybody else. You treated people as humans and you were not the traditional policemen. And, he started then to institute a whole series of reforms which were adopted throughout the country and the world. Vollmer-trained policemen went out into the world to spread the "new gospel" of enlightened criminology.

For instance, so that more ground could be covered than on foot he put his men on bicycles first, then in the old Model T Fords. It was fascinating. There were some very big men in the department and they had to get in the old Model T sitting behind the wheels all scrunched up. Eventually complete motorization evolved into the men operating their own cars with upkeep paid by the city. For years they owned their own cars. He did many things to bring the police department closer to the people.

He fought through the years for better working conditions and salaries -- all these things for his men. Sometimes there were near serious consequences, as I recall one instance under the first City Manager. The men were badly underpaid and I remember being in a little plot with Vollmer which we never admitted





RG: to the City Manager. Some of the men at that time were going to the University and working night shifts to get degrees. These were the first college-educated policemen -- to bring nation-wide publicity to Berkeley and the pioneers in setting high standards for law enforcement. There came a time when quite a few of them were graduating and were going off to various pursuits. To focus attention on the underpaid condition of the department, we concocted a story of these men leaving because of this and the City Manager was incensed. He ended up calling Vollmer and me up to his office and said to Vollmer, "Did you have any part of this?" We had agreed ahead of time that he had no part of it, knew nothing about it, I was the guilty party because I wasn't working for the city. I said no he did not. He said, "If you had I would have fired you." The men got a raise!

JRH: Do you think the City Manager suspected Vollmer?

RG: He suspected, sure. He was an intelligent man. He knew that Vollmer was a very astute person too, but I polled the City Council and we had the votes in the bag and we got the raise. Which was very necessary. He fought for his men constantly. He never let them down at any time.

JRH: Did you have to go through that again later on?

RG: Later on the Council was aware of the situation and city employees were becoming more organized. Raises were coming along more automatically. But there was still a struggle to get adequate pay and in recent years it was easier, or was until the so-called "radicals" were elected. That first "showdown" was under the first City Manager, John F. Edy who was really a very fine man. Frankly, he was resentful somewhat and I'm sure I'm not the only one who says this, that Vollmer was a bigger man in the community than he was and that was natural.

When I went down to the Berkeley Police Department during the first world war (if you want some of the human side of Vollmer), I was the first woman ever to cover a police station in this area. The Oakland Tribune had a shortage of men at that time, so I was just a war casualty. I had known him before but not too well. So when I went down, I was the only woman around that place, not even a policewoman. The men of course didn't know exactly how to take it. The Police Department was in the basement of the City Hall. The Squad Room and Press Room were one so we were very close and intimate. Vollmer was so very helpful in many ways and it wasn't long before I was accepted without any qualms. The newspaper men who were down there covering were good friends of mine and they helped me out too, so it



RG: was very good. Then, in those days too, they had no policewoman and I would "double" once in awhile when they needed a woman to be with an officer if a woman was being searched. They'd say, "Come and help out" and of course I would, so that it worked both ways.

Vollmer became interested in new and modern police techniques. He attracted attention from all over. It was he who brought in Dr. John Larson with his first lie detector. It was a very clumsy device and it looked like an infernal machine. John was the first Ph.D. policeman in the country. He did many experiments and was the one who started Leonard Keeler on his way. Keeler in Chicago became an eminent lie detector authority (he's dead now).

JRH: Vollmer must have had a lot of original ideas, but you and the other press people must have been a big factor in his getting them known.

RG: Of course, he was news!

JRH: Did he tell you what he would like to see printed or how did it work out?

RG: He just made the news. He started innovations and they were news. It just naturally worked out as news. He was very conscious of the value of publicity, not as personal publicity, but for the ideas and ideals he had in police work. He was responsible for raising the standards throughout the country. Men from his department were constantly being loaned for reorganization of other police departments -- some to take permanent (more or less) positions and others going into teaching at colleges and universities. People came from all over the world.

And then of course he encouraged the scientific aspect of police investigation through such men as E.O. Heinrich, who became an outstanding criminologist, Heinrich was called in with his microscopes and apparatus on various murders. Remember we had a Tule Marsh murder in El Cerrito. Heinrich came down and he literally had a rag and a bone and a hank of hair but he gave a description of the woman who was murdered. It tallied and they finally identified her. Then he had a Dr. Kirk, (the criminologist) who was with the University for years, and who died not too long ago, was another one he used and encouraged. He was a very humane and outgoing person. He was the kind of person who was interested in everybody. When you talked to him you were the only person in the world in whom he was interested.



RG: He had a very close relationship with the press, but he demanded honesty and cooperation -- fair play. In other words, with a wide-open Police Department the press had access to all records.

JRH: That would be unbelievably rare today. Was it unusual then?

RG: It was unusual. It is not so today because some reporters betrayed confidence and records are now closed at Berkeley. But in the years I worked there I could go to the file myself and take out any report I wanted without asking anybody about it. Also the other press people. There were the San Francisco papers: the San Francisco Chronicle, the San Francisco Examiner, the Daily News, the Berkeley Daily Gazette, the Oakland Post Inquirer, some of which are now extinct.

It was "open sesame" which was just fine except if something went wrong. I remember one time an Examiner man, an old friend of Vollmer's and a good friend of mine, and a couple of the other boys during Prohibition, swiped some evidence of liquor. Vollmer barred them from the police station, the farthest they could get for their period of punishment was the outer counter and they had to rely on friends inside to help them out. I don't remember whether they took it or substituted it or what, but nevertheless, the evidence was gone. If Vollmer found someone who betrayed a confidence or betrayed a trust, he didn't hesitate to do something about it. This worked beautifully. There wasn't any police department in this area for which newspaper people had more respect and as you said we don't get these things elsewhere. This is unusual.

He always had time; he was a good friend and when he was a good friend you were a good friend. He always tried to think of things to help you. Some of the best exclusive stories I've ever had came from Vollmer.

JRH: He wouldn't give them to the other people, but you were the first sometimes?

RG: Once in awhile he might, but if you were good he'd slip them to you. They were off-department, extra-curricular things, if you know what I mean. I remember a beautiful love nest with a University professor's niece that he tipped me off to. It was stupendous and it had no connection with the Berkeley Department at all, it was just something he knew about. I sat on that story over a weekend. The "love birds" went for it, pictures and everything, they were proud of themselves. At that time it was unusual; today it wouldn't mean anything.



RG: He went to other countries: Germany, China, all over. I think he went to Germany, but I might be a little vague on that.

(After off the tape discussion of whether to discuss the suicide:)  
He had been ill for some time. His sight was bad and with complications he was in intense pain for a long time, many months. He had said on occasion that if it got too bad, he would do this thing that he did. They didn't have a complete biography of him at the Police Station but they had a lot of material which they gave to me and asked if I would get a biography together in the event something happened, not dreaming what did happen would happen. I got this together and they made copies of it so they had it available. I remember sending this to my office some weeks before, which was a lifesaver at the time of his death. The morning that he committed suicide I was sitting in my office. The early edition was off and I was at the office doing some work when I heard a radio call with an address on Euclid Avenue, a suicide by gunshot. I recognized the address. The men on the Desk didn't. I called down and asked for the Captain of Detectives, who was Walter Johnson at that time, and I said, "Do you know what address this is with the gunshot wound?" He said no and I said, "It's Vollmer's."

I dashed up there with a chap who was working with me and arrived just as they were taking him away. I had been at the house a number of times and I knew the housekeeper. She let me in the house and it was some comfort to her because she was shaking and threw her arms around me. It was the hardest story I ever covered. I was on a first edition deadline and here was one of my best friends who had done this, but I had to get on the telephone and I did. They fortunately had this biography and I know the chap who was with me said that I turned white and he thought I was going to faint. Very soon other newspaper men came up and for some time afterwards they were downstairs in his study. Much to their chagrin I was upstairs. I'll never forget the anguish of going through that.

JRH: You had to call and give the whole story right away?

RG: Yes. To meet a deadline. But what could you do?

Vollmer was a very good friend and he would give me excellent advice. I remember when I was younger and ambitious, I wanted to get away and do bigger and better things. I thought, "Oh heck, covering this police beat was fun and I enjoyed it and the Tribune was marvelous to work for, but I thought I should like to go abroad or do something, reach out. I remember him saying this to me, and I've never forgotten his answer. He said, "Remember, wherever you go, you take yourself with you and if you are not happy here you won't be happy there."





RG: I wasn't particularly unhappy but I thought about it and when I had offers from other papers, I stayed with the Tribune where I was really happy. Anytime I had problems and wanted to talk things over, there was a man ready to listen and straighten you out.

JRH: That's interesting. He must have done that for an awful lot of people.

RG: He was interested in so many people. People came from all over. He had many men and women with personal problems come to him. Not on a police basis, but they could have been police aspects. I'll never forget one father who had a son he couldn't do anything with. Vollmer brought him down, kept him in the Police Station for awhile, locked him up to discipline him and it straightened him out. The guy is now very respectable and I won't mention his name, but you'd know it if I mentioned it. Vollmer did so many things for so many people; family friends, personal friends, city officials. He was very close to everybody.

(Pause here. Tape turned off.) I started in as a novice on the Berkeley Daily Gazette. Didn't know anything about newspaper work at all. They called me up and said come to work. I had never asked for a newspaper job in my life.

JRH: How did they think to ask you?

RG: I knew the City Editor on the Gazette slightly and he said they needed a society editor and to come on down. I said, "Oh, my God, I've never done it." So I went. I was young and green. During the war I'd done other things besides society and I had done some interesting news stories on the Gazette. Apparently the men on the beat thought I'd developed into a pretty good newspaper woman, so when the Tribune took its Berkeley correspondent into the Oakland office to become Assistant City Editor, they asked me to take his job. At that time, it covered the entire city, the University. You had no automobile so you went around on foot, so subsequently thereafter, I got my first car. It was one of those struggles where you used the streetcars and it was just terrific and you wonder now how you did it.

I had met Vollmer when I had been working for the Gazette and I knew him and his first wife, Lydia Sturtevant slightly and socially. Then when I went to the Police Station I said, "Here I am" and he said, "Fine." He took me under his wing and that was it.

JRH: Not many people knew his first wife. Did you have much contact with her?



RG: She was a singer and had a studio. She taught voice on Shattuck Avenue upstairs where Penney's is now. She was a rather buxom, attractive, dark-haired woman. Then I knew his second wife, Millicent called "Pat." They married in Los Angeles.

Did anybody tell you about the Los Angeles so-called scandal?

JRH: No.

RG: I'm a little vague on this, but when he went down to Los Angeles to reorganize the police department, some woman brought charges against him but I can't remember what they were. Why don't you go down to the Oakland Tribune office files on Vollmer? I'll give you a letter. They have very complete files. This woman's charges would probably be in there.

JRH: That would be a good idea, because I'd never heard of this and there's probably a lot of things there that no one's talked about.

RG: I can't remember what it was, but it was something of an intimate nature. Right after that he married Pat to spike the guns. It was a nuisance tactic in retaliation for his police investigation down there.

JRH: You mentioned how you got to know him.

RG: I knew of him before I met him. He was a charming person, good looking, outgoing, fun loving, we had more fun.

(Phone rang. After returning, Miss Glavinovich said she felt she had really said all she had to say.)



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Gene B. Woods



A.L. Coffey



George Brereton

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Gene Woods

AUGUST VOLLMER: HIS COMMUNITY AND HIS STAFF

An interview conducted by

Jane Howard Robinson



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Gene Woods was interviewed by Jane Howard as part of the August Vollmer series. Mr. Woods, a patrolman under August Vollmer who retired due to injuries sustained in the line of duty, brought the point of view of a patrolman to the series.

Interviewer            Jane Howard

Time and Setting of the Interview: A single interview was held on July 23, 1971, at the interviewer's Oakland apartment. A friend of Mr. Woods sat in on the interview without commenting. The interview began at 1 p.m. and ended at 2 p.m.

Editing:                Editing was done by Jane Howard. Punctuation and grammatical errors were corrected. Mr. Woods also edited the interview, making only minor grammatical changes. He corrected the spelling of several names.

Narrative Account of Mr. Woods and the Progress of the Interview:

Gene Woods was born in Berkeley about 1902. He became interested in police work during high school and served as a volunteer for the Berkeley Police Department during his last years in high school.

Mr. Woods went to work as August Vollmer's secretary upon graduation and served in several positions within the Berkeley Police Department until he was forced to retire in 1931 due to police service related disabilities.

He gradually regained his health, however, and returned to work to serve as police chief in several small cities. He is now retired and lives in Walnut Creek.

Mr. Woods opens the interview with the recollection that he came to work for the Berkeley Police Department right after World War I; he took the job since it was the first one to come up and he needed work.

Mr. Woods had known Mr. Vollmer as a boy; he remembers getting chocolates at Vollmer's office.

Mr. Woods' first police job was as a secretary to Vollmer; he subsequently learned many phases of police work.

Mr. Woods recounts an incident in which he felt the Acting Chief of Police, John Greening, attempted to frame him and several other policemen. He discusses his fight for vindication and reinstatement.



## Gene Woods (contd.)

The discussion turns to Mr. Woods' feeling that Vollmer's way of looking people over when they came to see him reflected some inner weakness of Vollmer's. Mr. Woods tried over the years to get Vollmer to explain this mannerism, but never succeeded.

Woods then tells of his retirement from the force due to injuries sustained on the job, followed by gradual recovery of physical strength. He recalls he was then helped to return to work by Gene Biscailuz, then a Captain in the Los Angeles Police Department, and subsequently by Vollmer.

Gene Woods states that he thinks everyone who ever worked with Vollmer admired him. He recalled, however, an incident when Vollmer did not take action against a police officer who beat him and another young school boy.

Mr. Woods took J. Edgar Hoover around California in 1926 to show him some California innovations in law enforcement.

Mr. Woods discusses Vollmer's "crab meeting" training sessions and his emphasis on police training. The interview closes with a story illustrating why he believes, from personal experience, that capital punishment is necessary.





Woods: My name is Gene Woods, there's a "B" in the middle of it. With relation to August Vollmer and dating on back to my first knowledge of him, I was probably around six or seven years of age. At that time he was a letter carrier in the Post Office Department.

JRH: You grew up, then, in Berkeley.

Woods: I was born in Berkeley. Vollmer became the first Marshal of the City of Berkeley. When the populace grew sufficiently, he became the first Chief and remained in that capacity. My dad had been in police work and he and August Vollmer were very good friends. It had no basis or bearing upon my becoming a member of the Department. In fact, my dad was opposed to my becoming a member. I think that he was fearful that I wouldn't be able to pass the examination. I wasn't raised by my dad.

JRH: We have Chief Holstrom working with us; he put together some of the names for us and he mentioned that your father did a survey in Nanking.

Woods: Yes, he did go out there. Of course, he's been dead since 1945. So, well with Vollmer, I had known him as a little boy and then as I grew up, I got to know him. I was in the service in World War I. When I came out of the service, I was casting about to find a job. It wasn't like it is today, they weren't finding jobs for veterans. Anyway, I went to work for a railroad, and I got cut out at the 'board' a few times and that was unbearable. That's when I came back down to Berkeley. I took the examination in Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco and Alameda. They didn't have an examination in Alameda, but I filed anyway, looking for a job. I had talked to my dad. August Vollmer was away at that time, when I took the examination. He was back in Los Angeles. I took this examination and then I was out to get the first job that came up. I was hungry. That was the first one that came about and I took it.



JRH: Do you remember whether or not you were still as impressed with him as when you were a child?

Woods: Oh yes, as a child, he was a fabulous man. He was then, of course, a young man. Of course, I was still somewhat of a kid. August Vollmer always liked all the kids in the neighborhood. He never got married until he was quite along in years. When he got married the first time, he married a woman who was a professional woman, a pianist and a singer. It didn't last very long and then he was single for a long time.

First, before he was ever married, he treated us kids. We'd all flock around the old Police Department upstairs at Shattuck and Allston Way, right across from what is now the Shattuck Hotel. We'd all flock over there and he always treated us very nice. He'd generally always have in his desk some chocolates or something, maybe there'd be eight or ten of us kids. He was trying to point out things for us. Across the street on Shattuck Avenue there was a YMCA and that's where we boys should go, if we could get our parents to put up the money for us to attend.

That was part of what he undertook to do. To handle the kids and the first thing you know, we became very fond and had a love for him as we would a parent. That's mostly kids that knew him from childhood. It didn't seem like there were many in the Department in these past years, that had ever known him in that capacity. As a young man, as he was then, we had all admired him so much.

Then, I think the first communications I got from him was after I passed the examination. He sent me a letter when he learned of it to welcome me into the fold; and he hoped that I would carry on and do something in police work. He hoped this for all of us who had passed the examination. He had pointed out to me that a great many which he tried to encourage were these fellows going to college, to the University of California. He hoped that I would finish my education and go to college and that I would be able to do such, as he pointed out in his communication to me. It was a very nice letter, where that one went, I don't know. It was a nice one, because it was something of encouragement; to try to get you to do.



Woods: Well then, he returned and one of the things that he placed in vogue that had not been before that time, requiring everyone of us, we had to learn to punch a typewriter, touch system. I was already capable of that. I could write shorthand, so that was very good. So then, I was working in the Identification Bureau or in the Record Bureau when I first went in. Then after he returned (I'd been in the street in the meantime and back in) he called me in the office, and said, "Gene, you can write shorthand, I understand." I said, "Oh, just a smattering knowledge." I didn't want him to think I knew too much.

I had learned enough about August Vollmer, and you might have been told by some, that August Vollmer, I think had three years of schooling. He passed the Bar examination without ever going to school. He gained all that by himself, he was a self-educated man. He was a master of language and me, taking his dictation. I'll tell you, it was rough! The man, he knew in the vernacular of the people that he dealt with, to use the language that they would thoroughly understand. That was his method, of trying to point out to you never talk over the heads of people you're dealing with. I'll tell you a little example pertaining to that.

JRH: Yeah, that'll be good.

Woods: I went in to work for him. I didn't want to stay in there very long and I told him so. I got very well acquainted with him. I asked him no less than ten times, a question that he very capably avoided answering even up to five or six days before he committed suicide. I was visiting with him just at that time. I visited with him at least once a month.

After I came out of World War II, whenever the opportunity presented itself, I wouldn't even bother calling the Chief, I'd just take a run up there on Euclid Avenue and stop in and visit him. He always made me very welcome. I'm going around in circles trying to tell you some of the things that happened.

Well, he went to work, to tell me, he said, "Gene, I want you to learn every phase of police work." Every man has to qualify in identification and fingerprints, every man has to be able to classify, every man has to have a knowledge of blood, of powder, of everything. How to take a Plaster of



Woods: Paris casts of the various things. We're going to elevate this, so when you're sent out to pick up any latent fingerprints, you're going to know how to use the camera. Everyone had to learn photography, something, so that you'd have a smattering knowledge. Then you will not destroy any latent prints of any evidence that may have been left at the scene where a crime had been committed. These were the things that he was propounding into our skulls to make us understand what we had to do. He could do it in such a manner that you appreciated it.

Then one of his successors, a man that, and I very openly say that I disliked very much, a man by the name of Jack Greening. John A. Greening. He was Chief of Police. He was Acting-Chief, at one stage. He and my dad met this way, they hated one another, so I was the recipient of a lot of mistreatment from Jack Greening. He did everything he could to injure me.

At any rate, I went on through with the guidance of August Vollmer. He was away and then he returned. He went back to Chicago. When he returned, I was ailing. In 1931, August Vollmer said, "Well, Gene, within six month's time or thereabouts I intend to take my pension. In all probability Jack Greening will become Chief. I want you to take your pension before I leave. I don't want anything to happen to you." I said, "How you can avoid that is to see to it that that man does not become Chief. He's not eligible for it." In my estimation he was a disgrace to the Police Department. The manner in which he treated some of the people. He would place men out to try and get something on the different ones and he framed five of us in the Department. One of them became Chief of the State Bureau of Identification in Sacramento. A year ago he retired from up there and that was George Brereton.

JRH: I wrote him a letter. I haven't heard from him yet, though.

Woods: "Well, George Brereton, he might not want to tell you about this. Jack Greening had one of these undercover agents, he then had him appointed as a member of the Police Department without examination. He had this man go to work and plant -- we worked long, long hours to raid the places throughout West Berkeley and all places that were going against the law (bootlegging and other things in the area). We worked, in my case I'd gone to work at 8:00 in the morning and was still working at 4:00 the next morning. We went out on these raids.





Woods: We never got any time off or anything for that. As I say, at this time Vollmer was gone, when these things were happening.

So then he had this man go out and plant wine in our cars. I'd gone home at 4:30 that morning, dead tired and went to bed. Around 7:30 or 8:00 that morning, I got a call on the phone. "This is the Chief." I said, "Yes, Chief." I didn't know what time it was. He said, "Get right on up here and bring that booze that you got." I said, "I haven't got any booze, what're you talking about?" He said, "You have so, we already found it, you've got it in your car. You bring it right on up here." I very foolishly, I was very dumb in that respect, I never believed that I could have destroyed that wine and he'd have had no evidence on me. So, nevertheless I went on up there and there were five of us that were involved. Then, he went right to the City Manager and we were summarily dismissed from the Department.

I wouldn't take it sitting down. I was a fighter for what was right. So I got another member of the Department also charged, Grover Mull, a full-blooded Indian, I was telling you about him. Well, I talked with Grover, he lived a few blocks from me, and we were working almost on starvation, we didn't have an extra dime to get along on. I wouldn't stop at that, I was going back and Jack Greening was not the Chief. He wasn't even Acting-Chief. Clarence Lee, he's still living, he's the oldest man...

JRH: Clarence Lee?

Woods: That's right! he was Chief at that time. I still voiced myself very clearly, regardless, where it goes. He acted like a man with a backbone of wet spaghetti. He was afraid to stand up in behalf of a man against anything. A nice person, a very good man in his field as far as the Identification Bureau. A very wonderful man.

So, Clarence was the Chief, so when we went up, we couldn't get a hearing. Finally, I went up there and said, "My God," plain language, "We're going to follow this thing through." Not one of these fellows would go with me. I went up to the police station and walked right into the Chief's office. Clarence Lee was there and I took him by the arm, I said, "You're going right up that spiral stairway, you're going



Woods: with me up there to see John N. Edy, the City Manager. We're going to have an understanding and have this thing out." "I got this to do and that to do." I said, "To hell with that, you're going with me now." I took him by the arm and we marched up there. There was a little narrow stairway going up. We got up there and into the City Manager's outer office. He looked out and he knew me. He said, "What are you doing here, Gene?" I said, "The Chief and I want to have a little conversation with you." He said, "Oh, I'm very busy." I said, "I can't help that, this is a very important thing to me and I've got to see you now. The Chief's got some very important things to do too."

Okay, we went in and I said, "Let me start this off by telling you what a rotten deal five of us have been given and all the publicity, you've gone along with to fire all of us without a hearing. It's a dirty lousy thing for you to do as City Manager. Mr. John N. Edy, I'm going to tell you the truth of what happened, who placed this wine in our cars. I've learned since who the man is. He's a red-head. I can't think of the man's name. The man was a red-head and he was John Greening's undercover Agent and he planted this wine in the different cars.

"Then, we have been given this kind of treatment. I've had to dodge the newspapers so they can't take pictures of myself and some of the rest of us. I'm determined that we have a hearing and have an opportunity to defend ourselves. What chance have we got, if we go out of here with the kind of publicity you're responsible for giving us? I think it's a dirty stinking thing for you to be a part of. For this Chief here, Clarence Lee, this Acting-Chief to go along with, let a man pull the wool over his eyes, I don't like it a bit. I'm going to be given a fair chance."

So he said, "Okay, I'm going to get my secretary to take everything down." So I had to go through this again and tell the whole story again. He said to me, "You wait downstairs in the office." This was five days after this took place, trying to get to see him. So the rest of them were about ready to move out and leave town. At any rate, we managed to get a hearing. Finally, he came up with the idea that he was going to fine all of us \$100.00. I said, "That might go, but I'm going to fight for restoration of that too."



JRH: So, you got back on....

Woods: Yes, we were reinstated and I fought for it. I went before the City Council, when they weren't going to give it to me, so I fought to see that we got it. The rest of these fellows, not one of them would go with me, so I went up, I feared no one, I thought right was right and it will come out in our favor. I went before them to preach this whole story to them and I was condemning Jack Greening a great deal, and Clarence Lee too, for not having backbone enough to stand up and give us our rights. To publicize such a thing, to give the City a bad name, the Police Department a bad name and maybe we couldn't get a job and so on. It boils me up even now thinking about it, but it went through.

When Vollmer came back, he called me in and we sat down together for about three hours discussing the whole story. Then he, August Vollmer, got the different ones in there to talk and finally all of us were in there together. Then he informed them of what I had told him previously, he wanted to know if they agreed. They didn't know of my going upstairs with Clarence Lee or anything. Then Vollmer commended me for standing up for what was right and fighting for it. He was very happy to know that we were not involved as we had been accused.

I went back to him later, because I was back in the office quite a good deal from one department to another department within our department. I had many times to talk to him. One of the things I asked, this was earlier, "Chief, I've been around you a great deal, I've been before you, I've taken dictation from you, I've been sent on missions by you here and there. I've been with you to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, going along with you to take and transcribe some of the things that transpired there when you were going through the chairs and all. I think I know you pretty well, and I've been wondering, I want to know why, not for myself, cause you've never worried me, most of the men who come into that office, whether they're called in by you or whether they're asking for time to see you and your door is always open to them to come in. Why is it you make them so damn uncomfortable?"

"Every man that comes before you, you see him looking himself up and down; but you look at him, glance down and you look him



Woods: over. You look from one side to the other, like you're looking to see whether that man shaved today, whether he's got spots on his uniform, whether he needs a haircut or whatever. You make him so damn uncomfortable that he forgets some of the things that he came in to ask you. I want to know if you got a weakness of some kind, what is wrong? There must be something that you're trying to prevent us from asking you. There must be something, some kind of weakness."

He avoided it, he'd smile a little. He was not the kind of man to go around grinning and smiling. He was a very serious man, very serious in nature and a very grand person to work with and go around for.

I went to Southern California to die. Sixteen so-called specialists told me that I couldn't live over a year. That was one of the reasons why Vollmer wanted me to get my pension, to get out, whether I survived or not.

JRH: This was in 1930, huh?

Woods: No, that was prior to then. I got my pension then, this was while I was still in the department. I went up there to add the little bit I knew to help Gene Biscailuz. I became very closely acquainted with him. He had been the Captain of the Sheriff's office in Los Angeles. After I got my pension he'd become under-Sheriff and then Sheriff. He served the longest time of anyone, I guess in the United States as Sheriff. He only died a little over a year ago. I wanted to go into see him, I hadn't driven a car, my legs got so I could walk pretty good. I had to drag one side as I'd walk, my right side. I had no use, my hand, I couldn't use it. If I wanted to pick up anything I had to wear a sock, my fingernails were gone.

JRH: You've come all the way back. You're not paralyzed anymore.

Woods: Oh, I'm in pretty good shape today, for an old man. I was very quiet on that old man part. I went in to see him, Gene Biscailuz, and of course, I'd worn a sock. I had a pet, a dog that took me as his pal, instead of me taking in the dog. I used to walk, it would take me over an hour to go a distance of a quarter of a mile up to the sand dunes. Day after day, I'd go up there and strip my clothes off; down to my shorts only, in the sand dunes. I'd take two





Woods: pieces of bread and put some jam on it, that was for the dog and myself. We'd go up there and I'd be up there most of the day and finally one day in March, I had no use at all in my right hand, if I wanted to pick it up, I'd pick it up and it'd fall down. I couldn't control it.

Then I tried to get up one day and I went to use my right arm and I used it a little bit and it worked. A few days after that I went in to see Gene Biscailuz and, after talking with Gene Biscailuz, he invited me to go. At that time, of course, I was way down in my weight, weighing at that time probably a good 40 or 50 pounds less than my normal weight, but I'd gained some. He took me over to a Shrine luncheon with him. I felt very inadequate going with him, as I felt I wasn't dressed very good and my clothes looked a bit shabby. I went over with him and we came on back, he said, "Now, Gene I want you to...in the next two or three days...let's find my calendar." So we went into his office and got in there and he looked his calendar over and called somebody on the phone and said, "Gene, can you be back, I think this was on a Monday or Tuesday, I want you back here on Thursday. Can you be here at 10:00 Thursday morning?" I said to him, "Gene, I can be here at 4:00, anytime you say." So I went back in and I had quite a visit with him that day.

We had lunch and he stuck \$50.00 in my pocket, this was after we got back from the Shrine lunch. He said, "Anything you need, you let me know, I've got a little fund and that's what I've got it for." I didn't know what he had put in my pocket, in fact, I didn't even know about this money until I got home. When I went on back, he said, "I've got a job for you. You're going to either assist or head up the investigation for the Los Angeles County Grand Jury. That pays the same salary as the Chief of Police for the city of Los Angeles. There is only a few months to go on that, but that will put you on your feet and give you something to do."

Then about this time Vollmer communicated with me and there was a post for me to be interviewed on, to take on investigation in that city. So I went to, on my own I became Chief of Police in a few different cities that I went to here and there. To reorganize them or to assist in reorganizing them.



Woods: So Vollmer, every time he commended me very highly and told me he'd been in communication with those people and they told him that I'd did a very fine job and that they liked me very much because I'd tried to be right down to earth and I'd gained the respect of the men under my command. Of course, when you go to one of these departments, there's men that have always been chief of that department, and they're not working in your behalf. I'll tell you one of the things about Vollmer, in his trying to instill in our minds things that we must do and how we must conduct ourselves (you may have talked to O.W. Wilson).

JRH: Yes.

Woods: Well, O.W. Wilson and I were close friends. I visited him back in Wichita and he visited me. Then he came to Los Angeles, where I'd been in Pasadena to reorganize that one. He came there for the same purpose -- to make a survey. Prior to that when we were both in the same Police Department in Berkeley, we were sent to West Berkeley to meet with a group of people consisting of about 150 or 200 (whatever it was) they were in the category of laboring class, truck drivers and wives and all and quite a number of people there. They had a lot of questions and they wanted us to deliver a few of the "Do's" and "Don'ts" and so forth and what is required of a policeman and all; and what we requested of the public. What we were to do was to try to inform them of the things and answer any questions.

O.W. said to me, "Gene, I'm 15 minutes older than you are in the department, so let me take the first portion." Well, he talked and talked for a good half an hour and I told him, "Whatever you do, O.W., don't talk over 15 minutes, let them ask questions." By the time you've talked thirty minutes or over fifteen minutes you've lost most of them, their minds are elsewhere or they're lighting cigarettes or carrying on a few conversations."

Okay, when he got through, he said, "Do you want to take over?" I said, "No." When we left there he said, "Well, I guess I told them." I said, "Yes, you told them, what damn fools we police are. Those people haven't got any more respect for you than they have for the garbage man



Woods: or anyone else. You talked way over their heads, about half of the time, which wasn't true. I didn't know what you were talking about. You used language that those people didn't understand. I know you graduated with honors in letters and science, but as far as being an intelligent person, you're a dumb ox." At any rate, we always got along. So, getting back to August Vollmer.

With August Vollmer, the last few times I visited with him he talked and of course, this what do they call it? He had Parkinson's Disease. I asked him one of the questions I had already asked him -- I guess I asked as many questions as anyone who ever worked for him asked. I loved the man and I thought so much of him. I felt that I was so close to him that I could confide in him anything I wanted to. I asked him, "Chief, I would like to know something from you. Is a man who takes his life, whether he jumps over the bridge or whether he shoots himself to death or whatever means that he destroys his body, is he a coward or is he a brave man?" He didn't answer the question. I asked him repeatedly. I said, "I have to have a direct answer." He said, "I wouldn't be able to answer that question." That was the closest he ever came to telling the truth. I think that he even evaded a direct answer of not being able to truly answer that question. But I've asked him such questions.

JRH: You mentioned the other questions you asked him up towards his death; whether or not...why he always looked people over.

Woods: He never would answer that. He'd always evade that question with a smile. Only a half smile, because he was too serious-minded. He said, "Well, you will formulate ideas of your own. Maybe these ideas of yours are strictly your own or may not be concurred in by others." That would be the closest that he would come to ever answering some of those questions. You may have learned that from some of the other people.

But you may find and I think everyone that would speak up, I don't think anyone would condemn him. I only condemned him once to his face. One time I was very miserably beaten in that Police Department by one man that's been dead and gone many years. I made a good samaritan out of him and that was Frank Waterbury. He was one of those that whipped myself; me and another kid from South Berkeley. We went in and two other officers helped him; they stripped us down.

We had left school, we went to the Lincoln School in South Berkeley. I lived there in the house with my brother. My dad and mother were separated. We were only little kids; my brother is five years older than myself. We went to school and it was getting near Christmas time and we didn't have enough to eat. My dad was well fixed; could well afford it. However, not condemning him -- he's



Woods: been dead and gone for many years. I've forgiven him in my heart many times for the things that he failed to do, or did do, and for failing to care for us. This Lester Richardson and myself -- Lester is still living in the Los Angeles area -- we went to the Principal's office. I think we were in the fourth or fifth grade. This was just a few weeks before Christmas and we asked if we couldn't get out (we were far enough in our studies). We'd already solicited all the stores in South Berkeley to get some little jobs to see if we could earn some Christmas money.

Both of us stated that we'd like to be able to get enough to send something, a gift, to our mothers for Christmas. So the Principal told us to get back and he reached for a strap -- that was Mr. Blum. He told us to get out. Well, Les Richardson shoved him over in the swivel chair upsetting him. He pulled the key out of the door and locked him in his room. We left from school. We didn't know where we were going. We went on down the street a ways half running. About two blocks from the school we bumped into a man. I should remember his name, he was an ex-convict. We'd never seen him before. He was only about twenty-three years old and he saw us kids and he started talking to us and we walked along with him. We were headed in the general direction from there clear out to West Berkeley. We were in South Berkeley. We walked all the way along and he had money. He stopped and went into a bakery and he bought some doughnuts and cookies. Boy! We thought he was a great guy. We had a bite and went along with him.

Understand, this is the only thing that I went to Vollmer and told him that I condemned him for not doing something about this situation of how badly we were mistreated. So, we finally wound up by going out to West Berkeley Wharf (the Pier) out to the end. We got down into a rowboat. I don't know where we were going; this guy's taking us for a ride (he's stealing it). I think he was starting to take us across the Bay and by this time we were discovered and water...one of the police officers was shooting at us out there in a boat. Three police officers out there shooting at us. These shots, one of them went through the boat, one of them went right near us in the water. So we headed on back and we got back there. This fellow's name was Otto Trenchill. Well, we started on, and here they were, riding their bicycles. They came up and they'd kick us in the back to make us go faster up University Avenue. Finally when Trenchill (of course, he was twenty-three years of age, we were only little kids) broke and he ran and got on the side of a car and got away. Well, he was later subdued in Oakland. He shot and killed an Oakland police officer about two blocks from where I lived on Alcatraz Avenue. So he was shot and killed, and he killed a police officer; they both shot and killed each other.

So later in these years when I was in the department, I had gone to August Vollmer and complained nearly a year later after this occurred, and complained of the way we had been treated. I've still got a





Woods: couple of marks on my body that I got from Waterbury. But I went to him about that and he couldn't believe it. I stripped down in his office and showed him. I said, "I will always harbor ill-will against that man." I forgot after the years, no, I guess I never did. Vollmer had he known directly that this was true, but he didn't search to find out, but I think that if he had he would have really done something about it. My admiration for the man, I'm sure that he would have nothing like that to take place.

JRH: Then, he said he hadn't known about it, or...

Woods: No. However, nothing was done about it and in later years I discussed it with him again and I told him when he was going to be elevated as an Inspector (this is Waterbury), I was opposed to that. I didn't want to see that happen; I didn't think he earned that recognition. But the other man, isn't that funny I don't remember the others, but I remember the man who wielded the whip. That was the one with the bad feet. Let's see what else you've got in here that you wanted to know about.

JRH: Just the stories like you've told me; stories about what sort of a man he was. That was an interesting one.

Woods: Well, he came to Los Angeles and he was down in San Diego. He came down and I was down to San Diego. I went down there to make a survey in their department. He was down there, I don't know what the mission was, but then I was invited and I went to a luncheon and he was there and I had that, and so he also gave me quite a send-off (for the survey job) to the people present at this luncheon. There were at least 150 or 200 people there. He gave me quite a send-off and dating on back of course, I'm going like a round-robin trying to tell you things.

August Vollmer, one day, about 1925 I guess it could have been '26, 1925 or 1926, he brought a man into the Identification Bureau and he said, "Gene" (and whoever was there in the office with me; whoever was in charge of the Identification Bureau), he said, "I want you to meet Edgar Hoover. I want you to take him up to meet with Clarence Morrill." Clarence Morrill was the head of our Identification Bureau. He was in the Berkeley Police Department. He was then the head of the State Bureau of Identification and Investigation in Sacramento. "I want you to take him up there, take him to Los Angeles, take him here and take him there. You will be supplied with your expenses." Edgar Hoover, that didn't mean anything to me. So after Edgar Hoover was appointed in the Bureau, of course. The Federal Bureau of Investigation was created then. After he was making his rounds to learn something, to have a smattering knowledge of police work. That was the thing that August Vollmer propounded to us in every meeting at our so-called Crab Clubs. Did anyone mention about Crab Clubs?

JRH: Yes, they mentioned that every Friday...



Woods: Once a month, they couldn't have it every Friday because it would be too rough on men as they were working. Once a month, with the exception of maybe once or twice in ten year's time that he'd call a special session. But, usually he'd call for key people in his office for that. So that could be, that he was calling every week by reason of some select group would have some special Crab Club business. He'd propound these things to us.

One of them was, to kill the public with kindness. Make yourself feel that you're scared to death that if you turn around someone is going to kick you in the pants. That would be the language that he'd use sometimes. That you're being so kind and nice to the people. You have to be, you're not a judge, but you have to be judge as to whether you're doing the right thing at that time by cautioning people, advising them to be more cautious in their operating a vehicle, if they're crossing in the middle of a block, or any of the things that they might be doing. Stealing something, not pickpocket, but stealing some insignificant thing or doing some little depredation of some kind. That you, by talking to them in a fatherly manner, you can correct something. Whereas you might be making an enemy of that person and cause them to dislike us more. If you can plant a seed of kindness, you're doing something for the welfare of policemen in general. Those are the kinds of things that he talked to us so much on. Invariably he'd call and we'd have examinations very frequently to see whether different ones and a lot of these things were carried out by Jack Greening.

JRH: No one mentioned that. You had regular examinations?

Woods: We had examinations. They would be periodical, at least once every two months. You would have maybe examinations on the street where the fire boxes were; where the outlets were; even though you weren't a fireman you had to work in conjunction with your fire department, to aid and assist them. To see that cars don't drive over the hoses or do whatever to get in their way to creat hazards or traffic jams, and numerous things of that nature. There was so much that you could be of service to the public.

We would be sent to the schools. Along with others I've been in on the creation of the School Traffic Squads, where we had those first created. There were two others beside myself in on the origin of this. I can't think of their names now, isn't that funny?

JRH: I have a name, a Mr. Baird, could he be one of them?

Woods: No he was not in it, originally. He was in it late. The first one in that, gee -- I knew him so darn well. When it was originally created there were only three. We'd given our time to the schools and we'd go out there and speak to them to create something. We went to San Francisco, too, to see where we could get somebody to give us something. We were trying to get a half dozen kids outfitted with something. We were trying to get some kind of grant or something.



JRH: I forget names in two years, so that's nothing. You were telling us, a good deal of stories, anyway.

Woods: One more thing I might say is that I've been in conflict with one of the Wardens (Duffy) over at San Quentin; he was born and raised over at San Quentin. His father was a guard and then later he became Warden (Duffy). He lives in Rossmoor now. We had quite a little conflict and we spoke on the subject jointly. He was speaking in behalf of a measure to outlaw the capital punishment and I spoke in favor of capital punishment. I told him, "I'll tell you why, you Mr. Warden, you never were a policeman; you never came in contact with these people on the outside. Only after you got them incarcerated in prison. It's up to you to try to instill something in their heads there but, we, as policemen on the street, we come in contact with these people." In my case, I said, "I was stabbed by an ex-convict; I was shot down by an ex-convict. I've come in contact with some of these hop-heads, some of these people, narcotic addicts, where I was only fortunate in one case -- there were three of them and I was pretty well beaten up by them, but I managed to keep one and I wouldn't shoot a man down unless I absolutely had to."

I knew what the taste of lead was and I said, "Now Mr. Warden, you're opposing this. If your mother, your wife, your daughter were molested or were raped you'd be the first man to want to gouge their eyes, to chop their fingers off and a few other things of that nature. I went into a department store at 2:00 in the morning where a couple -- the man was the organist at a theatre, the other, the girl was the ticket-taker at this show house on University Avenue -- they came down after they were through they'd go out for a ride and this fellow lived upstairs over this place. He went up there to get something and the girl was parked in his car. This fellow, the burglar, was down in the store and she saw him so they drove and saw me and I asked them to go directly to the police department and tell them I need help. I went up there and I put my shoulder (I was telling this whole story to the Warden) to it and I went inside and there were little peanut globes. If you know what a peanut globe is -- it emits very little amounts of light inside but you can see your way around. There I saw a trail of things spewing out down the stairs.

I went down there and I found in all this rubbish and all this crockery and everything else, the packing boxes were down there. I called out, I said, "Okay fellow, throw your gun out and come on out. The place is surrounded and you can't get away." This guy threw a .45 caliber gun out and it scared the daylights out of me. I didn't know where it come from. He was an ex-con. Well, I picked it up and stuck it in my belt. Then I composed myself evidently because he never knew I was scared!



Woods: He came on out there and by this time I've got him with his hands behind him, handcuffed. He said, "Well, I'll tell you Woods, I laid there with this gun pointed at your badge; I was planning to kill you. I wasn't fifteen feet away from you." He'd gotten the gun from the Armory which he'd burglarized. But he said, "When you said this place was surrounded, I thought of the rope." I said, "Mr. Warden, my life was saved by my speaking of the rope." That man feared the death penalty.





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August Vollmer Historical Project

Al Coffey

AUGUST VOLLMER: A MAN OF PRINCIPLE AND ACTION

An interview conducted by

Jane Howard Robinson





## INTERVIEW HISTORY

A.L. Coffey was born in 1907 and served as August Vollmer's secretary from 1931-3. He remained in the Berkeley Police Department for several years, and later went on to reach the position of Chief of the Bureau of Identification and Investigation. Mr. Coffey brings the perspective of a career police professional to this August Vollmer series.

Interviewer: Jane Howard

Time and Setting of

Interview: One interview was conducted, on August 9, 1971, in Mr. Coffey's ranch-style home in Sacramento. The interview began at 9:30 a.m. and concluded at 10:30 a.m.

Editing: The interview was corrected for spelling and punctuation errors by Jane Howard. In addition, after consultation with the Bancroft Library Regional Oral History Office regarding the appropriate procedures, several interesting anecdotes related by Mr. Coffey off the tape were paraphrased. Suggestions were made on points for inclusion of these anecdotes points in the written transcript. Mr. Coffey edited the transcript extensively for style, but did make only minor deletions of information. He also agreed to the inclusion of all but one anecdote. These anecdotes are now part of the written transcript.

Narrative  
Account of  
Mr. Coffey  
and the  
Progress of  
the Inter-  
view

Mr. Coffey was born in 1907, in Fresno County, California. He attended Armstrong Business College in Berkeley, and the University of California. Coffey worked in the Berkeley Police Department for thirteen years, in a variety of assignments, including patrolman, sergeant, and inspector. During World War II he served in the Pacific in the Marine Corps. After the war, A.L. Coffey worked in the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation, serving as supervisor of the investigation section, and then Chief of the Bureau. He was a lecturer at the University of California in 1958-59. Mr. Coffey retired from the Bureau in December 1971.



A.L. Coffey (contd.)

Coffey opens the interview by stating that he served as August Vollmer's secretary from 1931-33. He found Vollmer to be a man who knew what he wanted, a man who followed his own clearly thought out set of principles, and a man who paid careful attention to detail. Coffey found that Vollmer attacked problems very aggressively, and with a sense of direction. During Vollmer's tenure, Coffey reports, morale in the department was extremely high; Vollmer related well to all staff and all members of the department respected and admired him.

Turning to Vollmer's professional role, Coffey mentions Vollmer's work promoting the formation of the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation, his leadership in the International Association of Chiefs of Police and his extensive correspondence with police officers throughout the country and the world. Coffey discusses Vollmer's efforts to make policing nonpolitical, and his deep involvement in the Berkeley community.

Coffey tells two stories: one, on Vollmer's conflict with the Berkeley city manager, in 1933, over police salaries. He also remembers meeting Vollmer accidentally in a speakeasy during prohibition.

The conversation turns to a consideration of the types of correspondence Vollmer handled. Mr. Coffey recalls that it covered a wide range from chatty letters to long time friends, to responses to citizens' requests for information, to technical advise to fellow police professionals. Coffey mentions here, as he does at several other points in the interview, that although Vollmer sometimes seemed to be austere, his correspondence revealed great warmth and gregariousness.

In response to a final question from the interviewer, Coffey comments that when Vollmer met with opposition to his ideas, he would listen openly to discussion until he came to a decision and would then act forcefully to carry out that decision.

Jane Howard



ALC: Well, let's follow your questionnaire then, as a beginning at least. How did I get to know Vollmer? I was his secretary at the police department in 1931 continuing for about two years.

JRH: Was he still on the force then?

ALC: He was still Chief of Police but apparently had a part-time arrangement. I had just joined the department and Vollmer was teaching at the University of California. He would come to the Police Department in the late afternoon to take care of his correspondence. He would dictate from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. or later and then leave. I had the balance of the night for transcription and getting the work out.

JRH: So you would work evenings for him then?

ALC: I was assigned on the 4 p.m. to midnight watch. Through handling his correspondence I got some insight into the things he was doing and the manner in which he functioned.

JRH: Was he officially with the Police Department?

ALC: Yes, he was still officially with the Department as Chief even while he was at the University. Then Captain, who later became Chief Greening after Vollmer's retirement actually was doing a great deal of the administration of the Department.

Under these circumstances my acquaintance with Vollmer was as an employee. I did not have a continuing contact with him and never developed a personal relationship with him as some of the other members of the Department did.

You also asked what effect he had on my life both personally and professionally. I think I'd have to answer that I was influenced by example rather than precept. To a person as young as I was Vollmer was an impressive figure of a man. Physically, he was above average height, rather sparsely built with an erect almost military bearing. He was beyond middle age and impressed me as being a somewhat austere, not particularly warm sort of personality.

Again my reaction to him was that he was a very incisive sort of person who knew pretty well what he wanted. I think his decisions were made relatively easy for him because of his adherence to a set of well defined principles. I felt that he lived with a personal philosophy which enabled decision without too much emotional involvement.

I've gotten into your second question as to the kind of man he was. One of the things which impressed me most about him was that within



ALC: my experience he was a perfectionist. At that time he was writing for publication a lot; magazine articles, book reviews and that sort of thing. He would polish, re-polish and re-polish an article until it met his every requirement.

Another thing which made a lasting impression on me, and maybe it's saying the same thing a little differently, was the fact that he organized himself and his work more precisely than almost any other person I've ever known. He would prepare for dictation, have his material laid out on his desk in the order he wanted to handle it, and knew exactly how he wanted to handle each item. He would run through a heavy correspondence schedule and then he would rough out the articles he was writing. The next evening he would revise the articles. We would do this over and over and over again until he was satisfied.

JRH: Would he outline his correspondence?

ALC: No, he had the correspondence he wanted to respond to stacked on his desk and he would run through it piece by piece. I mentioned earlier that I felt him to be a very incisive rather austere person and yet this has to be balanced against the fact that from his correspondence, his letters to friends he had known years earlier when he was younger, he had been a very warm and gregarious person. He maintained correspondence with people in all walks of life and some of his references to occurrences years before left me with the impression that he had been in his time the equivalent of what we now might call a "swinger." At the time I knew him he had suffered a heart attack, possibly this contributed to a change of pace for him. Also he had stopped smoking at that time.

JRH: How old was he when you knew him, in his late 40's?

ALC: No, I think he must have been pretty well into his 50's, because he was eligible to retire which he did around 1933, so he must have been approaching his 60's. You, of course, have his early background -- the mail carrier thing and his tenure as Marshal before the formation of the police department.

JRH: Very few people have known much about him during this early period.

ALC: I don't really have any stories about him except the history. As I understand it, he had been a mail carrier in Berkeley, had subsequently been elected City Marshal and when the police department was organized he was appointed Chief of Police.

I can't give you the name of the person but my information was that Vollmer was greatly influenced in the administration of the police department and in many of the policies he initiated by an official of the Oakland Police Department. That man had a decided influence on him.





ALC: Maybe because the Berkeley Department in those early days was in its formative stages Vollmer was able to do a lot of innovative thinking and initiate some advanced practices and policies without having to overcome the inertia of long established procedures as would have been the case in a department which had been in operation many years.

Another of the things about Vollmer which made a lasting impression on me was an apparent tendency to attack a problem. Physically he appeared to be a quick moving, well coordinated athletic type person and I felt his mental processes were consistent with the physical. To my knowledge he never procrastinated and I felt that he had a pattern planned for his life.

JRH: Do you think for example he intended to go on and start a school in Berkeley? Is that what you mean, in that sense?

ALC: No, I don't think so. I don't mean that he had tunnel vision. Rather that he had generated a well defined set of personal principles, that he knew pretty well what he wanted to accomplish, knew where he was going and thought in terms of the future rather than just living in a day to day situation meeting things as they developed.

He had a strong impact on the people around him. Everybody in the department and within my experience, most of the people around him, accepted him as a leader. I felt there was less friction, less internal dissension in the department during his tenure than at any subsequent time. Many of the people with whom I worked have said in effect, "I've never gone in to talk to the Old Man without coming away with some new ideas or some additional thoughts on a problem."

Because he was such a positive individual I have felt that his act of suicide when he learned the nature and extent of his illness was consistent with his aggressive relationship to life. I'm sure it was not done in panic or from fear but rather that it was a calculated well considered decision.

JRH: Do you think some people might have been afraid of him by his austerity at all?

ALC: No I don't think so. As a matter of fact he had a much closer, less formal relationship with some people on the department than in my case. I have reason to know that there were times when he acted very paternalistically toward some members of the group. There were at that time actually about four generations on the department. There was the generation of Vollmer himself including the original personnel; there were the people who had come along subsequently who were on their way up through the ranks. There was a generation of patrolmen ahead of my time; and then the generation which included John Holstrom, myself and others.



ALC: How did he relate to the people he dealt with on a frequent and close basis; to friends, employees, or professional colleagues? His relationships I think were almost uniformly good. Personally, of all the people I have ever worked for I enjoyed him most. I never before or since worked harder or more enthusiastically. I think most people were inspired similarly.

The only additional comment I might make would be that I was well aware of his professional stature, where he was outstanding. Police officials throughout the world acknowledged him as a leader in the profession; a man in the forefront of the developing police science.

JRH: Internationally who were some of the people?

ALC: He carried on a continuous and extensive correspondence with police officials and government officials throughout the United States and the world, among whom were administrators from Scotland Yard in London, the French Surete in Paris and most all the other world capitals.

He had been as I'm sure you know, one of the early presidents of the International Association of Chiefs of Police. He also played a major part in the promotion and lobbying of the legislature which preceded the establishment of the California Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation.

The reason and the need for this Bureau of course was that at that time the police had the problem of adapting to the mobility of offenders who were transient. During those years for instance, in booking felony prisoners we took nineteen sets of fingerprints, one for our own files, the others for exchange with other departments in the Bay Area and Statewide in an effort to provide information as to possible offenses or offenders in other jurisdictions. For these reasons Vollmer earlier joined with other police officials and lobbied for the establishment by the State of a central records keeping depository. The Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation grew out of those efforts.

JRH: Do you know who he would talk to to get it established? You say he lobbied for it; what did he have to do to get it started?

ALC: Because it was intended and designed as a state function it was necessary to convince the members of the State Legislature that the proposal was valid, that there was a need, that it was legitimately a state activity, and that the legislature should appropriate the necessary monies.



JRH: What I'm thinking is were you ever involved with say writing some of the letters in the process of getting legislation passed?

ALC: Not too much. The State Bureau was in operation before I joined the Police Department. Also at that time law enforcement even more than now, was regarded as being a local concern. As a consequence there was not as much legislation in those days which affected law enforcement. Law enforcement now is demanding a great deal of attention from everyone and there is much scrutiny of law enforcement activities these days.

In what ways was he influential in the community in Berkeley and in Alameda County? I think that Vollmer was most responsible for the acceptance and support of the department by the community. He recognized the need for community support and the department in those early days had almost solid public support.

The Berkeley Department under Vollmer was one of the first police agencies in the country to recruit employees on the basis of ability rather than appointing on the basis of political connections or pressure. It was first also to recognize the need for psychiatric evaluations of applicants and as early as 1930 utilized the services of a psychiatrist for recruiting. Since those days law enforcement generally has made every effort to avoid political interference, or political or partisan activity. Vollmer I'm certain, contributed greatly to this philosophy that law enforcement should remain non-political. Because of his stature as an enforcement official and because he made every effort to maintain good press relations Vollmer spoke with authority in both the city and county.

JRH: I understand he made a lot of speeches in the community which kept the community aware of what was going on. Did you help him with any of these?

ALC: Not so far as his speeches were concerned. He encouraged department personnel to become involved in civic activities, to join local service clubs, and participate generally in community life, as he encouraged them to continue education activity. I think another thing which contributed to Vollmer's stature in the community and generally was that with his rise to prominence he was frequently invited to survey major departments throughout the country and to serve as consultant in the upgrading of other law enforcement agencies. As I have indicated he also published a great deal, writing on many phases of law enforcement.

So far as anecdotes or stories I recall, the outstanding recollection that I have can only reinforce the comments made earlier. Vollmer's retirement actually resulted from a disagreement with the City Administrator over police salaries. It was, I believe, in 1933 that the then City Manager, Hollis Thompson, came to



ALC: Vollmer's office during the dictation session. Because of the Depression, Thompson indicated that he felt it advisable to reduce police salaries. Vollmer's response was a positive "The day you cut salaries in the Police Department you can go out and buy yourself a new Chief of Police." Thompson did cut salaries and Vollmer took his retirement, I believe for that reason only.

I also remember going, after a Stanford-University of California game, with a friend to a speakeasy in the Santa Cruz Mountains during the Prohibition era. We ran into August Vollmer and the man who later became Chief of the Berkeley Police Department, Captain J.A. Greening, and his wife. Neither the Vollmer party nor the Coffey party acknowledged each other and very shortly Vollmer and Greening got up and left. I was surprised to see them there, in a way, although I knew that in his earlier days, Mr. Vollmer had really been quite a "goer." I got the impression that Vollmer was well-known in the speakeasy from the way he chatted with the people there. I have the general impression that Vollmer was very sociable in his youth, and well-known in the Berkeley area bars and very popular with women as well as men.

JRH: I'd be interested if you can describe some of the kinds of correspondence he was working with at that time.

ALC: It covered a wide range. Apart from the normal business of the Police Department most of it dealt with general police problems and procedures. He discussed problems, and made recommendations or offered suggestions in responding to correspondence from administrators in other departments.

JRH: Ones he had met or hadn't met, I wonder?

ALC: Both. A great many he was acquainted with because of his tenure as President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police. The others were just a wide range of people asking for information or advice so far as police activities were concerned. Many inquiries were from university students or professors. Other than that sort of thing much of his correspondence was exchanges with acquaintances or friends of many years. Here again despite his outward austerity and apparent sternness, he had a capacity for expressing himself very warmly and humanly. For a long time I kept copies of some of his letters to old friends, letters of condolence or sympathy because of death or illness.

JRH: Since he did introduce so many innovations, presumably he ran into a lot of opposition with some of them. How did he handle it?

ALC: I don't really know that he met serious opposition from his own community. I'm sure he met disagreement and argument from other departments. In keeping with his general makeup I'm sure that he would listen to any discussion with an open mind until he





ALC: came to a decision, then override or ignore the opposition. One area of disagreement of course was Vollmer's recruitment policies. He recruited at age 21 and in those days most departments would not appoint under age 25 or in some instances 27 years. Then too, his emphasis on education and professionalism. Both of these factors have since become standard practices but in those days we (Berkeley officers) were widely and deprecatingly known as the "college cops" or the "whiz kids" and other such terms.

Even then also, and despite Vollmer's unquestioned public support, money for law enforcement was a problem. This probably generated some opposition at times when he requested funds for untried new ideas.

JRH: How did he manage it before 1933? I guess he managed to get pretty good funding for his police department?

ALC: I believe so, but of course I don't know how long, how many budget periods it took for him to get these things accomplished. I suspect even then he had to pioneer, educate, amass supporting data, and argue, as police administrators do in these days.



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August Vollmer Historical Project

George Brereton

LOOKING BACK: EX-DIRECTOR OF THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT  
OF JUSTICE REMEMBERS HIS YEARS AS A PATROLMAN UNDER AUGUST VOLLMER

An interview conducted by

Jane Howard Robinson





## INTERVIEW HISTORY

George Brereton, born 1901, was interviewed by Jane Howard as part of the series on August Vollmer. Mr. Brereton brings the perspective of a leader in California law enforcement who worked with Mr. Vollmer during Vollmer's tenure as Chief of the Berkeley Police Department.

Interviewer: Jane Howard

Time and Setting  
of the Interview:

One interview was conducted on July 9, 1971, with Mr. Brereton in his antique furnished home in Sacramento, California. The interview began around 11:30 a.m. and concluded at approximately 1:00 p.m.

Editing:

Editing of the transcripts was done by Jane Howard. Paragraphing, correction of some misspelled names and punctuation was done. A section unclear from the tape to the typists was filled in. The changes were minor. Mr. Brereton edited extensively. He made many changes to eliminate informal English in the interview. He also expanded on some of the ideas and concepts discussed.

Narrative Account  
of George Brereton  
and the Progress  
of the Interview:

George Brereton, born in 1901 in Mendicino, California, received an M.A. degree in history from the University of California at Berkeley in 1926. He continued graduate studies toward a Ph.D. through 1929.

Mr. Brereton's professional career began in 1922, when he took a job as a Berkeley policeman while still an undergraduate. He continued to work for the Department through 1929. In 1930 he became director of the first police training school in the United States, at San Jose State College.

Subsequent professional experience includes six years with the San Diego Sheriff's Department and service in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Brereton became Chief of the California Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation in 1945 and rose to Deputy Director of the State Department of Justice by 1960. He retired in 1964.



George Brereton (contd.)

Mr. Brereton is the author of many articles on police training, police professionalism, and on California law enforcement agencies.

The interview follows the question outline quite closely. Mr. Brereton explains that he came into policing because he needed a job, but decided to remain in the field because of the impression August Vollmer made on him. Mr. Vollmer was always fair and supported and encouraged his men, he says.

Mr. Brereton talks of Vollmer's stress on courtesy toward the public, and of his national and international influence and of his drive and energy.

In response to the question on Vollmer's state influence, Brereton discusses Vollmer's role in establishing the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation and his work with Earl Warren on enforcing prohibition. He also mentions his own assignment as an undercover agent to get evidence on Contra Costa gambling and bootlegging.

In relation to Berkeley, Mr. Brereton recalls the cooperative relation between Berkeley fraternities and the Berkeley Police Department, and Vollmer's acquaintance with University of California, Berkeley presidents.

Mr. Brereton touches on Vollmer's principles, and his kindness to staff, in response to questionnaire items.

The tape concludes with a discussion of other men who might be good interview subjects.

Jane Howard



BRERETON: My father was the first Chief of Law Enforcement for the United States Forest Service in the California Natural Forest and his office was in San Francisco. In his work he became a good friend of August Vollmer. Also in those days my mother was a teacher and my father had been a teacher some years before. But they didn't have very much money, so going to college was a matter of trying to work my way through and the first two years I went to college, I "waited on table" at my fraternity house and I did different jobs.

One day my father said, "Why don't you take the examination for the Berkeley Police Department?" and, if you will pardon the expression, I said, "What the hell do I want to be a policeman for?" He said, "Well, one reason is that they pay \$175 a month." And I said, "\$175 a month?" He said, "Yes, and there are several college fellows in the Berkeley Police Department" and he said "Chief Vollmer and I have been talking and he asked me why don't your son take the examination."

Since times were bad, (just like they are today for young people trying to get jobs in anything -- my grandchildren for example and my son, who after 15 1/2 years as a Senior Mechanical Engineer lost his job at Project Sacramento.) I took the examination and 8 or 9 months later was notified to report for work on the midnight shift. In those days they gave various tests, and psychological examinations. Dr. John Ball was one of the consultants that Chief Vollmer had and a Dr. Rowell was also one of the interviewers. He has since passed away. He was not related to the Rowell's of Fresno or the editor of the San Francisco Chronicle; in fact, those Rowells were related to my first wife who is deceased.

Anyway, I took the exam and went to work and at that time was taking 18 units in mining engineering. Actually I think I ended up with an incomplete in my civil engineering course because I didn't have time to finish my surveying -- which we did on the hillside back of the Greek Theater. That was one reason which caused me to change my course from Mining Engineering because I would have to have given up my police job and gone out into a mine during the Summer starting my junior year for three months; secondly, I wasn't doing too well in chemistry, although I did receive good grades in high school. I didn't care for the particular section leader in Chem 1A so, to make a long story short, I



BRERETON: changed my course and majored in history and minored in political science and economics.

In the early days, (at that time I think I was the 35th policeman who came on the Police Department) they gave you the number of the last man to leave the department; in fact, I think I still have the old badge around some place. What I should do is find that and give it to you; Badge No. 1 -- that was my number. Somebody had either died or retired and so I had No. 1 although I was not number one in the police department. We would all work six days a week and the newest patrolman would get the last choice of shifts, so that is why I went on the "graveyard" (12 midnight to 8 a.m.). I also got the last choice of vacations, after everybody else had made their selection, and college could not interfere with your police work. Lots of times we'd have to have longer hours and so we'd have to cut class and that sort of thing.

But, Vollmer was a very wonderful person. I had a very high regard for him, as did the others. He, of course, had had no great amount of formal education. I'm not quite sure, but I don't believe he even went to high school. I think he just finished grammar school. As I remember hearing him tell about it, he was in the Spanish-American War and came back to Berkeley and became a postman and he made a lot of friends so that when a constable was needed he was elected City Constable of Berkeley. Then, as time went on, he self-educated himself and became a very, very highly educated man. He had that ability. He was a terrific reader and had developed a fine library by the time I came in the department, April the 7th, 1922. He had become well known, internationally known, and he was great for training and for newer theories. That's the reason why he encouraged university students to come into the police department. It was his belief that eventually all policemen would be required to have a college education and, of course, you see how that belief has progressed. Even though he had little formal education himself he was certainly far better educated than many college graduates because he was a terrific reader. As time went on he became an outstanding important police expert and made a great many surveys (I've forgotten how many he made) and traveled around the United States and the world. But personally, I never had any relationship with him. I was a patrolman there only.

Of course, he did have a important and lasting impact on my life and I had the highest regard for him because of his intelligence and his self-education. He knew far more than a great many professors on problems of policing and law enforcement, psychology of people, etc. Although I had changed my course and planned to become a college professor and teach history (and did in fact teach history), actually the impact he made on me caused me to remain in law enforcement and, as time went on, more and more I was affected by his influence.





BRERETON: In the first place, I was recommended by Chief Vollmer when I started the police training school in September 1930 at San Jose State College. Vollmer recommended me and I went down and started the first two-year college full-time police training school in the United States at San Jose. You will find a reference to that in the Wickersham Report. They had short police schools at other places and Vollmer had taught several courses in the Summer Session at the University of California at Berkeley and I had taken some of those courses. Dr. John Don Ball had given courses in psychiatry and we'd take trips to the prisons and the mental hospitals. About every Friday Chief Vollmer would also conduct a little school for all the policemen and of course there were only 35 or 40, so you had to get out of bed if you were on the 12 to 8 shift to attend school that day. Everybody was there. At that time Walter Gordon -- have you talked with him? -- was on the department and he was one of the first patrolmen to teach me the rudiments of patrolling "a beat."

JRH: Bancroft is doing an Earl Warren history and they are interviewing him in relation to that, so I'm not going to do one.

BRERETON: Walter Gordon was at that time a policeman in the Berkeley Police Department as well as attending law school at Cal and he was the one that I trained with. The way they started training in the Berkeley police when I started they'd send you out on the street in an automobile and with an older experienced policeman. You'd go around with him for several nights and then with somebody else and Gordon was one of the patrolmen that I was assigned to. He taught me how to be careful in going down dark alleys, turning door knobs, etc. We had to patrol "a beat." For example, my first "beat" was from the Albany boundary to the northern boundary of Oakland and from Sacramento Street to a certain area called the west waterfront. And on some nights on the 12 to 8 shift we had only two or maybe three policemen to patrol the entire city of Berkeley.

JRH: That's a big territory.

BRERETON: Well, we didn't have some of the problems that you have in Berkeley (1965-71) nowadays. In fact, a later beat of mine was from Shattuck Avenue to the Hills (last street) and from Bancroft Way to Derby Street. So I had the University "beat" in the days when I could as a lone patrolman at Bancroft Way and Telegraph Avenue handle the problems. We'd have the Rally Committee and the Senior Peace Committee help if the kids came down and started trouble. I would have no difficulty and we never had to call any extra police because members of the Big C Society, the Peace Committee and the Rally Committee and other students helped. They would say, "George, do you need some help to stop those kids from cutting the fire hose lines or overturning a car," and if I said yes they took care of the



BRERETON: problem. Incidentally, part of our jobs in those days (1922-29) was to make a tour of the fraternity houses looking for "souvenirs." We knew most of the fellows and we would collect all the momentos they had been "stealing" (i.e., red lanterns, street ropes, etc.) the past year and get them back without any problems.

Vollmer was a very striking man, tall and slender. As I remember his hair was slightly gray. He was a great backer of his men. If you were in the right no one could get your job or get you in trouble. If you arrested a State Senator speeding down Telegraph Avenue and you were in the right, he would support you. On many different occasions, he supported our actions. If you were wrong, which I was on one occasion, he had a great deal of understanding and sympathy and forgave my indiscretion. He was just a very, very wonderful person. He had a lot of magnetism which would draw you to him.

One of his great expressions when he would speak to us in those Friday afternoon hour and one half sessions, (of course, it was a very small school compared to what we have today and what has been done) was, in speaking to the public, "kill them with kindness." And he used to say, "When you're talking with a person on the phone always be courteous." Anyway, he would say, "In dealing with the public, this may be the first and last time that that person ever has contact with the police; either with the Berkeley Police Department or with a policeman, and it may be a minor or a major thing; it may be a complaint about a crowing rooster, which they had in Berkeley until recently, it may be a barking dog, or it may be children throwing rocks against an elderly woman's door. Whatever it is, it's very important to that particular complainant to take that report and answer them personally and give them the courtesy, understanding, respect and service they are entitled to. If you do that the complaining person will support the police department, not only the Berkeley Police Department, but have a good opinion of police in general because that may be the only time the complainant ever comes in contact with the police."

Well, I think as far as impressing others, he impressed people all over the world. He did have some of the "old-time" policemen who opposed his progressive ideas and who did not believe that a policeman could learn anything out of a book, but the amusing thing is that some of the ones who originally said the only way you could learn policing was "to put them out on a beat" later supported the training school. Of course, we in Berkeley were put on the beat and that's the way we were learning in 1922. But Vollmer was developing this ideas that he wanted to put training schools in police departments and put courses in the universities and establish police training schools throughout the country. And, as time went on, of course, that requirement



BRERETON: is now being initiated for some law enforcement agencies. Some of the people that were attacking Vollmer followed his methods in later days. For example, in the city of San Francisco some of the early chiefs of police or chiefs of detectives there "looked down their noses" at him. But that didn't bother him. He rose above their ridicule. There were many old-time policemen who had come up the hard way and did not agree with his ideas. He had come up the hard way too, but he was thinking far in advance of his time. They were ridiculing him, but he overcame that and was called into their cities (Kansas City and many others around the country) to reorganize their departments. In 1923-24 he went down to Los Angeles and reorganized that police department and, later, many others around the world.

He had a tremendous drive. Incidentally, whatever shift you were on, you had about twenty minutes for a meal on the eight hour shift and you had no radios. We had what they called the Gamewell signal system, a red light system with red lights hanging at the intersection of major streets throughout the city. You had your own number of flashes, you would watch for that number and then telephone the police station from a police "call box" (telephone). You would patrol your beat and in all the areas where they had stores you got out of your car and you tried the front door and then went around to the back door to ascertain if they were locked. You did that at least two times a night. If a store was broken into the next day your superior wanted to know if you tried that door or had seen a window broken. So the 4 to 12 and 12 to 8 shifts checked against one another and the day shift (8 to 4) checked on Sundays and holidays.

Vollmer had a lot of influence on the men. Everybody in the department, in those years I was there, loved him. He worked more than his share. As I said, I didn't mingle with him socially. I don't remember meeting his first wife and I didn't meet his second wife until after he retired from Berkeley and had gone to Chicago University and came back and was teaching in Berkeley.

In what way was Vollmer influential in the community of Berkeley? I think Vollmer was Berkeley. He could do no wrong. Nobody would have dared to cross him and as far as Alameda County is concerned he was well-liked and he was disliked only by jealous people. But he was respected throughout the world; in Japan, in England, in Germany, etc. As time went on police officials and others would meet him and would listen to his theories, lectures, or read his writings. He became internationally famous. You can understand that when both the University of California and the University of Chicago would take a man who had no degree at all and give him a full professorship without any problem at all. That doesn't happen to but a few people. Although when I returned from 4 1/2 years of naval service in 1945, I was offered a full professorship at the



BRERETON: University of Southern California. I turned it down because I was Chief of Identification and Investigation at that time and was better paid than I would have been in Los Angeles. I had a Master of Arts degree from the University of California, but Vollmer without any degrees could step into any university and hold up his own -- conversing with anyone about many subjects and preparing scholarly papers. His language was good, his knowledge was tremendous. Of course, his main interest was in doing a good police job and in training good policemen. Training young men to be good policemen and organizing police departments so that they were fine, honest, efficient, modern police departments was his lifelong work.

Long before I was chief of the State Division of Criminal Identification and Investigation, he had a great deal to do with its reorganization and modernization in 1917. Incidentally, it was probably the first in the country being first established at San Quentin in 1909. It was first set up about 1900 at San Quentin prison and then it was allowed to lapse for a year or two and then, in 1917, it was reorganized under the influence of August Vollmer, who was one of the three board members and one of the leaders to have this state bureau established by the State Legislature. The FBI wasn't organized until about 1924 or 1925. Vollmer had the state bureau going and the California state bureau handled for the eleven western states many identification problems and received fingerprints, photos and records from Kansas City, Seattle and many other cities and all of the western penitentiaries.

He also had a lot to do with the development and organization of the International Association of Chiefs of Police and, of course, when he was at the University of Chicago he gave more impetus to training as he did at the University of California when he was there. He was followed to UC by O.W. Wilson who was on the Berkeley police department a year or two before me and he was one of the so called "college cops."

I've told you some of the things he was involved in with the state, such as the State Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation. You might as well call it "his baby." He reorganized it and pushed it.

JRH: Did he become the chairman of a board?

BRERETON: Yes, there was a Board of Managers. The Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation was originally governed by a Chief of Police, a Sheriff, and a District Attorney, appointed by the Governor. And he was the chief of police. I've forgotten who the DA and the sheriff were. Later Earl Warren was District Attorney -- and was on the Board of Managers. I've forgotten who else, maybe the Chief of Police of





BRERETON: San Francisco and the Sheriff of Los Angeles were the other board members, (but at one time Warren, Sheriff Biscailuz of Los Angeles and Chief Bill Quinn of San Francisco were members). When Warren became Attorney General he wanted to remain on the board, and he had the law changed so that he became an ex-official member of the Board of Managers. They had no Department of Justice at that time. It wasn't until Warren became Governor and Bob Kinney was the Attorney General, that they got together and established the Department of Justice by combining the Attorney General's office and the State Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation. And, if I remember correctly, he brought in the Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement at about the same time and the Bureau of Criminal Statistics. Later in fact, I had those three Bureaus under my direction when I was Deputy Director of the Department of Justice.

JRH: Do you know if Vollmer worked with Earl Warren on any other things? In the county or in the State?

BRERETON: I knew Earl Warren only as District Attorney of Alameda County. In fact, the first time I met him was when he must have believed that the Berkeley Police had more integrity than some of the others because he arranged, through Vollmer, to have us, in teams, raid Emeryville which was running wide open, and had been for many years. It was "wide open." It was full of prostitutes' houses of prostitution, liquor joints and Chinese gambling. We went down one night and I was on a team that crashed into one place with a sledge hammer. This was at 40th and San Pablo at a place called the Key Route Inn. Right in back of the Key Route Inn there was a Chinese illegal gambling "joint." We "hit" six or seven other gambling "joints" at the same time. Oscar Jansen, who was Warren's boy Friday, had been a former federal investigator led the raids and later worked with us in Berkeley for a time. He and his wife were both undercover agents and for awhile and later Oscar worked as Warren's Chief Special Agent, and still later, when Warren was Governor Oscar was appointed a Lieutenant Colonel in the California National Guard and retired as a Brigadier General.

JRH: I also heard that during Vollmer's time, it should have been when you were on the force, that there was some effort made against, or there was still some Klu Klux Klan in there and Vollmer made some effort against them. Do you remember this at all?

BRERETON: Well, I would say this, Vollmer would have had nothing to do with supporting the Klu Klux Klan. Do you mean Klu Klux Klan in the Berkeley Police Department?

JRH: Not in the department, in Alameda county. I meant, had he been active in trying to control their activities in the county?



BRERETON: In the first place, I should have known because I'm a Catholic. In fact, there were only two Catholics in the Department. I was the second Catholic to be brought in, while Officer Patrick O'Keefe was the first. But that had nothing to do with Vollmer. It didn't make any difference to Vollmer whether you were a Catholic, Protestant, Jew, black man or a white man. What he wanted was men who were honest, sincere and who had integrity and a good mental capacity. As I said, they gave Binet, Army Alpha and other tests and wanted to get some men of above average intelligence. Returning to the KKK, I had heard some rumors there was some minor activities, but if there was anyone working on it it might have been some of the detectives, i.e., Inspectors Waterbury, Wilson and Jack Greening, (who later became Chief of Police there) and another detective whose name I've forgotten. And he might have been working with Warren on that.

One of my first duties in the Berkeley Police Department which I objected to strenuously was an "undercover assignment." Clarence Taylor, a graduate in engineering and I were called into Vollmer's office one day and he said, "You're going to be temporarily assigned to the DA's office of Contra Costa County to get the evidence on all the gambling joints, liquor joints, and houses of prostitution in Contra Costa County." Well, neither of us liked that at all. I had a personal resentment and antipathy towards that type of operation and, secondly, I didn't believe in the Volstead Act or the Wright Act. I had come from a family that had grown up with liquor in the house. I had had beer and wine and when I was a little boy, when we would come in after a long horse back trip (I was from Mendocino County, I was born and raised there) wet and cold we would make a tiny hottoddy or something. So I didn't like the idea of going in under false colors. But he said, "Do you like your police job?" I said, "Yes, I do." He said, "Either you take this assignment or you won't be working with us."

On another occasion, he called me and, I had a very poor handwriting. I had fairly good handwriting once but I ruined it going to college because I would try to get everything down on paper which was said in a lecture. So I would write my police report. When you get through your police "shift" you always had to write your reports, if you had a burglary or whatever you had, when you came in off your beat. Relative to my reports Vollmer said, "One thing you are going to have to do, either you're going to have to learn to use a typewriter or you're going to learn to write clearly so we can read your report or you're not going to be here very long." I said, "Yes, sir" and I learned to use about four fingers typing.

JRH: We heard that Vollmer wasn't a terribly strong believer in Prohibition himself.



BRERETON: Well, I'm sure that he wasn't.

JRH: But he did enforce the law? You did follow it in relation to the story you were telling?

BRERETON: I would say probably he had the same kind of feeling that I had toward it. I know nothing about his private life, whether he took a drink during Prohibition or not. I would certainly have no reason to say that. But we enforced the laws there and actually I nearly lost my job at one time because of being on a liquor raid and three of us each took a pint bottle of wine. The stuff wasn't any good anyhow. I went home and took a sip out of it, but it wasn't good. Vollmer wasn't Chief at the time. He was on leave down in Los Angeles (another officer was Acting Chief), but I think that probably it was due to Vollmer's great understanding of human weaknesses and the stupidity of young kids that caused him to keep us from being discharged. But anyway, he had a deep understanding and sympathy for people. He understood the psychology of people and he had great sympathy for any problems of the men or their families.

JRH: One thing else about the community you mentioned earlier. You mentioned that when you were on the campus beat generally the men would know most of the people in the fraternities.

BRERETON: I belonged to a fraternity (where I lived) and I had friends in all of the houses. I could walk into any fraternity on the campus and there would always be somebody there who would say, "Hello George, how are you?" Or if something would disappear, they would help find it. For example, on one occasion, a bunch of kids from one of the fraternities that's still there (the freshmen) went over to North Beach and, of all things, stole four or five musical instruments from the band who, I suppose, were out having a drink or a rest. And they stole a big bass horn. I don't know how they got it home. There were headlines in the San Francisco paper and police were wild and so somebody called me and asked me if we had a report of any musical instruments stolen and what would happen to those that took them. I told them it was grand theft. They said that the kids had had too much to drink and then asked if they could get the instruments back to the musicians, could they drop the charges. I think I checked with Vollmer or the captain or sargeant and said yes. Some superior knew it was a prank and he said, "Bring them down and we will straighten it out," which we did and there was nothing further done about it. Kids would steal souvenirs which I suppose they still do today; sometimes street signs and stop signs, plants and red lanterns. Once or twice a year a few of us would go through the fraternity houses on our beats. Probably there would just be two because there would be some fraternities north of campus and some south. We would load our cars and bring the articles to the police station and the boys would moan and groan but they, of course, could do nothing to prevent our actions.



JRH: Somebody said that Vollmer used to know the people in the fraternities himself.

BRERETON: Yes, he knew many of them. Of course he knew some of the older men or some of those who would get in trouble. He knew the Presidents of the University, i.e. Benjamin I. Wheeler, David Prescott Barrows, Dr. Campbell and Bob Sproul, the Comptroller who became President -- he knew all of them. Vollmer at that time lived on Grove Street in a flat or an apartment on North Grove.

I've talked about principles and major ideas. Training and education were his great major interests and integrity of his men and sympathy for them. He would attempt to prevent crime. He would have the men on the beat to encourage the shopkeepers or the storekeepers to place their safes out in front of the windows of their stores and not keep them hidden, also to put electric lights in the alleys and not leave them dark for the burglars to work in more safety. He would ask the store owners to cover the doors and the windows with metal bars. He was thinking all the time of ways for his men to pass out this information to prevent crime. We had to be trained in various subjects and take firearm instruction. We had to study the Penal Code and take examinations on it and on city ordinances and on a number of other books. We were always encouraged to get books from the University, and also to get books from his library. And he had some of the best books of the early criminologists. Hans Gross's Criminal Investigation, etc.

How did he relate? He related very well, very courteously, with empathy and sympathy among all people. On the other hand, he would support anyone for his principles if he believed them to be correct. He had kindness and a great amount of mental courage. One thing he had, you know, over the years was a bad heart. He used to carry a little pillbox and he used to take nitroglycerine pills. But that never kept him from doing anything. He never talked to me about his personal life or anything of that nature. I don't think he considered that my business, which it wasn't. We were good friends and he was constantly trying to keep track of his boys, and tried to help everyone of them.

JRH: I also interviewed Gene Woods. He told me tht he showed Hoover around the State and Hoover learned some of Vollmer's ideas at that time.

BRERETON: I don't remember that. Gene Woods?

JRH: Yes.





BRERETON: Gene Wood's father, Al Woods, was one of the detectives who was there when I came on the police department. Gene came, I'm sure, after I did. And he was shot at Durant and Shattuck one morning about six o'clock. But I don't remember Gene's trip with J. Edgar Hoover, but there were a lot of things that I wouldn't remember or that I might not even know about, as far as that goes.

When I first met J. Edgar Hoover while I was Undersheriff in San Diego in 1935 or 1936, I was teaching at San Jose State College, where I started the police school in 1930 -- I started there in September 1930, that was on Vollmer's recommendation. I was also employed in Santa Cruz as Chief Criminal Deputy Sheriff from 1932-1934. When Sheriff Dresser of Santa Cruz County was defeated, the new Sheriff in San Diego, Ernest Dort, came north to see Vollmer to get his advice because he didn't know a thing about policing. In fact, he ran on the basis that he was honest and that he'd have a new regime. The Sheriff Ed Cooper, who had been in office twenty years had had some tough luck -- a lot of bad murders. So Dort who had been Postmaster in San Diego for some twelve years said, he was going to get someone who knew policing to come in and reorganize the San Diego Sheriff's Department. So he came up to see Vollmer and I was lucky enough to be recommended by Chief Vollmer to become Undersheriff of San Diego County (January 1935 - December 1938, when I resigned to accept the position of State Supervisor of Peace Officer's Training with the State Department of Education at Sacramento).

JRH: You mentioned Mr. Mull as somebody else who worked with him. He sounds familiar. We have Mull, but we don't have his address.

BRERETON: Oh, Grover Mull was in the police department there. He's 79 now but very bright, he now lives at Diamond Springs, California, P.O. Box 616, 95619.

JRH: Is there anyone else that you would think would know about him? John Holstrom has given us the names of a lot of people.

BRERETON: Yes. Of course, John Holstrom worked for me at the University of California stadium and then I got him interested in police work and I encouraged him to take the examination for the department. Mull told me that Bob Robinson was living over in Mill Valley and I think he knows where Ralph Proctor is. Bob Robinson has an unusually long name: Shayer O.L. "Bob Robinson." I think that when you talk with Mull, if you get a chance, he will tell you where Robinson lives and also Ralph Proctor. I think he was in the military service too, but I don't know what he did.

JRH: We have Maeshner's name.



BRERETON: Eddie Maeshner -- isn't he dead?

JRH: I don't know.

BRERETON: Have you got Bill Peck's name?

JRH: He (Holstrom) went through the files, but he listed them by members and ex-members. So the people that quit we may not have. He listed them by retirees (people who stayed through and then retired) and then a separate section on the people who left before retiring.

BRERETON: These fellows all left.

JRH: Holstrom has Proctor's address. He thinks it's 1800 North Street in Berkeley.

BRERETON: Proctor. Well, may be. Bill Peck, is he there?

JRH: He has nothing about Bill Peck.

BRERETON: Well, he may be dead. Mull will know more about this than anyone because he was there and he stayed after I left.

JRH: He came in 1923, Holstrom says.

BRERETON: Well, then he came after I did. I came in 1922.

JRH: But he was considerably older.

BRERETON: Yes. He was from World War I. But he is 79 and I am 70 -- last May 23rd.

JRH: Holstrom has quite a list, but I don't know if he has everybody.

BRERETON: (Looking through Holstrom's book) Owens. V.A. Leonard. He's still alive and writing books by the carload. He was an inside clerk when I knew him.

JRH: Only trouble with him is he's so far away.

BRERETON: Kenney, Heinrick, -- tape ended, reviewing names off tape.



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Thomas Hunter



Willard Schmidt



Alfred E. Parker



Jane Howard Robinson and Gene Carte. September 1972.



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August Vollmer Historical Project

Thomas Hunter

THE "V" MEN, VOLLMER'S DEDICATED PROTEGES

An interview conducted by

Jane Howard Robinson



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Thomas Hunter was interviewed as part of a series on August Vollmer, the professional and the man. Mr. Hunter talks from the perspective of a law enforcement professional who rose from the Berkeley Police Department to become Supervisor, Special Services Division, in the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation.

Interviewer: Jane Howard

Time and Setting  
of Interview:

One interview was conducted on August 9, 1971, in Mr. Hunter's office at the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation. The interview began at about 2 p.m. and concluded at 3 p.m.

Editing:

The interview was edited by Jane Howard for typing and spelling errors. She also replayed the tape, filling in the blanks in the interview left by the typist where the tape was unclear. Mr. Hunter edited the manuscript, making a few minor corrections on names and dates.

Narrative

Account of  
Mr. Hunter and  
the Progress of  
the Interview:

Thomas Hunter began his career in law enforcement in 1935, upon graduation from the University of California with a group major in police administration. After brief employment at the Berkeley Police Department, Mr. Hunter received an appointment in 1936 as special agent for the State Board of Examiners. He remained in that position until 1942, when he went to work for the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation. Mr. Hunter retired in 1971 from his position as Supervisor of the Special Services Division of the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation.

The interview begins with a discussion of Mr. Hunter's enrollment at the University of California in Vollmer's group major in police administration. Mr. Hunter recalls becoming part of August Vollmer's informal "gang" at South Hall, becoming interested in Vollmer's secretary, and being married in 1934 to this secretary, Muriel Bigelow, in Vollmer's home. Upon graduation from the University of California in 1935, Mr. Hunter took a job with the Berkeley Police Department until his appointment as a special agent for the State Board of Examiners in 1936.





Thomas Hunter (cont.)

He remembers useful advise and encouragement received over the years as a friend and neighbor of Vollmer's.

The interview turns to a discussion of Vollmer's extensive knowledge on a wide range of topics. Hunter also talks about Vollmer's informal group of "V" men, and tells about the "V" men's group trips to Yolo County, California where Hunter's wife's family had a farm.

Hunter feels, as did many other interview subjects, that Vollmer's most outstanding trait was his innovativeness. He cites Vollmer's adoption of modus operandi, his lobbying for the establishment of the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation and his work on the establishment of the East Bay Regional Parks.

Hunter's thoughts turn to an anecdote about an accident involving the Berkeley city manager and Vollmer on the first day of Safety Week. Hunter mentions that Vollmer was an unpretentious man, easy to work for, and that Vollmer was very fond of children.

Hunter closes by saying he feels people are finally beginning to see Vollmer's influence on current police practices, particularly in the area of administration.

Jane Howard



JRH: How did you get to know Vollmer?

HUNTER: I became interested in doing work in police administration so I wrote to the places where they were giving courses. I wrote to August Vollmer to ask what were the potentials in going to Cal and to George Brereton, who at the time was Director of the new Police Science course in the first experiment outside of the University at San Jose State College. I thought Vollmer's looked better.

JRH: What were you doing at the time?

HUNTER: I was living in Southern California at the time and starving through the depression of 1929-31 or '32 and some of my classmates who had gone on to Cal came home in the summertime and encouraged me to go to Berkeley. I was working on a newspaper which was paying very low wages and I figured that I could starve in Berkeley as well as I could in Fullerton, so I came north. I was enrolled in August of 1933 and finally graduated on what I think was the first, at that particular time, group major in Police Administration. In 1934 the University had adopted a provision making it possible to major across colleges and, of course, this was long before the School of Criminology existed and so I had a number of courses in addition to Professor Vollmer's class, which I took in my junior year. There were a cross section of economics and history and other matters which was considered relevant to being a policeman and I was graduated in May of 1935.

Shortly after I arrived in Berkeley, I became a member of an informal gang that hung around Room 11, South Hall, which was the Chief's office. It had a big advantage that the window was level with the ground outside and you could sit down and talk with people inside the room without having to go in the building. As part of this relationship with the gang I was rather attracted to this secretary, Muriel Bigelow. However, I was economically unable to afford a girl friend, so nothing much happened on that score until the Fall of 1934 when we were married. The Chief enthusiastically encouraged this transaction and even loaned his home for the ceremony, the event taking place in his living room while we were able to look out over the bay in very pleasant circumstances.



HUNTER: After our marriage I stayed in school until graduation and worked for the Berkeley Police Department from January 1, 1935, until I was appointed to be the special agent for the State Board of Medical Examiners in San Francisco in September of 1936. This necessitated a move to San Francisco at a time when Muriel was more than eight months pregnant and caused a lot of difficulties. However, the commuting situation in those days was such that I had no great choice but to reside in San Francisco. Subsequently, we did return to Berkeley and lived on Miller Way just one block uphill from his home on Euclid and accordingly both we and the children frequently had opportunities to pass the time of day with "Uncle Gus" and I, of course, received much helpful advice from him on what type of employment might be available and what might be preferable over the long run.

He encouraged me to obtain employment with the State Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation which I eventually did in January of 1942. He had been the first chief of police member of the Board of Managers which was composed of a district attorney, a chief of police and a sheriff. He had participated in 1909 and through the years to lobby the necessary legislation to create the Bureau in 1917. So he was able to give me a lot of interesting background information as to how the bureau came to be formed.

I remember one such story was his description as to how a rather elemental organization, technically the first State Bureau, had been formed pursuant to 1905 legislation and set up at the prison at San Quentin. The idea was exactly the opposite of a centralized identification bureau, inasmuch as the purpose was to take many fingerprints of any incoming prisoners and distribute those prints to some 17 law enforcement agencies in the 11 western states. It has been interesting to me to note that while some of the sheriff's offices and police departments that were in that early distribution pattern have had their ups and downs as far as efficiency and honesty; nevertheless, their identification bureaus have had a reputation for efficiency and high quality work through the years.

The Chief told me that the sheriffs and chiefs of police, who were not satisfied with this small bureau and were lobbying in the 1909 session so hard for some other centralized bureau with a wider scope of activities such as we finally obtained in the 1917 statutes. But the lobbyists forgot all about the San Quentin institution and there was no budget provided so the 1905 bureau went out of business after about four years of existence. This could have been the 1907 session since in those days the legislature met in the odd numbered years.



HUNTER: August Vollmer had the potentialities of a great man and he would have succeeded whether he had stayed in his feed and fuel business or whether he chose some other field. We are fortunate that he happened to be interested in law enforcement and the police. Because of other elements in his life he spent a number of years as a bachelor with much time to read and his self-education was modestly evident. I have heard him converse with doctors of medicine concerning the blood circulatory system in humans, talk to psychiatrists concerning various mental afflictions and on no occasion was he in the position of being talked down to. He did not parade his knowledge, but he had a vast amount of information about a number of highly technical things. I believe the one thing that he did never master was how to drive an automobile and sometimes I believe that that was very smart of him.

JRH: How so?

HUNTER: As some of the pictures of the gag organization, the International Association of V-Men indicate, August Vollmer, like all of the great ones, was never one to stand on rank or ceremony. He needed no artificial props to his dignity. He mixed with his students and was genuinely fond of them and they of him. If he had done nothing else in his life, he at least breathed inspiration and incentive into the hearts of many people who subsequently have very important places in the leadership groups of law enforcement. In fact, if he had any fault it was perhaps putting too much faith in the people he had faith in. He would sometimes recommend people for something that was really beyond the person's ability.

JRH: You mentioned before who was in this association of yours and how you all got together.

HUNTER: Well, this was a very informal group. The "V" men, as I said, was more or less a gag. (The "V" men even had badges -- 7 point stars with V's on them.) A play on "G" Men which had been possibly overdone about that time, but there were such people as the now Dean Milton Chernin from the School of Social Welfare at Cal, A.E. Parker, Burtis C. Bridges, author of the book on fingerprinting, Ben Holmes who at one time was a U.S. Postal Inspector.

JRH: Those are more pictures of Vollmer?

HUNTER: Yes. Arthur Bellman, now as well as then, practicing law in the East Bay. Persons of all ages and backgrounds who were a part of the group that came to him for leadership and inspiration.





JRH: You were saying you used to go out to your wife's home up in Winters....

HUNTER: Yes. One of the social activities of "V" Men, apart from occasional spaghetti and meatballs and beer bust in one of the Telegraph Avenue bistros, was an annual trek to Yolo County where Muriel Bigelow's father had a ranch abutting Putah Creek. At that time the swimming was good in the creek and it became practically one of the "rites of Spring" for us to spend, usually around Easter Week, swimming in Putah Creek and using the background hills as bullet stops for our amateur gunnery sessions.

A small illustration of the man's adjustment to himself was his ability to tell a joke on himself. He told us one time rather informally, or at least nothing particular of a relevant nature had occurred, but he was telling about his invitation to attend a police council in Germany during his around the world trip immediately after he retired from the police department. This, as you will recall in point of time, was after the development of the National Socialists and the S.S. which under the Nazis became high officials in the police as well as everything else. He told us that the conference was terminated by a rather elaborate dinner and everyone toasted everyone else and then the German police disappeared, leaving "Uncle Gus" with the check for the dinner. And so much for international hospitality.

During my time both on the campus, and for that matter even today in some places, August Vollmer had to overcome a basic distrust on the part of people who were bound to the conservative "don't try anything new" school in law enforcement. Even today a large portion of police administrators are very reactionary and do not look with any interest in changes, even if they might be for the better. Consequently, I have heard, particularly in the days when he was still active in the university, the derogatory comments from unenlightened law enforcement people attributing his efforts to mere publicity grabbing.

However, I think that anyone taking an objective view of his efforts would see that he was the spark plug that lent considerable velocity to a lot of new ideas in the law enforcement field. He was an active enthusiast for modus operandi which he translated into U.S. English, both figuratively and literally, to make it possible in the U.S. This, of course, was of interest to me because modus operandi processing is one of the things in my section which even today we have some doubts on the part of our administrators as to whether the technique is worthwhile. He took an active part in the formation of the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation and in lobbying for it through the years until the first bill setting up what we essentially are now was passed in 1917. We operated in much the same way with added tasks for well over half a century until July 1 of this year when the present administration abolished the Bureau and reorganized the Department.



HUNTER: One activity which may not be too well known to law enforcement people after leaving the University and the formation of the Regional Parks. He was a member of one of the early Board of Directors and took an active part in transforming what had been merely guarded watershed land, which in my day at Cal was no man's land so far as university students and girl friends climbing over fences and looking for wild strawberries, into a chain of public parks which are now showing great value to the East Bay area. There is a "Vollmer Peak" in the north East Bay Regional Park as a permanent remembrance of Vollmer. In fact, these parks should be considerably larger since I understand the use of the parks is very tremendous these days.

At the statewide level I would say his influence was very high in the formation of this bureau and the encouragement of organized groups such as the State Peace Officers Association, and the development of the Berkeley Police Department.

Although in my day I soon found out once I left the city of Berkeley that there were two things one did not discuss in the general police field: (a) that you had never seen the inside of a four-year college or (b) that you had ever been a Berkeley policeman. There seemed to be a certain prejudice against either condition. However, I believe that this has long since changed and the mere fact that it has, during the last thirty years, come about is one of the long range benefits of August Vollmer's work in the field.

JRH: Do you remember any other stories about your group or anecdotes about Vollmer?

HUNTER: No, I don't. There must have been some, but one that I did not know of any great detail and you may have picked it up from some of the other people or if you haven't, I'd certainly ask them about it. The City Manager of Berkeley at one time, the first one if I'm not mistaken, was a man named John Edy. And he was a very much dominating type. It was the beginning of the City Manager concept, all power went to the City Manager and the City Council sat and backed him up and he was, from what I gather from when I was there, a rather irascible type. Uncle Gus did tell a tale about how on the first day of their Traffic Safety Week that he was riding in an automobile west-bound on University Avenue somewhere between Shattuck and Grove and I guess Edy must have been driving, because certainly the Chief wouldn't be and so they had a collision and, this being safety week, it was somewhat of a source of embarrassment for the City Manager and the Chief of Police to be standing out looking at these wrinkled fenders right in the middle of downtown.



HUNTER: He was an easy man to get along with and a very considerate man. I, of course, had some menial jobs in my day and I hashed while I was going through school and I have concluded that it's only the phonies that have to make with a lot of front and stuffiness and derogation of the peons and when you find someone who does that you put him down as a phony and when you find someone who has real status and he doesn't do that you know that he is genuinely a good man. That I think was his way.

JRH: People say he was good with kids. You mentioned that your kids used to see some of him.

HUNTER: Yes. He would pay as much attention to the youngsters and talk to them as individuals as grownups. In looking over material for you I found one letter that I didn't have time to disengage. I wrote it on a piece of note paper. Sometime in 1953 I believe, he had written me acknowledging some book with statistics or something that I had sent him. And after thanking me for that he said, "Well, it's back to the hospital now for some more surgery. For the cuttee it doesn't feel so good but I guess it's necessary to have it done," or something, more or less philosophically, so he pretty well accepted the world.

I think that probably about now and from here on people will begin to see his hand in the back of many police elements. He was retained to reorganize the Los Angeles police department in about 1931. It could have been earlier, but there are still some things down there in their reports that bear the mark of changes that were adopted by August Vollmer that long ago so he had some pretty good basic ideas.



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Regional Oral History Office

August Vollmer Historical Project

Willard Schmidt

ENFORCING PROHIBITION: AUGUST VOLLMER, EARL WARREN,

AND WILLARD SCHMIDT

An interview conducted by

Jane Howard Robinson



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Willard Schmidt, born in 1908, was interviewed by Jane Howard as part of a series on August Vollmer, the man and the police professional. Mr. Schmidt brings the perspective of an individual who worked his way up through the ranks from a high school volunteer to director of the San Jose State College Police School. Mr. Schmidt also brings the perspective of experience as a member of Earl Warren's crimebusting squad.

Interviewer: Jane Howard

Time and Setting of the Interview: One interview was held on Friday, August 27, 1971, at the Berkeley Police Department. The location was selected as convenient for both the interview subject and interviewer. Mr. Schmidt was in the bay area briefly for a visit, and the Berkeley Police Department kindly made space available for the interview through John Holstrom. The interview began at around 7 p.m., with Chief Holstrom sitting in for about 15 minutes at the start of the interview, and concluded at about 9 p.m.

Editing: Jane Howard edited the interview for typing and clerical errors. Mr. Schmidt corrected spelling of names and amplified and clarified some of the sections discussing policing technology. The changes were not major.

This interview is particularly notable for its lengthy discussion of Mr. Schmidt's participation in Earl Warren's raids on bootlegging and gambling establishments in the 1930's, and for Mr. Schmidt's thoughtful reflections on the changes in policing since Vollmer's time.

Narrative Account of Mr. Schmidt and the Progress of the Interview:

Willard Schmidt was born in Berkeley, California in 1908. While attending Berkeley High School, Schmidt became interested in policing and worked during his last two years in high school as a volunteer trainee in the Berkeley Police Department. On graduation in 1928 he went to work for the department and served in a variety of positions until 1938 when he left to teach at the San Jose State College Police School. Schmidt went from this position to the directorship of police training at Sacramento State College. During the war, he was the national chief of internal security. After the war, he completed his bachelor's degree at San Jose State and went on to become



Willard Schmidt (cont.)

director of the San Jose State College Police School, a position which he held until 1964. Mr. Schmidt currently serves on the California Council of Criminal Justice, among other activities.

The interview opens with discussion of how Mr. Schmidt came to know August Vollmer: his father was one of the men who urged Vollmer to run for town marshal in 1906. When Schmidt went to work on a voluntary basis for the Berkeley Police Department as a high school junior he became acquainted with Vollmer.

Schmidt discusses his early years in the department, and his recollections of Vollmer, saying that Vollmer was a man who encouraged his staff to try out new ideas. Schmidt emphasizes that many of the innovations for which Vollmer received credit resulted from ideas developed by other men, both in the department and in the Berkeley community, notably Clarence Lee.

Schmidt comments on Vollmer's philosophical outlook on life, relating an incident from the night before Vollmer's suicide. He also talks briefly about Vollmer's second wife Pat. Reflecting on the current problem of alienation of the police from the community, Schmidt feels that Vollmer might have had some answers to current problems. He discusses Vollmer's willingness to try out new ideas proposed by the community residents, and staff. He speaks of Vollmer's lighter side, discussing swimming trips and Vollmer's guitar playing.

The interview turns to Vollmer's "crab clubs," regular Friday training sessions. In response to a question, Schmidt explains that Vollmer was strongly opposed to use of the third degree, to verbal abuse of criminals, and to petty theft from criminals by police officers. Schmidt feels that this attitude was an important factor in the respect of Berkeley lawbreakers for the Vollmer police force.

Schmidt returns to the difference in the relation between police and the community now and then, attributing the good relations that characterized Vollmer's era, in part, to superior personnel, Vollmer's personal rapport with many community members and leaders, and to the fact that most policemen lived in the community at that time.





Willard Schmidt (contd.)

A lengthy discussion of Schmidt's relation to the Earl Warren crimebusting squad follows, as planned by Schmidt, Miss Howard and the Bancroft Library Regional Oral History office. Schmidt collected photographic evidence on many raids. He discusses the gambling parlors and speakeasies in Emeryville, Warren's investigative staff, the techniques used in raids, and Vollmer's cooperation with Warren in the conduct of the raids. He comments on various members on Warren's raiding team.

After this discussion of Warren's crimebusting, the interview returns briefly to August Vollmer, and his work with the press, followed by further discussion of the speakeasies and Vollmer's attitude toward prohibition. Schmidt talks about the careful patrols made at night by foot patrolmen in their assigned areas. He returns briefly to discussing the Warren raids.

The interview concludes with comments on how Vollmer made clothes, food and lodging at the city jail available to the poor and needy in the community.



JRH: How did you get to know Vollmer?

Schmidt: He was a friend of our family going back to Vollmer's running for Town Marshal. My uncle, George Schmidt, at the time was the Postmaster and they needed someone to run for Marshal who was a popular man in town and Vollmer was a postman and my uncle called him in and said we want you to run for this particular position and I guess there might have been a few misgivings but anyhow, he did say he would run and was elected the first Marshal.

JRH: Do you know how he came to Berkeley and to be a postman?

Schmidt: I don't know where he came from or anything like that. He was a friend of my father as well and I didn't know this but my first contact with him personally was through a career day situation given by the Berkeley YMCA in conjunction with the high school. In your 11th year they asked you what you were interested in and they would have one person from the career field for each two persons so I was the only one that said I was interested in police work and my sponsor at that time was Inspector Albert S.J. Woods who was sent up to talk to me. He got the impression that I was sincerely interested and said, "Why don't you drop down and talk this over with Chief Vollmer and I'm sure he'd be interested in you." I did and as usual the Chief said, "There's only one way to find out if you like it and that's to try it." "So, when you get through school, you may want to come over here and do some typing and this sort of thing," which I did.

Then the man who finally became my father-in-law, Captain Lee, started teaching me fingerprints and photography and before I was 18 years old, Lee suffered a very serious injury to his hand -- he nearly had his hand cut off at the wrist and there wasn't anybody to do photography and fingerprinting on the basis of latent dusting and this sort of thing which Captain Lee had shown me. I started doing it. Then I took an examination for the department and passed it and when I was 18 years old I was asked to be appointed to a position as clerk. I didn't have a badge or anything like that but I could carry a concealed weapon which I used when I went out on emergency calls. I was treated like a regular police officer and from then on I was just like anybody who had access to the Chief. If you wanted to see the Chief, you could see him.

JRH: You were given more patrolman-type duties?

Schmidt: It was mostly clerical -- fingerprints, photography, records, etc. Then I finally went into the clerical division when I was twenty-one as a records clerk. I worked in nearly every division of the department with the exception of the budget.



Schmidt: I suffered an in-service injury and the doctor suggested I go on the outside when I became a patrolman. I mention this injury because Vollmer always saw to it that his men were well taken care of and we all respected him for it. There was a meeting with the City Manager and the City Attorney and the Chief said he wanted his men to know that they were going to be protected. If they should have to think for only two or three seconds if things are going to be all right or not, some life might be lost. It was important to myself and a lot of other men to know that the Chief would stand up for us in adverse situations and who would stand up for them when they were right.

If it hadn't been for a man like Vollmer why I can remember two times when, in a normal police department, I probably would have been fired from the standpoint that I didn't do enough work. When the Chief read the supervisor's report he called me in and gave me the material he was given and I just told him what I was doing and he knew enough about the job to know that I was more than doing my work. He always wanted to get both sides of the story. To me, Vollmer was the kind of man that if you made a mistake this was all right, if it was a mistake that was the result of trying. He didn't want you to make the same mistake twice, but a mistake that was made sincerely is progress and he accepted it because he was this way. If you ever went in to see him and you'd knock on the door and open it, he could tell by the look on your face that you had some sort of an idea and he'd say, "Come in." If you had an idea he'd say, "There's only one way to find out, let's try it." After a certain period of time we'd get together again and he'd say, "How's it working out?" and he had the ability to know that the person who was working on it should have some ideas about how it should be fixed or whether it was a failure. Very seldom would he say no on something that was controversial without giving his point of view.

JRH: So you were saying when you came in he would ask you what your ideas were?

Schmidt: That's right. You could always discuss things with him. If you had something detrimental to say about somebody he'd never let you say it unless the other person was present, which was my tendency and I've always done this particular thing too. I think that all the men that worked with him felt this way. I would say that he was very strong on seeing the adaptability of certain things to police service and the ability to know the abilities and interests of other people, with the result that he would have a kind of protective covenant toward a person who was working on something in the area of police work.

For example, Captain Clarence D. Lee who was a friend of Vollmer's before he (Lee) came to work for the police department, came here because of the big fire in San Francisco. Captain Lee was the Secretary of the S&W Food Company and he had a number of children



Schmidt: to support, so after the fire he needed a job and Vollmer asked him to come to work in the Berkeley Police Department. I don't know whether he knew that Lee would be able to bring business principles to the department, but this was the very start of business principles being applied in police work. Captain Lee started a records division -- index cards, cross filing, if you please. This was done by Captain Lee in various areas so that it improved police service. You could go in and look up the number of a watch that had been stolen. It was just purely business principles.

The Berkeley Police Department was one of the first police departments, with Oakland, that started fingerprints. Captain Lee did this, but Vollmer was there and they were working together and there was a lot of teamwork. The modus operandi that came from Llewelyn Atcherly in England was gone over by Captain Lee and Vollmer and they came up with Vollmer's system of M.O. which was the same as Atcherly's with the exception of two points. These two which were left out of the sequence of the English version: Pal and Tale Told. In other words, to be able to connect a crime that had had an object of attack, place of attack, instrument of entry, point of entry. The English went a little further than they did here from the standpoint that the pal you were with might indicate who you were. In other words, if you and I worked together and we were safe (lock-box) persons and if you were found in the proximity of it, then they could start looking for me if they knew you and I were pals. This was recorded in record procedure. The tale told would be if you were surprised, what your slibi was to be. It was the thinking that on the basis of being surprised you would more or less go into your subconscious or some background of experience that you had so that you could talk about it. So they would be able to identify the person. The two items of sequence, i.e., "Pal and Tale Told," were to be covered under an area listed as "Trademark" in the Vollmer concept or revision. "Trademark" items of the Vollmer M.O. System were to cover peculiarities related to the perpetrator and not necessarily related to the res gestae or the statutory requirements of the crime or offense. In handwriting, Captain Lee became interested in handwriting on the basis of its use in forgeries, bad checks, etc. He wrote one of the first books, with Ronald Abbey of the Berkeley Police Department on the classification and identification of handwriting. All with Vollmer there and helping.

The use of the lie detector which was first brought to the attention of the Chief by Leonard Keeler. It had a metal camber on it and Captain Lee invented one that had a pressure cylinder that ran on the basis of rubber so that the heat contraction and expansion during the run of the machine did not have as much of a problem as it did with camber at that time. Any idea a person had, Vollmer would encourage you and never belittle you. At least I never knew of an instance where he belittled anybody. He would say there are a lot of unsung heroes in the police service that he got credit for because he was the head of it; it's just like a General taking a





Schmidt: citation for his group.

Now there's one thing that Vollmer's given credit for and it was written up in the Elk's magazine and he would have been the first person to say that he was not responsible for, and it was on the Junior Traffic Police. Now this is more or less recognized all over the country. When Vollmer was in Los Angeles and an interim Chief of Police, Captain Lee was the Acting Chief here and they evidently were experiencing accidents in the school areas here. They were having problems of traffic and Captain Lee had read in the paper or heard about something that they were doing in San Francisco, so he called up San Francisco to inquire about it and he knew the person personally. The fellow told him what they were doing over there and Lee said, "Well, we're going to try it here too," and they did and they put Officer Bert Frazer in charge of the thing and that's how it grew.

JRH: People have told me that Vollmer started it. General Dean mentioned that Vollmer had started it.

Schmidt: No, this is not true. As a matter of fact, I'm going to see Captain Lee tomorrow and I'm going to ask him and he'll know the name of the person. But it was operating over in San Francisco. Now San Francisco didn't follow it up, as I understand, with the result that it was enhanced here with signs that would come out over the street. They didn't have the Junior Traffic Police getting out into the street where they'd stand and put the stop sign out. They eventually had a barrier that was operated with a handle that was on a standard that would swing out over the line of traffic above the top of the automobiles. This was the first part of the Junior Traffic Police.

The studies that were made in the records division led to the sequence of the describing of a person on the fingerprint cards which is more or less standard procedure particularly in the State of California and that is: the hair, eyes, height, weight, and age. Over a period of years they made a study of what a person would recognize first on another individual. The most points went to hair, and then eyes, height, weight and age. That's the reason why they would put it in that sequence and it was very helpful because when you were talking to a citizen, when you started at the head of the list and got to the end, you knew that you'd gone through the whole thing, rather than in haste, and in the problems of making an investigation you overlook a lot of things if you don't have a set routine. Set routines can be dangerous too. If you go in with a preconceived idea about what you're going to see then you're....For example, if I lose my knife and you help me find it, you're going to pick up other objects -- money and that sort of thing -- that I won't pick up and won't necessarily perceive and I'll say I just went by that place and you're finding all that sort of stuff and it's because I know what I'm looking for with a conditioning and your mind is still receptive.



Schmidt: My wife and I've been on picnics with Vollmer; went to dances with him and his wife; been to his home and had dinner with him and he was just a personal friend. One thing to me that gave him his philosophical outlook on life would be from the standpoint that I think that I was at his place the night before his death and we had been talking that afternoon. And usually at the end of a gabfest (as he called them) if we were going to have dinner or leave one another, why he had a kind of a ritual where we would go up to the kitchen and have a cocktail and he was the only one who knew how to make this kind of a cocktail. And this particular evening about 6 o'clock, he climbed up to the top of his cupboard in the kitchen and got down his favorites and put them in a glass and then he said, "Now walk over there and open that drawer (since he had palsy) and I opened the drawer and he said, "that little spoon in there, put that in the glass for me, would you." I put it in the glass for him and he took hold of it and he said, "Well, the Lord gave me this affliction, but it's the best stirring action I ever had." Right up to the end he was philosophical; not regrettable about it, at least from his outside appearance. At this time, as a suggestion, Mrs. Miller, his housekeeper might be a person to interview.

JRH: Do you know where she is now?

Schmidt: It's my understanding that when he died he gave her the house. She was a very fine woman and she dearly loved the Chief and he liked her too. She just took care of him wonderfully and I dare say that that was the one person who had more insight than anybody else, because in his last days he suffered extreme pain, so he told me. He said it was one of these things. Not being able to get in and out of bed by himself.

JRH: He outlived his wife.

Schmidt: Yes. But he had two wives. I think the first one's name was Lydia Sturdivant. I was told she was a very fine vocalist. The other one we called Pat and she was a very fine woman and a wife and pal to the Chief. As a matter of fact, there were just hundreds of people that used to visit the Chief that he would give information to and discuss and who he helped. He helped me and nearly everybody that he touched. His wife started an organization that she called the "V-Men." We didn't know who all were in it because it was a kind of thing between the two of them, where she would give you this little gold V and that was to say, "Well, you're a Vollmer man now. You can be trusted and you're honest and you're a professional policeman." I used to discuss with the Chief the difference between a law enforcement man and a policeman and this is particularly true when we got closer to the era we're in now and I believe that there is a decided difference between a law enforcement man and a policeman.



JRH: In what sense?

Schmidt: The law enforcement man is a person who has had to use the area of selective neglect from the police field. The police field is a very broad thing. Service ideal is one of the things important to people. More and more demands are made by the public and with the less money we have to work with, we have to find the areas of neglect on a priority basis, so I call it selective neglect, with the result that we come down to the particular situation now that instead of an on view arrest, which is an arrest made by an officer out on the beat, we're so busy rendering work to a call, as a result of a citizen's call, you very seldom ever see a pedestrian patrolman. When I used to check my doors on Shattuck Avenue, people would smile and say, "Good evening, officer" and if you see a man walking the street now in uniform, people turn around to look and perhaps follow him to see what's doing. This has done something to the heart of our community. We have two officers together now for mutual protection and we have lost the contact with the public because even in a confessional you're alone with a person so how would you want to give some information that would be considered confidential where there's two people together. This is an area of selective neglect in police service, with the result that the farther we get away from that, the more we are just law enforcement, which would be bad. Vollmer might have had an answer to some of this or he would have found somebody who had an idea and back him up.

There was a time when the business people of Berkeley were up in arms about the parking situation: whether they should park parallel or diagonal. It was a very serious situation from the standpoint of the Chief because the traffic engineer said we park this way because it's safer and they've painted it this way. The businessmen came down to City Hall and instead of Vollmer getting mad and saying we know what we're doing, he said, "Gentlemen, what do you want?" They said they wanted a certain situation and he said, "Let's try it." They tried it and came back in three or four months and said, "you're right, change it the other way."

In my administration when a man got into trouble or got the department into trouble and it was an honest mistake, ask him first, how did he think we could get out of it and ninety-nine times out of one hundred a person that has gotten into trouble knows a way out of it if it's just a mistake of progress. This is just an offsprout of Vollmer's philosophy that I just said in a different way. He'd say, well, let's try it, and at least this gave him time enough to think in case you didn't have the right answer.

Vollmer was a good swimmer. He used to swim up at Putah Creek while picknicking. We would go up there with Captain Lee and his family. I used to go to the same school with Marjorie Lee long before she became my wife, but I didn't know she was related to



Schmidt: Bob Lee who was a longtime friend of mine. When I was working at the Berkeley Police Department we had an assist case for Contra Costa County on an accidental death that proved to be a murder out in Walnut Creek -- the Schwartz murder case -- and I was only about 16 or 17 years old and we were going out to make an investigation of that particular case and Captain Lee was going out at night to make his investigation. He took me over to his place for dinner and that's when I found out that Marjie was the sister of this fellow I went with. So that's how I started to get related to Captain Lee.

Incidentally, the clue that brought it to a head that this was a murder out there rather than a suicide or an accident was due to the fact of the application of Bertillon from the standpoint of the picture that was enlarged compared to one taken of the corpse. In other words, the head profile (badly burned) of the corpse was taken on an original 8 x 10 plate and it was nearly life size. There was another small picture of a group and it had pictures of the heads about an 1/8th of an inch high, one known to be Schwartz. We photographed and enlarged the "exemplar head" to the same size as the 8 x 10 plate and in the profile view we found that it was not Schwartz that was dead; that Schwartz had a straight nose and the one of the corpse was concave. The septum was all gone in the corpse so this is when they started making a further inquiry and found out where Schwartz was staying. Schwartz was a scientist and had done work for the Berkeley Police Department in scientific evidence. He had insurance for his wife and had a paramour in Oakland. Schwartz murdered a tramp of his general size and used the body in a set up to make it appear that an explosion and fire accidently took place in his laboratory, he being killed in the explosion. Thus Schwartz would be mourned by his wife but he would be able to live out his life with his paramour under a pseudonym. Captain Lee and Ralph Pidgeon who was a Sergeant of Berkeley Police at the time and some Oakland policemen went down to his place of abode in Oakland but he shot himself before they could get in to him and make an arrest.

Vollmer was quite a music and song man. He loved to play the guitar. I used to play the accordian and Captain Lee played the banjo. Vollmer played with a zest and he seemed to be a very versatile man in all of his pursuits. We all dearly loved him. It might seem as though we're prejudiced -- well, if it's prejudice that's all right as far as I'm concerned because he was a very fine person.

JRH: I haven't found anyone who disliked him.

Schmidt: He would be the first one to admit and the one who would have it straightened out that he took many a citation because it belonged to the group. He always gave you credit.





JRH: Do you remember any of the picnics or parties with him?

Schmidt: He was just like anybody else. When he was on a picnic he wasn't the Chief, he was just people. I wouldn't call it relaxed, but it would be just like either you or me on a picnic. This situation of bowing to him because he was the Chief never entered your mind.

It has been a wonder to a lot of us as to the reason why Vollmer did not drive an automobile. His wife Pat always drove for him and he was a pretty good steerer at times, I understand. I know one rather unusual anecdote about the Chief; it was during the pioneering stages of the boulevard stop signs. They were being concerned with color and shape. Now to you at your age you've accepted them as a standard thing, but at the very start of this thing there was a question as to whether they should be triangular, square or octagonal; what would be the most visible color. They went to the scientists to find out whether green or yellow or red would be. They had installed a sign at Bancroft and Telegraph Avenue where they were making a study to find out the number of people that noticed the sign and stopped as compared to signs elsewhere which were a different type and shape and things like that. Officer Clarence Taylor, who was in charge of the traffic division, was driving the Chief down Bancroft Way and he (Taylor) was saying, "Now I think that's about the best sign we've got." Well, they stopped about where the campus theater was, which was about a half a block below Telegraph Avenue and he said, "Chief, you know what we just did?" Vollmer said "What?" and Taylor said, "We were talking about that stop sign and we went through it!" Vollmer told me this a number of times because it gave him an idea about how people can violate laws unknowingly with the result that he didn't get mad at anybody when they went through a boulevard stop sign because it happened to him.

I think it was the philosophy of all of us that we might hate the transgression but not the transgressor. We all were brought up on his philosophy and part of it was that if we had a case with you now, it was forgotten on the next case. I think he realized that if there was any man from his department who was resentful or was the type of person who thought, well, while I won't be able to get him to court, he's going to have to stay in jail overnight. Vollmer wouldn't stand for any of this. None of us would. If you fired your gun you would have to get up before the whole group on the Friday Crab Club hour and give the factors of what happened and then there was a decision made by the men from the standpoint of this way or this way; right or wrong. No matter how you fired the gun or why you had to fire it; even if it was an injured dog or something like that. This was a part of the training, responsibility for firing a firearm. This might of saved some people's lives, but of course, it might have cost a policeman his life.



JRH: How often did he have these Friday meetings?

Schmidt: Every Friday for an hour between 4 and 5 p.m. with the exception of during the summers when we would be going to school for three months every Friday. The whole department went.

JRH: Who set up these training sessions?

Schmidt: The Chief, on the basis of what they called the "Crab Club." For instance, if you had anything against any man in the department you said it right there in front of him and after it was over it was forgotten; you didn't go out and squawk about the man or degrade somebody in the department or say anything about him. As a result, in the summertime, they would have people like Dr. Hubert N. Rowell who was very interested in sex cases and the insanities. Dr. Juan Don Ball who was a psychiatrist; Dr. Stanley who was over at San Quentin and wrote a book not too long ago about the criminals in San Quentin, many others also. Vollmer would nearly every day go to the jail and talk to all the people in the jail. He was able to have people who were criminals come in and lecture and tell us as to how they committed their crime. One in particular I remember was called Frisco Billy and he was reputed to be the best safe man in the country. He came in and told us how he was able to open these safes and get around the police. Vollmer was capable of convincing these people they ought to do these lectures.

JRH: Dean Chernin told me Vollmer taught him how to crack a safe and also how to forge.

Schmidt: As a matter of fact, when Billy was lecturing to us we had a safe blown up at Friedman Paint Company and a number of us stayed up there overnight because the person in the American Grill had seen people on top of the roof and told them to get off and they got off. We thought they were going to come back there again to blow the safe up so we waited all that weekend and Monday morning when the paint store opened up they said "Hey, our safe has been blown open." What had happened, the persons knew their business so well they wrapped the safe and they used a technique with nitroglycerin -- I don't know whether you're interested in this sort of thing.

JRH: Yes.

Schmidt: They put paper in the crack of the safe at the top (cigarette paper) and puttied all the sides and the bottom with octagen soap and they poured the nitro on top of the paper and let it seep down and when it started to come down to the bottom where a small opening was left, they knew how much they had to have and they'd stop that up, put the igniter at the top and then they wrapped the whole safe with a bunch of cloths -- drop cloths and wallpaper -- and when it went off there was just a "wuff." Just took the door off to a place about that far (1/8th inch as shown by spacing between thumb and index finger). You could then just force it open about an



Schmidt: 1/8th of an inch. Jimmy was giving this lecture while they were knocking off the safe and we never did prove who did it. I got in on a lot of these so-called stakeouts because that time I didn't smoke and in many places where you had to be in -- buildings under construction, where people were throwing creosote to cause damage or people were stealing out of stores at night and you didn't know who it was -- the fact that I didn't smoke didn't bother me when I had to be in a place for eight hours and where if they had another man who usually smoked he would have to refrain because the scent of smoke would betray him. The fact that I was working for two years without pay between the age of 16 and 18, (I was in every division) doing work for them, working at night with a patrolman and things like that, I could go where I wanted to or where they wanted me and the experience I got was wonderful. This could have never happened in any other department except that Vollmer said this is what you can do. I went to him one time and he could tell from the frown on my face that something was wrong. He asked me what was the matter and I said, "Chief, you told me to find out if I wanted to be a policeman and I said I didn't think I could do this sort of thing." He said, "What's the matter?" and I said, "I'm sick to my stomach because I just locked up a man." It was the first person that I had ever locked up and I was about 16 or 17 years old. He said, "Well, now, this is the type of person we like to get in police work." If you had any part in you that was resentful or you kept anything against anybody, he didn't want you in the Department. He was a humanitarian. You didn't hit anybody except in defense of yourself; you didn't abuse anybody; you treated a lady as a lady regardless of her walk in life.

JRH: People say he was very much against giving the third degree tactics or getting confessions.

Schmidt: Absolutely. I don't like to use confessions because that had connotations of abuse. I like to say the person made a statement admitting his guilt. You didn't do this. If you hit anybody or anything like that you were through. There was no second time and you were told about it beforehand. He didn't want you to just stand there and get beaten up, but we all had the theory that you were a poor policeman if you couldn't keep your temper if a drunk cussed you out. This was one of the personality traits he wanted.

The offenders of the law had respect for the Department. For example, I remember the time on the West Berkeley beat, we had a fellow who had been arrested for burglary, indecent exposure, forgery, and was a problem. I told him to leave the corner down there one night because he was pretty drunk. I said, "Spot, get off the corner because you're looking like the dickens." He said, "All right," and I came back about 15 minutes later and he still was there. I said, "Spot, what did I tell you?" He said, "For me to leave the corner," and I said, "Now what do you think I ought to do with you?" and he said, "Lock me up." So I went over to the box to call for the wagon to come and lock him up and at that time



Schmidt: the steady light came on. The red light that hangs out in the middle of the street and they have a way of signaling you. In other words, if your number was 26, it would flash twice and then a short time lapse and six times followed by a long time lapse, and when it came on steady this meant an emergency and all the police all over town were supposed to find out what was doing.

Just about the time I was to hit the box the steady light came on and I answered and was told there was a fight at the Mexican section house. It would be better to stop a fight where someone might get killed than bring in a drunk so I reached in my pocket (I didn't tell the Sergeant about "Spot") and I got a dime and said, "Here, Spot, take the streetcar and turn yourself in." So he tells the Sergeant what I said and he did it. Most of Berkeley offenders thought the world of Vollmer. He knew Vollmer and Vollmer knew Spot and it was because he used to visit the jail just about every morning and talk to the people who were in there and see if they had been treated well. He might arrest you, but by gosh you were treated like a gentleman. This was part of all of us. Not because of the Chief but because he only kept people who believed in this.

JRH: Were there other things he didn't tolerate besides the third degree?

Schmidt: Dishonesty from the standpoint of taking something that didn't belong to you. For example, bringing in a drunk and taking the money out of his pocket and saying he didn't have it because he's drunk and doesn't know how much money he's got. I wouldn't doubt but what there were times that he would have people do this, not so much to find out whether or not we were dishonest, but to be able to defend us when someone accused us, and there's a difference there. At least I feel this way about it. When I was a patrolman if someone made accusations about us the first thing we'd do was call in our Sergeants to defend us. Our Sergeants were not "snooper-supervisors" they were supervisors. If we did have a snoopervisor, he didn't last long under the Chief. I don't say that it was hard to get that type of man in Berkeley at that time because Berkeley was a town with a lot of good citizens during Vollmer's regime here and later.

At one time I know Berkeley had the highest drunk rate of any town in the United States. This was a result of the fact that anytime anyone was drunk, there were three or four citizens who would call up. But there are other towns I could name that if they happened to see a drunk in the gutter they'd say, "Well, he's been out." On the second day if he was still there they'd say, "I wonder if he's got any money," then on the third day when the flies were in and out of his mouth and he was bloated they'd say, "Hey, I wonder if he's dead." There were different people here. Prostitution -- you wouldn't have an arrest for prostitution here once in three or four years. We only had about two murders when I was in the department. I don't know whether two wanted fellows are still alive: Louis Guerrerra and Feliz Maldonado. The type of people we had in Berkeley had a part in the Vollmer story.





JRH: That's an interesting part that no one has talked about before.

Schmidt: It would be interesting to go back to the newspapers of the time he was here to find the headlines of some of the cases which were headlines three inches high and now are on the second page. For example, now I read in the paper where a man's head was blown off and there's a byline only about a quarter of an inch high and it's about three inches long on the first page and two inches on the next and they say there were narcotics there and no more than usual. Why, narcotics arrests in Berkeley when I was a police officer and when Vollmer was here were unusual, which indicated the type of people we had.

JRH: Why do you think Berkeley had such different kinds of people than other communities?

Schmidt: Well, this gets into a lot of sociological situations. Changing times.

JRH: Compared to, say Emeryville or Oakland at that time.

Schmidt: I might explain it this way. When you talk to people about personnel, if you have 90% of your people in an organization that are tops, they're in a position to boost the poor ones out. Much like the PG&E. If they get a bumner, they just don't belong. And so when we started getting that percentage down here to the 60's and 70's, then your good people leave because they're rather inclined not to want to upset anybody. Or they give in easier and pretty soon you have the ones who are economic cowards; close to pension, their wife is sick or the roots are so far down that they're scared to do anything. To me, I hear an awful lot about Berkeley but I've been in Berkeley for two days and I've had more "Hello" and "How are you" from the Black people and other people haven't even waved. People are just scared to say hello. This makes police work harder. The policemen at that time were known as individuals because we were a small community. There was a time when they were recognized taking their children to church and knew that the policeman was a human being.

JRH: Did they tend to live in the community in those days?

Schmidt: Always did.

There was a time when I was an Acting Sergeant -- I was never a Sergeant. I was an Acting Sergeant as a lot of us were. There were a number of misgivings about a number of us being Acting Sergeants when they had positions for five and they only filled the positions with two. We used to think the city was saving a lot of money and maybe they did, but it may also have been on the basis of a training program for us because even though I was an Acting Sergeant I learned an awful lot. We used to get together and divide the watch and if I was entitled to Sunday off we would



Schmidt: agree among ourselves and if there were four denominations in that shift, that you could go to your church once in four times on a trade-day-off basis so that people could see you with your children and wife and that gives people a different outlook. You just don't appreciate a person until you can realize that a policeman can cry when a member of his family is dead and that he hates to see an animal killed. In that respect, Pat O'Keefe, who was a patrolman, had a dog he had to shoot and he held the dog's head in his hand out of pity and shot him in the head and put a bullet through his finger on the other side of the dog's head.

JRH: How was Vollmer a part of the community?

Schmidt: First, when he was elected Marshal he had been a postal carrier and it's my understanding that he used to be the carrier for the other carriers that were off on vacation, sick leave, etc. with the result that he was known all over town and his service ideal in seeing to it that they got the letters with a hello and the personal contact with his customers was more than anybody else in town, so everybody knew him. I go back a long time because my family was the second family and had the first house in Berkeley. The Caustigan house was called the first but it was in Oakland on the other side of where the Claremont Hotel now stands. I don't think that there were more than 500 - 1,000 people here and when the University started here the town grew. We had college professors living here, we had business people from San Francisco living here. It was a different type of an economy.

JRH: Was there any industry at that time?

Schmidt: Oh yes. In fact there was a lot of sqawking about the Ford Motor Company which they did not let put their plant here, but Ford put it in Richmond instead. They let the Heinz Pickle Works put their factory up here. This sort of thing was a terrific impact in Berkeley. They aroused the public on this, but now they could care less. Whether this is good or bad I don't know. Berkeley was a cultural town, with family Sunday treks to the University of California grounds, the Greek Theatre for dramatics and musicals. The Parathania was enjoyed as an annual event by a tremendous audience. People picknicked on the University of California grounds with its beautiful landscaping and places of repose.

They had a situation here where the business machines were first used in police work. The first machine that they had here was the old Powers. It had a round key punch hole and in discussing modus operandi with the person who came from the Powers Company, I mentioned to him one day that we did not have enough columns on



Schmidt: the card to be able to take care of the modus operandi and the various aspects of the crimes and our cases. (They call it programming now.) He said they couldn't get any more columns on the card and I said, "You can if you do away with the circles." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "With the circles you've got one, two, three areas so if you move them over you have space in the central area and you've picked up another position." He said, "My gosh," and that's where it started, the idea of having the parallelograms as we call them now instead of the round circles and I'll bet they still have the round punch cards here in the early records. The Hollerith machine came out and it still had the round and I don't know whether IBM started the parallel or not, but at least the idea originated in the Berkeley Police Department.

JRH: Did you meet Vollmer as a child?

Schmidt: I probably met him at the Elks' Club because I used to go to the Elks' Club with my Dad when I was a young squirt but I wouldn't have remembered him then. He and my father were very close friends. They used to talk kind of Chinese mimicry to one another and had fun together but I was just a little bit of a fellow. My very first personal contact with him was after I went to the YMCA career meeting.

JRH: Why don't we talk about the crime busting thing with Warren?

Schmidt: In this era, Prohibition, around 1928, bootlegging flourished in the Emeryville area. There was also some of it in the departments, although the major part of the department didn't have any part of it. Even in the Oakland Police Department there were arrests of some of their people who were in it. It got to the extent that if a policeman was standing in front of a certain establishment, that meant it was alright to go in there and gamble and drink your liquor. If he wasn't there don't go in. It was to the extent that if the District Attorney would call on the Department and say bring your men in to plan a raid, they knew they were going to have a raid. With the result that if the policeman wasn't standing in front of the place, he had been called in, which indicated that Earl Warren was going to pull a raid. In other words, let's say that we have a police department that is amenable to bootlegging. They knew when there was going to be a pending raid when they would get all the police officers from that department into the squad room to discuss who they were going to raid. So when the policeman had to leave this area to go down and have this discussion, they



Schmidt: would say there's going to be a raid and would be found sitting around playing dominoes. That's how bad it was.

JRH: They had a pretty good alert system.

Schmidt: That's right. A very good term. After they did make arrests there was nothing done on the basis of certain judges. They had a select number of judges so you would get search warrants and that sort of thing with the result that the cost of "knocking" over these places started to become prohibitive. In gambling, which was the Olema Club, that was a place in Emeryville that had a square block and they ran buses to Sacramento, Stockton and San Francisco to bring people in there to gamble. They had a place that was highly secured from the standpoint that you had to go through two doors and these doors were never opened at the same time. You'd go into a little room and then the other door would open up and lookouts would look at you as a "check out" from both sides. They had a complete automotive repair shop there so that if you had a hit and run car you could take your car in and for a certain sum it would be fixed up. Beautiful place inside -- seven safes to carry the money in and it was a big operation. That was in connection with prostitution as well as....it was a wide open area.

They would start to raid a place and they had the doors laminated with steel between them so it would be hard for you to bust through. We used to be able to get in with battering rams and axes, but then they made the entrances to the doorways with a slanting wall so that you couldn't swing your axe. You couldn't get around the corner with a battering ram; finally they got to the spot where they had opened the door and they would pour the liquor down the sink, with the result that they (the investigators) went over and got enough alcohol content in sponges so that they were able to have a case. Then pretty soon the law enforcement officers started getting it out of the gooseneck under the sink where they dumped the liquor and then the bootleggers would take the gooseneck out and have it go into a straight pipe into the sewer where it couldn't be retrieved. The law enforcement people would get under the house at the time they weren't there and cut the pipes so that it would run down into a bucket and finally they got so they concreted this. This raiding group, under Earl Warren, and his assistant Charley Weir, was officiated by Capt. Helms; Oscar Jansen was the man under Capt. Helms and under Oscar Jansen he had a group of men named George Hard, Heningson, Chet Flint and two other people I don't recall now. They were the raiding people.

JRH: Were they employed by the D.A.'s office?

Schmidt: They were investigators for the District Attorney. Just like they would be patrolmen in the police department.

JRH: Mrs. Fry at Bancroft thought that at first he didn't have any paid staff. Do you know about that?





Schmidt: This could have been before my time.

JRH: At that time he did have how many men?

Schmidt: Helms, Harry Piper -- Helms was Captain, then next in command was Oscar Jansen, and then his men were Harry Piper, George Henningson, George Hard, Chet Flint and another fellow. Those were the persons I worked with and also there would be times when Warren would ask for 25 or 30 men from the Berkeley Police Department to go down there. They would just start "knocking" over the places. I remember we got into one place one time and Officer Harstad from the Berkeley Police Department had to shoot at a fellow because he was shot at when he went into the place that was being raided.

They got an idea that they would take photographs of these places. We'd gotten to the particular spot and we'd know how these houses were built and we'd get up in the attic and walk across where we thought we would be in the barroom and you'd jump up in the air and put your hands over your face and fall down into the room and be able to grab the bottles of liquor before they got rid of them. The bar and the place where they had the liquor would be below. It was plaster up there and it would support a person so you would walk on the ceiling joists and just come down through the plaster but you wouldn't know whether you would hit a chair or fall on top of somebody or whatever it would be. I would take pictures. I would come down sometimes and others would too.

JRH: With the camera?

Schmidt: Oh no. The camera was too big and heavy. Big 8 x 10 view camera. The camera was brought in after the initial raid. You had to be very selectful in the pictures you took because in those times we only had magnesium flashes and you couldn't take more than two or three pictures because of the flash smoke in the room would obliterate the scene. From then on we started taking pictures and in all these places they were having trouble with, they were able to abate. They didn't have to call any witnesses because Warren produced these pictures in court and what could the judges do but convict.

JRH: That's how you came into it?

Schmidt: Yes. And that's how I knew about Earl Warren and how he started from the standpoint of a gangbuster plus the fact that he made investigations and arrested the Sheriff of Alameda County.

JRH: Sheriff Becker is a name I'm supposed to ask you about.

Schmidt: Yes, Becker and a Captain of the Highway Patrol. They were sent to San Quentin and were convicted on the basis of a paving scandal. I forget the name of the Captain of the Highway Patrol. The scandal had to do with the buying of rights of way and getting too much money for the paving of some of the streets in Alameda County, as I recall.



Schmidt: There were situations where I happened to be in Oakland and sometimes I would go to the dance hall in Oakland and the Chief knew that I was going there. Through those people there I was able to affect more arrests on felony arrest warrants than any of the other fellows put together because I got to know the girls and they got to know me and they didn't know that I was a police officer.

I found out that they had some rather large stills in Oakland. This involved a number of Oakland police officers. Through Earl Warren they were "knocked over" and I did something there that I shouldn't have done and I didn't find out that I had done wrong until I got into a chemistry class about 15 years later when I retired and went to San Jose State. With all the alcohol fumes I thought that when I set off the flash that it would ignite the alcohol fumes but I found out later that alcohol will not ignite that way and we broke out all the windows out of the house without the need to.

These alcohol raids in connection with Earl Warren didn't last just one or two days; it went on for months. When we would go into a house that was a two-story house, there would be nothing but five gallon cans of alcohol and you would arrest the man that was there and it would take the rest of the night to break the alcohol out of the cans. You'd have to hit it at least six times on all sides and on the top and bottom. I remember one particular night when Oscar Jansen and Helms thought we were going to be in a lot of trouble because there was so much alcohol that was in one house and it came out in the back yard and flowed out the driveway into the gutter and started flowing down the gutter and about three blocks away a person threw a match in it and it started coming up the street and putting water and alcohol together and it takes an awful lot of water to saturate the alcohol to the point where it won't catch on fire. It got right out to the front of the house and into the driveway before we were able to get it out. These raids took a period of a year or so with the result of the notoriety and what Warren stood for -- that he was a champion of the cause of good citizenship and law and order.

JRH: I'd like to hear how you got detailed into this raiding group.

Schmidt: I was in photography and other places where they had a photographer they would have to tell him ahead and they were scared to tell anybody else because they didn't know who they could trust. Most of the people they could trust were at the Berkeley Police Department. Vollmer and Warren were close friends. There was a period of time when all the new Deputies came to Berkeley as Deputy District Attorneys because of the fact that the Berkeley Police Department had so much training that it helped those people learn the ropes from the standpoint of dealing with honest policemen. Now I'm not saying that other police departments were dishonest, but the reputation was that anybody who was working for Vollmer could be counted on where in some other instances they might not know for sure.



Schmidt: That was the beginning of the Warren and Vollmer combination and my first contact with the raiding group. He knows me and one time I gave his name as a reference. This was the time when I got a job with the government and I was in charge of policing the Japanese camps after the evacuation and I was in a riot in Tule Lake when a personnel investigator came up and said you're in trouble. I asked him what was the matter and he said I have the name of Earl Warren as a reference in your 57 Form and we went down to see him and he says he doesn't know you. I said well maybe he's like everybody else -- no one knows my name as Willard, they all knew me by my nickname "Huck" and maybe he only knows me by "Huck." So he saw me about four months later and he said he went to see the Governor again and when he said "Huck Schmidt" the Governor said, "Of course, I didn't know him by Willard."

Earl Warren had a wonderful memory for names and faces. He had the ability to remember faces and connect them and was like an old Bertillon man. There for a long time when they wanted someone on the basis of a circular or photograph that they would use the Bertillon man of the department to go out and try to search for the man because they were concerned with earmarks and various measurements of the faces so that they were able to remember the things by attaching them to the individuals. Warren had a keen ability to remember names.

JRH: I guess I misunderstood you over the phone when I talked to you. I thought you said you did something with cryptography or something like that. Did you mean photography?

Schmidt: No, cryptography was Captain Lee. That was analyzing secret writing on the basis of frequency of items that you're able to decode and that sort of thing. I've done a little bit. Captain Lee was more interested in it and so was Vollmer. We would discuss these things even at a picnic as to whether it was a lot of hullabaloo or whether it was something you could feel sure that you could say a person did commit a crime on the basis of this cryptoanalysis. At that time we all agreed that we wouldn't want to put ourselves in that position.

JRH: Do you know of any other ways in which Vollmer and Warren worked together?

Schmidt: Oh yes. Vollmer would know what Warren was doing because Warren was using Vollmer's men.

JRH: On these raids and in other things?

Schmidt: That's right. When they needed more than four people. For example, with the Olema Club, I'd say there were close to 40 police officers there one night. We arrested about 200 people in an evening. Those people were even brought from the Olema Club in Emeryville up in our Patrol Wagon, what we called the "Pike Wagon" or the Black Maria and they'd put so many in there at one time the



- Schmidt: front wheels came off the ground and it couldn't be driven. They'd have to take people and put them up in front or take them off the rear because there was so much overhang in back of the rear wheels that excessive weight raised the front.
- JRH: How come they could put them in the Berkeley jail if it happened in Emeryville? Wasn't there a question of jurisdiction?
- Schmidt: Well, this could have been a technicality and I didn't know anything about it. I do know we had the prostitutes from down there. There was some technical way Mr. Warren knew that this could be taken care of. Maybe their judges weren't available at that particular time. It might have been that it was the Volstead Act and it wasn't an ordinance. It had to be legal otherwise Warren wouldn't have done it.
- JRH: Did his staff get larger?
- Schmidt: I never knew of his staff getting any larger than the ones I knew. Piper was in charge of homicides and when he left they had to get several people in to replace him. How large it got I don't know. Harry Piper was a homicide investigator and incidentally he got with Earl Warren through Vollmer because Piper was injured in World War I and it was on the basis of rehabilitation that he came to work as a fingerprint person in the Berkeley Police Department and he was very small and could never have passed the physical height requirement in any police department. He was a real bang-up police investigator. A human dynamo. He had an oriental look and dark hair; he wasn't an oriental but he could have done some very good undercover work too. I don't know if he ever did. You see, Emeryville was a manufacturing town and it wasn't very much residential with the result that this could never have happened in a town like Berkeley because it had different people.
- JRH: Do you remember Chester Flint? I gather he was on the police force when you were. Is that right?
- Schmidt: He was in the Alameda County District Attorney's Office.
- JRH: Do you still know him or do you remember what he was like then?
- Schmidt: Sure. I remember what he was like then and he's still the same and his son is just about like him. He was a hard working law enforcement man and he's a lot older than I am and working with that type of person too, when I was 17 and 18 years old, his service ideals kind of rubbed off on me. They were (Warren's men) always perfect gentlemen and never abused anybody. You knew where you stood with them. I remember when we opened the Olema Club which was a place where you could take all the money to hold as evidence. With all of us trying to get in they were able to take some of the money from the gambling tables, of which there were 15 to 25, and they'd put the money in a safe, with the result that Oscar Jansen told the head man who was there to open the safe. He said





Schmidt: no, the boss had the combination and I don't know it. So I asked Oscar if he wanted the safe opened and he said yes and I said "Well, I can do it for you," and he said, "Go ahead." I went to the machine shop and got a sledge hammer and a drift pin and knocked off the combination and drifted the pin inside of it and opened the safe and showed the money. If you had lectures given to you by experts right in your own department you could remember those things. Vollmer would ask somebody to give a lecture and we'd all be there -- 40 to 50 of us.

JRH: Did you mention Lloyd Jester as being one of the men who was an investigator?

Schmidt: Jester; the Jester I knew was the Chief of Police in Albany. But Lester was the fellow who was with the California Adult Authority. He at one time was a Deputy Chief in Los Angeles.

JRH: This is a name they gave me to ask you about so it should have to do with Earl Warren. Lloyd Jester they say.

Schmidt: Now that you mention it, there's a possibility that Jester might have worked as an investigator like Heningson and George Hard and Flint. From there he became Police Chief of Albany.

JRH: But you don't know for sure about that?

Schmidt: No. But as you mention it, I think he was one of the investigators in the District Attorney's Office and eventually went to Albany after Chief John Glavinovich retired.

JRH: I interviewed his daughter.

Schmidt: She knows an awful lot about Chief Vollmer. They worked together and I think both of them had a philosophy of fairness. In the Department as a police officer, I, as well as others, could put on reports "no publicity" and the newspaper people at that time would respect that. They would come to you and ask you why you wanted this and if they didn't think you had a good reason they'd go to Vollmer and he'd say, "Well, we can't do it." They had respect for each other and that was instilled by Vollmer and we worked together and if there was something we didn't agree upon on the basis of publicity, they'd tell us about it but they respected our judgment. This had a great deal to do with the success of the Berkeley Department because we had the Post Inquirer, the Examiner, who was Payne, and Soto was with the Post Inquirer and Rose Glavinovich was with the Tribune and I knew all of them and they knew me.

I remember I had to kill a man one time and Rose talked to me about it the next day and said, "Now Huck, don't start puffing up over it. You had to do it but...." and she meant it too. I wasn't puffing up over it because it was an awful feeling. We used to say



Schmidt: that Vollmer had high I.Q.'s for his men. You had to have a high I.Q. to get on the job but you had to be dumb enough to see that you got scared two days after something happened.

We used to check all of our alleys, all of our lights. And whether by inference or by talk we thought it was a disgrace to have a fire on our beat at nighttime that we didn't discover first and that someone else had called in. That's the feeling we had for our town's people that they had to be protected and it wasn't some dime novel attitude we had. It was a sincere attitude.

JRH: One thing I'm supposed to ask you is who did what part of these investigations?

Schmidt: If you mean the Warren investigation -- they had their own undercover people. There would be times that we would make arrests in Berkeley, but on the basis of the attitude of the people at the time of their arrest, particularly if they were drunk. We would know almost for sure the outlet for that alcohol. If it was from a certain named person's place, we could anticipate fights -- a fighting personality; if it came from another source it would be a person who would pack up and depart. This was given back and forth so we would know if there was an outlet. They made most of their own investigations and we'd say that we had picked up another person from "Prop" (he used to be one of the persons who was a bootlegger at that time).

JRH: They were clubs or just stills?

Schmidt: They were stills and outlets mostly in Emeryville. Some places had girls with the liquor; some places would have poolrooms with the liquor; some had dancing and liquor available; some places wouldn't let anybody in except men and there weren't just one or two, there were many.

JRH: So you could sort of guess where the person came from?

Schmidt: Yes, because for instance, there was one place where they used to spike beer with ether and put heating wands in it. Much like you get a cup of coffee now and you have a little electrical thing you put in the cup to heat it. Well, these were big ones they put in great big containers of beer. Then they had places in Emeryville that we called "Speakeasies" where you had to know the name of an individual before you could get in and they had near beer and these college kids were going down there thinking that they were getting real beer when in fact it was just near beer and the psychological conditioning aspects produced some funny antics with these people since they thought they were drunk. The investigations were made by people like Oscar Jansen and when they needed more people with which to help with the raid on a place, then they'd call on us (the Berkeley Police Department) or all they would ask for would be



Schmidt: me as the photographer to take the pictures because this was all that they needed to prove the case.

JRH: Vollmer was big on scientific techniques I guess. Did they use any other photography techniques?

Schmidt: Not that I know of, other than investigational photography.

JRH: A number of people have mentioned that Vollmer wasn't too much in favor of Prohibition but he went along with it because it was the law, but he wasn't sure it was a good law. Do you know anything about that?

Schmidt: I never heard him express this one way or another. I did not know Vollmer well enough at that particular time to be in his house to know whether liquor was being served or whether he had any himself. I would think that he would try to uphold the law as well as he could because it was a question of this is the statute and it's my job to enforce it. But he wasn't put on the spot so much here in Berkeley because the people here were busy working in San Francisco or Oakland or going to college and if they did anything concerning liquor, in most instances they did it away from home. Like the difference between an adolescent and an adult -- I would say that an adolescent will do something within the home environment but when he's an adult he doesn't do it at home, he does it someplace else.

JRH: There weren't any speakeasies in Berkeley?

Schmidt: I don't think there were any here because if there were they were knocked over. If you go over the record of prostitution it would show you wouldn't arrest a prostitute in Berkeley but once every three or four years. Thirty drunks a month and that was when we had the highest drunk rate because they were all being reported. Speakeasies -- for heaven's sake -- Vollmer had a system where each police officer would be in charge of his beat and you were considered the chief of your beat. If you had a case, you had the responsibility for that case and if somebody else came in and started to work on it (detectives) you could say "knock it off." Vollmer would put the responsibility on you with the result that if you had a man who moved into business, it was up to you in a few days to find out who he was and where the business was. You would find out if he left money on the premises. You wouldn't necessarily have to ask him specifically about these questions, but on the other hand, during your patrol duties you had to find out about what time they locked up. There were many times that you would be able to go to them and say now listen, you're hiding your money about 12 feet from the cash register. They'd say how did you know that and it's a simple thing for a person that had the Berkeley training that when the girl is getting ready to close up there's a certain cadence, a certain number of steps, and she gets the money bag and disappears in the back. You can use the first one as a radii and this is simple.



Schmidt: Your criminal element figure this out as well as we did but the only thing they didn't know about is using alley cats. An alley cat is a lot better than a dog. When the cat comes out of an alley they always stop at the sidewalk where this alley opens and he'll look both ways and the person that is closest to him, whether it's two or three blocks away, he'll go in the opposite direction across the street. The enterprising officer gets on top of a building at various intervals and looks around and watches these alley cats. Another thing, if your alley cats are not in the alley when you go in to scare them out, then there was somebody else there ahead of you to scare them out. Now if you thought that there was somebody in there and you had a chance to get another officer to help you, you did just that.

Vollmer never allowed anybody to be a hero. He had a theory that if a person is in there he sees two or more officers, he wants to give up and we don't have to shoot a criminal. Where if there's just one person, he takes a chance in getting away. That's the reason we would march a person down the middle of the street. People would say you're crazy. Why don't you walk them down the sidewalk? He may see some brush, bushes or something else of like nature and think he can escape and I'd have to shoot and I don't want to. Walking them down the middle of the street doesn't put them in the position of taking a chance in escaping. This would be the type of police work that was a part of the Berkeley Department.

JRH: You've given me a really good impression of most of it. I don't like to make too many comments because I'm not taping my opinion.

Schmidt: I don't know exactly what you want.

JRH: This is fine.

Schmidt: Now they'd say, was Vollmer responsible for this type of police work and I don't know the answer to that. At least people who didn't feel this way weren't working for the Berkeley Police Department.

JRH: I think I've asked you most of what's on here. There are two more questions here. Do you know anything about the prosecution aspect -- which courts they prosecuted these raids or anything like that. Say like on this Chinese gambling -- did you bring them into the Berkeley jail and were they prosecuted in Berkeley?

Schmidt: Yes. For most of those people the fine was paid by the establishment. In other words, they posted bail to be forfeited and never showed up for trial.

JRH: How many people did you arrest?





Schmidt: One particular night there must have been at least 200. (By a raiding party of some 30 or 40 men.)

JRH: In the Chinese place?

Schmidt: Yes. It was almost a square block. It had a Chinese orchestra, a stage where they would have plays, the typical Chinese altar where they had stuffed bears and exotic figures and it was beautiful. The District Attorney's Office didn't bring too many of the prostitutes into the Berkeley courts. The District Attorney was most concerned with the alcohol. There were instances where various people were killed in Oakland and dumped in Emeryville. Prostitution was prevalent all over: San Francisco, Oakland, but not in Alameda or Piedmont. But there again, Piedmont was about the same as Berkeley with the same type of people we had here. Alameda was a comparatively clean town.

JRH: How did they get clues on these places?

Schmidt: If you see a certain type of person in a certain locality it is an indication that there's something doing there. For instance, as I was on the outside working it ends up in a police system of thinking as a patrolman. I was making a number of arrests on juveniles. Vollmer called me in like he would any officer and said, "Huck, what are you doing on these cases? How do you find out about persons responsible for these cases?" I just said, "Well, this particular case you're talking about I used the 'den instinct.'" He said, "What do you mean?" I said "Well, if you have some young wolves, coyotes, dogs or kittens and they're away from their nest or den and you scare them they return to their den. Now if you come home and find that your house has been entered by a young child and you scared him, he'd run home (his den) and all you'd have to do after you had three or four of those cases is, they ran this way and that way and you could put an arrow on the routes and triangulate them and that's where it is." Then you go over there to the records division and check on the kids who are living in the area. You go over there and check out the kids that are eating a lot of candy or other objects related to the cases.

With this bootlegging business, sometimes the wives would call in and talk about their husbands getting the stuff. In nearly every instance when you find a transgressor that the family has been a victim of him as well. At least it was in Berkeley at that time. In Berkeley those of us who were in police work at that time -- to show what type of people we had -- we'd have clothes that were outgrown by members of our families and you'd go behind a store and you'd find a kid there some night and you'd think you had a burglar. You'd ask him what he was doing back there and he'd say he was getting stuff for his rabbit and you looked into his sack and you know rabbits don't eat tomatoes and oranges and that sort of food and you realized the kid was getting food to eat because



Schmidt: he and his family were hungry. So you had contacts with the schoolteachers and you found out the number of people in the kid's family, their ages and that sort of thing. Everybody did it in the Berkeley Department and I don't know whether they still do or not but you'd get a box of stuff, i.e. food and clothing, and you wouldn't go up and knock on the door and say here it is. You'd put it on the front porch and leave it. And then there was the Mobilized Women in this town. That's a place in West Berkeley where I could just give them a note and they would outfit a man or child from top to bottom: shoes, shave, bath, etc. Nothing else was ever said about it. So when you have this type of people to work with you have a good department and good community relations. You have to be a creature of self-denial because a fireman can say I saved that person's house from burning down but a policeman can't say I saved that guy's son from going to San Quentin. Otherwise you would have undone the good you did.

There's another thing in Berkeley that Vollmer had and that was what we called a "Night Lodger" -- any person could come in and ask for a night's lodging. He'd be given two clean blankets and a place to sleep and a shower if he wanted it and shave and a good ham and egg breakfast in the morning and we'd turn him loose. It made no difference whether he was a prior burglar or robber or whatever. He was fingerprinted, but the criminal element had a respect for Vollmer and his men. The Chief was a humanitarian.



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Muriel Hunter

AUGUST VOLLMER'S SECRETARY TALKS ABOUT HER BOSS

An interview conducted by

Jane Howard Robinson



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Muriel Hunter, born in 1908, served as August Vollmer's secretary during his early years at the University of California (1932-1936). She later married Thomas Hunter, one of Vollmer's students, and she and her husband remained close friends of Vollmer's for many years. She brings the perspective of a non-police work associate and personal friend to this series of interviews on August Vollmer.

Interviewer: Jane Howard

Time and  
Setting of

the Interview: One interview was conducted with Mrs. Hunter on September 14, 1971, in her Berkeley home. The interview began at around 7:30 p.m. and concluded at about 8:00 p.m.

Editing: The transcript was edited for grammatical and paragraphing errors by Jane Howard. Mrs. Hunter edited the transcript, changing a couple of sentences where the tape had not caught her meaning and correcting several small errors. The changes were minor.

Narrative

Account of

Muriel Hunter and the Progress of the Interview: Muriel Hunter was born in Berkeley, California, in 1908. She received three degrees from the University of California: a B.A. in languages in 1930, a certificate in Medical Social Work in 1936, and a Master's in Social Work in 1957.

Mrs. Hunter worked as Mr. Vollmer's Secretary from 1932 to 1936. She married Thomas Hunter, one of Vollmer's students, and remained friendly with Vollmer over the years. Mrs. Hunter went to work as a medical social worker, and continues to work in this field.

The interview opens with Mrs. Hunter's recollections of her work with Mr. Vollmer. She describes Vollmer as an extremely interesting, kind and attractive man. She discusses his informality in social settings, which she felt contrasted with his working manner. Mrs. Hunter feels Vollmer's interest in juvenile delinquency was her first stimulus toward a social work career.

The interview touches on Vollmer's work with the Alameda County Coordinating Council, establishment of the School of





Muriel Hunter (contd.)

Criminology and Vollmer's survey activities.

In response to a question, Mrs. Hunter recalls that Vollmer always remained controlled even when angered. She tries to verbalise the nature of Vollmer's influence on his close associates and finds it hard to do so. She feels Vollmer was an inspiring and "very solid" individual.

Mrs. Hunter concludes with comments on Vollmer's second wife, saying she was very pleasant, although uncomfortable in social situations, as she herself admitted.

Jane Howard



JRH: You worked with Vollmer from '31 to '35?

HUNTER: '32, I think it was, to '36.

JRH: You, at the time, were in the university yourself?

HUNTER: Part of the time. Not when I started. I'd already graduated and largely through the chief I got interested in going on into social work.

JRH: You'd been at the university in another field?

HUNTER: Yes, I majored in languages. In fact, that's how I got started; he wanted some translating done. I started with that and then I walked into his office when I heard that he was going up to the university, and asked if he could use a secretary.

JRH: You were doing the translating while he was down in the police department still?

HUNTER: Yes. And he said, "Well, perhaps so. I don't have anything to say about this; you'll have to make application through the present administration." Which I did. So I worked as his secretary. As I say, about '34 I went back to graduate school.

JRH: So you worked full time.

HUNTER: For the first two or three years.

JRH: I guess it's most interesting to us, from your point of view, well, first of all, what kind of man was he to work for?

HUNTER: Wonderful. Kind, patient, understanding, interesting.

JRH: You did mostly typing? Did you do any kind of research for him or anything?

HUNTER: I worked over some of the manuscripts, some of his student's papers; they were people he had worked with before that were preparing for him, he was trying to develop a police science series.



JRH: Book series, you mean?

HUNTER: Yes. So I worked on the manuscripts for him. A good deal of my time was spent with students at the university.

JRH: Was that after they had actually started up at the School of Criminology?

HUNTER: No, he was still in the Bureau of Public Administration, so they would be taking courses for a variety of things. I can't remember what year it was, but a group major was developed. My husband was the first graduate. It was a matter of choosing different subjects from different schools and different majors. They have had group majors since then, but that was one of the first.

JRH: Do you remember any anecdotes, what was characteristic about him or what things stood out most about him to you?

HUNTER: That's hard to say. As I say, he was a very interesting man, a thinker; he worked things out. His ideas were stimulating, and he had this wonderful personality.

JRH: In what way? How would you describe it in terms of?

HUNTER: Well, just a kindly, honest, fair, real gentleman with a twinkle in his eye. Very good looking man.

JRH: I get that impression, but people never -- I've interviewed only men, and I guess they don't notice things like that.

HUNTER: Well he was over six feet, fascinating and very erect. Rather gray. Very handsome.

JRH: Dean Wilson said he tended to dress nicely too.

HUNTER: Well, he did.

JRH: Did he dress formally or sports clothes or suits mostly?

HUNTER: He wore suits mostly and had this sense of how he looked, something that we don't have today.

JRH: Some people say that he tended to get a little more austere or a little hard to approach as he got older, that people would feel a little frightened of him because he was a very, very solemn, a very serious man. Did you find that or something?



- HUNTER: I don't think the people who really worked with him fairly regularly would say so. I think that they, the young people that were interested in him, put him on a pedestal, and perhaps they would feel that way about him, they admired him so much. He was certainly admirable, but he was a very approachable person, although he tended to be a little stiff in some ways, a little formal if he didn't know people. You've heard of the V-Men, haven't you?
- JRH: Yes, a little, from your husband mostly, but...
- HUNTER: I can't remember who all was in that, but we used to have very good times together, quite apart from the work; we'd go to picnics and parties. It seems he wasn't stiff, formal, then.
- JRH: What kind of things happened; do you remember stories, things you'd do on those picnics?
- HUNTER: I can't remember any particular story.
- JRH: Your husband did have a couple of pictures of him sitting cross-legged at these picnics. Like in a yoga position.
- HUNTER: He had a very good sense of humor and he was stiff at times and other times he wasn't. When he was lecturing he tended to lecture in a rather formal fashion except when he was telling a story.
- JRH: You later -- you've gone into social work now -- is that something you saw at the time? People say he was really interested in social work.
- HUNTER: Yes, he was. It was I think his views on juvenile delinquency that got me interested in it in the first place. I went to social work with that idea in mind. I took everything they had to offer, of which, most developed, of course, was medical social work. Then I got fascinated in medicine and I've been in medical work every since. So I kind of dropped my previous interest, what started me off. A different subject. He had been very interested in the possibilities of health problems and things of that kind, when a child went wrong. He did quite a job; I don't know whether he was the initiator, but he was extremely active in the early coordinating council here in Berkeley. He was always fascinated with why these kids go wrong. His ideal, as you may have heard from some others, was service. He used to have a little thing on his desk; I don't know where it originated exactly, a figure with wide spread arms. I don't know where it originated. It may have been a Grecian statue; it exemplified service.





- JRH: In keeping his office did he tend to be orderly or disorderly or what kind of hours did he work when you worked for him at the University?
- HUNTER: Fairly regular hours. By and large he was fairly orderly, although he always had his papers spread around.
- JRH: Do you remember anything about, you mentioned a coordinating council, what other community activities was he involved in?
- HUNTER: That was before he started at the University -- years before. I don't really know. As I recall when he was at the University, I can't remember him doing anything when he was at the University except maybe once in a while. He'd go out of town for awhile. I think, as I recall, he was asked to do consultations in different cities. I don't know what the occasions were, but I know he was called out of town a lot.
- JRH: It took about twenty years after when you were working for him to finally get the criminology curriculum started as a regular independent department.
- HUNTER: I can't say, I don't remember when it became a department.
- JRH: What I was thinking about was -- Was he very active in working to get a independent department started when you were working or was he just -- it must have been quite a process finally establishing a School of Criminology.
- HUNTER: He had tried to get several other courses besides his own started; and I can't remember now just how far along he did get, and what snags it ran into.
- JRH: Do you remember, one thing I haven't got too much from anyone else, is who his enemies were. It seems a man who was involved in making changes must have run into some opposition. People have mentioned that when his ideas were presented as Chief of the Police Association people would often think his ideas wouldn't work at first and then later would become converts. Did you know any people? We want to collect a rounded picture of the man and most of what we've heard are good things about him. Do you know any people he ran in with at school or....?
- HUNTER: Oh, I'm sure there were people who disagreed with him. I've seen him angry, but he never lost his temper.
- JRH: What would he do when he got angry? He didn't yell or anything?



HUNTER: Oh no! he was very calm. He could be made angry on occasion and then he'd just sort of, he just didn't do anything or say anything. He thought things out. He was very rational about things. No, I don't know of any specific incident or disagreement. I don't remember anybody that disagreed with him violently.

JRH: What would people who disagreed with his ideas say about his ideas or him?

HUNTER: Well, they just disagreed with him. They agreed to disagree.

JRH: But he didn't tend to lock horns with people?

HUNTER: He was a very well balanced man.

JRH: It sounds like that. We mentioned on our questionnaire, you didn't think of any particular stories or events that happened that you would say were typical?

HUNTER: Unfortunately, I can't. I'm sure there are, but I can't remember anything. It's awfully hard to explain. I think those who were closest to him and knew him best have an awfully hard time putting it into words, the influence he had on us.

JRH: I guess he had a very curious manner that made it tough to put into words.

HUNTER: He was really quite inspiring in many ways. He was very sound, a very solid person and yet he was very (Mrs. Hunter reflected, found it hard to specify)... I didn't put him on a pedestal, but I certainly thought he was a remarkable person.

JRH: Could you say he influenced you? Well, you said he influenced you to go on to graduate school.

HUNTER: Yes, he did. He didn't ever suggest it to me. It was just that the areas of interest he opened up for me compelled me to do this.

JRH: What kind of influence, I'm just kind of skipping from thing to thing to get some of the things other people haven't said -- how would you describe his wife, what sort of person was she and what sort of influence she had?

HUNTER: On him?

JRH: Yes.



HUNTER: She was a very nice person, quite inhibited in many ways and knew it. She wanted to be more out-going than she was. She took good care of him -- a very pleasant person, but a little reserved.

JRH: Quieter than him in a way then?

HUNTER: Oh yes, she was always uncomfortable in social situations and he was a social bear! She would do them nicely, but as she said she was too much of an introvert, and she was.

JRH: In a social situation, what kind of person was Vollmer?

HUNTER: Oh, affable, gracious.

JRH: Would he be a leader or... Some people at a party or in a social situation kind of start things off. Or was he more reserved than that?

HUNTER: Well, in the party situations I saw him in he was with the students, there wasn't any need to start things. Just because he was there was enough for them! I don't know what he'd be like in other kinds of situations.

That's just about all I can think of. I don't feel that I do justice to him, but I just really am at a loss.



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Alfred Parker

VOLLMER'S BIOGRAPHER DISCUSSES HIS SUBJECT

An interview conducted by

Jane Howard Robinson



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Alfred Parker was interviewed by Jane Howard as part of the August Vollmer series. Mr. Parker is a retired Berkeley, California school teacher who has authored two books on the Berkeley Police Department and one on August Vollmer. He brings to the interview a wealth of personal and research knowledge of Vollmer and his police department.

Interviewer: Jane Howard

Time and Setting of  
the Interview:

A single interview was conducted with Mr. Parker on September 18, 1971, in his brown shingle Berkeley Hills home. The interview began at approximately 9:30 a.m. and concluded at 10:30 a.m.

Editing:

Editing of the transcripts was done by Jane Howard. Some corrections in punctuation and spelling were made and some blanks left by the typists were filled. Paragraphing was done. Mr. Parker edited quite extensively to improve the grammar of the narrative.

Narrative Account  
of Mr. Parker and  
the Progress of  
the Interview:

Mr. Parker received his M.A. from the University of California in 1932 where he wrote his thesis under August Vollmer, on policing state and federal recreation areas. He then taught physical education in the Berkeley school system for 20 years, followed by 19 years of service as a junior high school counselor.

Mr. Parker has authored materials in both the education and police fields. In policing, he is author of Crime Fighter: August Vollmer and co-author with Mr. Vollmer of two books: Crime and the State Police and Crime, Crooks and Cops. Mr. Parker has just completed The Berkeley Police Story.

Mr. Parker recalls his earliest association with Mr. Vollmer: joint preparation of an article on lie detectors. He then explains that he decided to return to the University in 1931 for his M.A. where he worked with Vollmer on Crime and the State Police and on his master's degree.

Parker continues by discussing Vollmer's outstanding intellectual and personal qualities. He also mentions that Vollmer was a physically impressive man.



Alfred Parker (contd.)

Mr. Parker turns his attention to memories of a trip to Parker's Catalina Island home. The interview continues with discussion of Vollmer's life history, principles and professional influence.

Mr. Parker recalls the physical appearance of Vollmer's study. He discusses Vollmer's liking for, and friendliness toward, neighborhood children. He offers his opinion, as a former physical education instructor, that Vollmer could have been a superior athlete if he had the opportunity for training. As it was, Parker states, his athletic abilities were outstanding.

Parker describes Vollmer's home briefly, and turns to a discussion of the police surveys done by Vollmer and his men. He emphasizes that one of Vollmer's major goals was removing police work from all political influence.

The tape continues with a description by Mr. Parker of Vollmer's role in the preparation of the Wickersham Report and in instituting reforms in California law enforcement. Mr. Parker touches on Vollmer's efforts against the gambling clubs in Emeryville. He closes with an explanation of how he wrote his book on Vollmer.

Jane Howard

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specimens will be ready to be sent to  
the Geological Survey of the United States.

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# An Educator's Labor of Love--Al Parker's Authoritative Book on the Berkeley Police

One of the few men left who has personally known all six of Berkeley's police chiefs has written a book called, simply, "The Berkeley Police Story."

The author is Alfred E. Parker, who not only knew all the city's top officers he coached or counseled at least one chief and countless prior and present officers during his 19 years with the Berkeley Public School System.

"No one is as well qualified as Alfred E. Parker to tell the Berkeley Police story," writes the late Orlando W. Wilson, who died this year after a long and distinguished career in criminology and education.

WILSON, who started his career as a Berkeley policeman, and present Police Chief Bruce R. Baker provide the foreword for Parker's book.

The story is both dramatic and informative, using an abundance of case histories, first-hand police observations and personal anecdotes and familiarity.

Three years in the nitty-gritty research and writing, the book traces the department's tradition and history from the day the famed August "Gus" Vollmer was elected Town Marshal here in 1905, to the spring riots of 1970.

It deals with crime and crime fighting, police procedures and equipment, and the Berkeley department's distinguished record in initiating scientific methods of detecting, detaining and document-

ing crimes and criminals. Threaded throughout is a growing town's love, respect and support for its peace-keeping agency.

IN THOSE days, and until the turbulent 60's hit Berkeley, the police department had the support and encouragement of city officials, the press, the university, and most important—the citizenry.

Parker's book deals only in a sketchy way with latter-day police problems involving public antagonism and very little support from politicians, city officials, the press and, again, most important—the citizenry.

The book concludes prior to the election, of the present city council, severe financial and manpower cutbacks in the department, and massive resignations of well-trained, veteran officers.

But it ends on a note of hope, both from Parker—a long-time Berkeley resident—and Chief Baker.

BAKER REFERS to Parker's book as "a capsule history of a police department which has become an institution. While it is currently being buffeted by the vagaries of radical political change, there is no doubt about its survival . . ."

"I believe," concludes Parker, "like Chief Barker, that the Berkeley police will continue to guard their proud tradition."

"It can and must happen." Parker, a native of Blue Springs, Neb., has written several books, many of them

in the crime field.

He co-authored two books with Chief Vollmer: "Crime and the State Police," University of California Press, 1935; and "Crime, Crooks and Cops," Funk and Wagnalls, 1937.

In 1961 his book on Vollmer, "Crime Fighter: August Vollmer" was published on by Macmillan Co.

IN ADDITION, he co-authored and edited "Reading Roundup," a reading-literature series that is still being used in schools throughout the United States. He also has written numerous articles and fiction stories for juvenile magazines.

Because of his staunch, almost military bearing Parker is often mistaken for a policeman.

But his field is education. He was a physical education instructor and basketball coach at Berkeley High School for 20 years and he

served 19 years as head counselor at the former Burbank (West Campus) Junior High School.

HE IS a 1922 graduate of the University of California here and earned his MA degree from UC in 1932.

It was while working on his master's degree in political science that he was a student in Vollmer's police administration course and ended up writing two books with the famous chief.

In his senior year at UC Parker wrote a sports column for the Berkeley Daily Gazette and worked with the city's recreation department supervising playground activities.

He married his wife, Ella, in 1923, and recently returned from a leisurely cruise of the Orient with his bride in pre-celebration of their Golden Wedding Anniversary.

ALTHOUGH they have no children, Parker has been a chief architect in molding

thousands of young men, including policemen, in their formative years.

He is a life member of Phi Delta Kappa, the national professional fraternity for men in education, and past president of the California Writer's Club and the Berkeley Breakfast Club.

His hobbies, and he continues to pursue vigorously all of them, include travel, golf, writing for teenagers and collecting books.

He is presently reviewing and researching his 40-year-old master's thesis: "Policing State and Federal Recreation Areas."

PARKER'S story of the Berkeley police is true, accurate, informative, and inspirational, as he hope it would be.

It does not pretend to be and is not a critique.

The book is available at Hink's Bookstore or by contacting Charles C. Thomas, publisher, in Springfield, Ill.

Berkeley Daily Gazette

6 December 1972



ALFRED E. PARKER WITH HIS LABOR OF LOVE . . . educator knew all six Berkeley police chiefs . . .



Parker: I first met August Vollmer in 1920 and we met each other several times after that and became good friends. Then in 1924, I thought of writing a magazine article about Vollmer. I went to his office and we spent two or three hours doing the interview. Later, I sold the article to a magazine in the east.

I remember, when the interview was over, Vollmer picked up eight or ten magazines and two or three books. I said, "What are you going to do with those?" "Well," he said, "that's my homework for tonight." He told me at that time that he never went to bed before twelve o'clock and sometimes later. He said he was always studying and had an armful of books or magazines that he took home.

JRH: What were you writing on?

Parker: The title of the article was "You Can't Fool the Lie Detector."

In 1931, I went back to the University to take courses for my M.A. degree. I signed for a course with Vollmer on Police Administration. My original major had been in the Political Science Department. So we worked in this course and started research to develop a book called "Crime and State Police" which was published by the University of California Press. Also, in addition to that I had to write a thesis and Vollmer suggested the title, "Policing Federal and State Recreation Areas." So, I started digging up information on that subject and it was accepted as my thesis. Interestingly, about two or three years later the University Library called me and wanted to know if they could make duplicate copies of this thesis, they had so many calls for it. So there are a number of copies at the University.

Vollmer was a great inspiration to me. Through the years we had many conferences together in his home and we became real friends and he was, in my opinion, a genius. I've heard of a lot of definitions of genius: 95% hard work and 5% inspiration, but I would say that he was 100% hard work and 100% inspiration. I'm sure that he would have been a success in any field. He lectured later at the Medical School at the University of California in San Francisco. He studied law and could have passed the Bar, but he didn't have time. He was too busy. He got all he wanted to know about law so that it would help him as Chief of Police. He was really a psychiatrist in a way because of his studies.

Another thing that impressed me about him was his terrific memory. We'd be talking in his study and he'd mention something and he said, "I know that there's a certain thing that I want to tell you about." He'd go pick up a book and turn to the page and show you what this author had said.



Parker: I remember that he left for the Philippines during the Spanish-American War. His mother gave him a Bible and along with a friend of his they sat on the deck of the ship (it took a long time to get to the Philippines in those days) and they read the Bible clear through. He'd quote passage after passage from that one reading. It was terrific, the memory that he had, which certainly was a great advantage.

His personality really impressed me, he was a big man, over six feet, broad-shouldered. His clothes -- he always wore a uniform when the members of the Department had inspection day, but otherwise he wore business suits, usually gray or blue, his necktie neatly up against the collar. He was a well groomed man.

JRH: Was he dark haired or fair haired?

Parker: I would say dark haired when he was a young man, then gray and he kept his hair quite well in later years. His personal characteristics that attracted people were: he was interested in people, friendly with them, and he wanted to help people, he had a nice smile. His voice was commanding, he made a great impression on people when he'd walk into a room, I noticed that. He really had the type of personality that attracted people and they liked him.

JRH: You mentioned that he wore business suits. Would most Chiefs of Police wear business suits or would they wear uniforms?

Parker: Well, I think he started the idea of wearing a business suit because he found out -- when he first started in he wore his uniform more, but as time went on he found out that he was a business executive and he had to run this department and he had to meet the public. There were so many instances where he didn't need to have on a uniform and it was a practice carried on in the Berkeley Department and I think in a lot of departments because it's the way that the job of Police Chief has developed all over the country.

Through the years we became friendly, both my wife and I, and also Vollmer's wife Pat. They were in our home many times for dinner and we were at their place many times. One of his favorite dishes was bouillabaisse and he used to wrap a towel around our necks when we were eating to protect our clothes.

JRH: Did he cook himself?

Parker: Yes, he was a pretty good cook.

I remember my wife's folks owned a home at Catalina Island. In fact, we still do. We invited the Vollmers down there and he was there for several days. One of my best friends at Catalina was Judge Ernest Windle and he was a great student of criminology and law. Being a judge, he needed that information. He was fascinated to have Vollmer for a visit. The Judge took the two of us in his car down the middle of the Island and he also took a rifle along and some bullets because there's wild



Parker: hogs on the Island and you're allowed to hunt. So we got down there and the judge said, "Well, Chief, would you like to see if we can find a wild hog and you can shoot it?" He said, "Oh no, it's much more interesting to talk about criminology." So he passed that one up, and the Judge remarked about that for years later. He felt that was really something because in his younger days and later too, I guess, Vollmer was an expert pistol shot. In fact, he started that in the Department, having the men practice on a pistol range. He had to shoot a pistol himself a few times when he was chasing a criminal.

JRH: He was never a patrolman at all, was he?

Parker: No, he wasn't.

In 1905, Friend W. Richardson, who owned the Berkeley Daily Gazette called him in; I think Vollmer was peddling mail then. Richardson wanted Vollmer to run for town Marshal. He at first laughed at the idea and his family thought that it was a crazy idea. Several other people along with Friend Richardson persuaded him to do it. He had made quite a record in the Spanish American War. He'd gone on one expedition all by himself with somebody running a boat up the river to locate some of the enemy that they wanted to ferret out. He had to hide under hay in the boat at times. Anyway, they located the enemy and they conquered them.

He had this record of bravery behind him; he was well liked in the town. He was a volunteer fireman and so Richardson finally persuaded him, and he said that he would run, but he knew he wouldn't be elected. Well, he was elected by a terrific margin and at the end of two years they wanted him to run again and he did.

By that time, he got really interested. I suppose that you would say that when he was a Town Marshal and in his first years as Chief of Police he was out with the men a lot on patrol, but he was never actually a patrolman.

Vollmer's principles, what he stood for, right from the start, even when he was Town Marshal, was practicing the Golden Rule. He was determined later that he would try to professionalize the police force and see that they got all the possible education they could so that they'd be able to meet all the situations.

His biggest influence, I would say, on policing in the United States, was all the different "firsts" that he started. For one thing, he installed the first red light, flashing signal in the United States; he installed centralized record systems, and he organized the first bicycle patrol, the first motorcycle patrol and the first motorized police force. He started a radio car, in an old Model T. Ford, so that they could have contact with their men in the cars. He started the first Police School in Berkeley, and all of this had its effect nationally, and of course, in 1922 he was President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.





Parker: His influence in Berkeley was great and he was sought for advice by all kinds of people, for problems other than police problems. He was one person who was not shunned by the local citizens and in 1931 he received the Wheeler Award. The Benjamin I. Wheeler Award is for being Berkeley's most noted citizen, nationally and internationally.

In Alameda County he was in the Officer's Association of the county.

He was sought for advice by other police chiefs in the county and he cooperated with them.

He was first called a "boy-Marshall"; then, they started sending reporters from magazines in the East, and the newspaper syndicates. When they found out that this fellow really had something, he got a national reputation; pretty soon there were police chiefs from all over the United States visiting him and from China and foreign countries. Every year they would come to visit his department and talk to him. So he became an influence in police work all over the world.

In the many conferences that we had in his study, in his home on Euclid Avenue, I was fascinated with the type of study that he had, the physical make-up of it. He had a nice fireplace at the end of the room, and he had a picture of the redwoods above the fireplace and around one wall he had all kinds of books, hundreds of books, everything you could think of! Then he had a big flat-top desk. There was a piano in there. He was musical. He played a guitar when he was young and there was one of his old friends, Erma Mazza, who came over and played the piano and he played the guitar. Off of this study, which was really in the basement, was another big room and he had shelf after shelf reaching to the ceiling. He had hundreds of police reports from all over the world, from every country that you could think of. When we were talking or doing research on our book, "Crime, Crooks and Cops" that we wrote together, he'd think of something and he'd go into this room and he'd pull out a pamphlet and say, "I think I saw that in such and such a report" -- and we'd have the information.

Another thing that interested me was his liking for children. I don't think I was ever at his study, particularly in the afternoon, when it was after school hours, there would be a tap, tap, tap on the outside door. He'd go to the door and there'd be three or four boys, eight or ten years old and he'd have a round dish and he'd greet them with a nice jovial voice and ask them how they were getting along. He'd pull off the cover of this dish and he'd give them some candy and then he would say "Now, I'm pretty busy today, you come back and we'll figure out some more puzzles for detective work."

Then one day, there was a tap, tap on the door and they said there's some boys up the street, some older boys who are throwing rocks and they're trying to fight with one of our pals. So we went out and the Chief got in my car and we drove about two blocks up the street. He talked to these boys and finally persuaded them that that was no way to do, picking on a little kid and that they were older. He was very much interested in boys and girls and I remember that after I'd



Parker: published a biography of Vollmer, after he died, it was published by MacMillan in 1961, I got letters from several men and women who had been boys and girls back in the days when Vollmer lived on Euclid. The letters told how much they thought of him, and they called him "Uncle Gus." He was an inspiration in their life.

He was also a great gardener, he did a lot of gardening around the house, he loved birds, he had several places where he fed the birds and he had bird baths there. Another thing that I remember about Vollmer is the fact that he really was a great athlete.

JRH: That's something. You're the only one who's talked about that.

Parker: He didn't have the opportunity at the time that he grew up to go to the university, he couldn't go to high school or anything like that, but he learned wrestling, he learned boxing, and he would win all kinds of foot races back in those days, and he learned how to swim. I can remember when we were down at Catalina, we went swimming, and he swam a beautiful Australian Crawl stroke, a powerful stroke. Powerful legs and powerful arms and he really could plow through the water. I'm sure that had he gone to a university he could have been a fine football player, basketball, baseball -- anything you'd wish, because he was a natural athlete. All of which I think didn't do him any harm in being a leader of men and they respected him for his physical ability.

JRH: I got the impression from other people that he didn't have much time to engage in sports or anything.

Parker: No, he really didn't because you see he lived in New Orleans and his father . . . Well, before his father died, Vollmer was a little kid about eight or ten, he came home and he was all beat up and he had a black-eye and a bloody nose.

JRH: Yes.

Parker: His father looked at him and he told him what had happened and so he said "Okay, we're going to fix this." So he took him down to a gym instructor and said, "I want you to teach him boxing and wrestling" and he told him "Now August, I don't want you when you've learned all this to go out and pick a fight with anybody. But when you get jumped on, you're going to defend yourself" and he certainly did from then on.

After Vollmer's father died, Mrs. Vollmer moved to San Francisco and August went two years to a business school and that was all of his formal education. Then they moved over to Berkeley and he got a job, I think in a fuel yard; fuel, coal and wood yard. When the Spanish-American War came along, he enlisted and when he came back he was a mailman for a while and so he didn't really have any opportunity to engage in sports as we know sports.

JRH: When you knew him, did he work out at all? Did he come down to your gym or do things like that?



Parker: No, he didn't do too much of that, although he did a lot of physical work around the yard. He kept himself in good trim though, did a lot of walking. I remember him telling me that in the early days when they were hunting a criminal, he would act as a detective. He said, he was awfully busy and he would eat a big breakfast; he would eat two or three or four pancakes, five or six eggs and milk and coffee and bacon. It just sounded like an enormous breakfast. But he had no lunch, he never ate a lunch as he was on the go a lot.

JRH: You described his study, I think. It made me curious about what the rest of his home was like. Could you give me an idea?

Parker: Well, they had a nice home. Modern furniture and Pat, his wife, was meticulous housekeeper and she kept the place clean. The study was down in the basement and the rooms were upstairs. It was a modern type home, well decorated, modern furniture. She was particular about it, keeping everything clean. She used to tell me that at the time that Gus was making so many of these surveys, which you probably already have noted, she got to the point where she never unpacked her suitcase because she didn't know when they were going some place and he liked to have her along and so she said she just kept one suitcase packed and all ready to go. Have you got anything about the surveys?

JRH: Yes, some that I have listed of where he went are Los Angeles, and San Diego.

Parker: It's an interesting thing to me, that as these different police chiefs came to talk to him, they realized, many of them, that there was something wrong with their departments and they wanted him to make recommendations and that's how the surveys really started. The first survey that he made was in San Diego and when he went there they didn't even know he was in town. He'd prowl around, get the picture of the place and then start studying the department. You have a list of the surveys?

JRH: Let me see, I think I do. It's published in your book. They'll be using them in conjunction with the other things, your books and things like that.

Parker: Well, these surveys that he made, it got to the point that there were so many places that wanted him that he couldn't go to all of these places, so he'd select one of his captains and ask him if he would go and make a survey and that's what happened and the result was that his influence was all over the world.

Now, one fact that has been misunderstood by some people. They thought that when he went to Los Angeles in 1923, he had left the Berkeley Police Department and gone to Los Angeles to become their permanent chief of police. That was not so. He became their chief of police, that was correct, but he agreed that he would go there only for one year and he did. He went there for one year, he studied the situation, he wrote a five or six hundred page report and a recommendation on what should be done in the Los Angeles Police Department. After he left the next chief of police, I can't remember his name, put the report on a shelf and it began to gather dust. They didn't do anything about it.



Parker: Then, a later chief of police came along and he pulled that report down and he put into practice practically everything that he recommended. Many an officer in the Berkeley Police Department has been proud of the fact that L.A. has one of the finest police departments in the world. They carried out everything that Vollmer had suggested and really made a great department out of it, but at first they just shoved the report aside, which is what happens sometimes.

JRH: I was going to ask you one of the things that you said when Gene Carte and I came originally, that Vollmer always fought politics. He had an awful lot of influence, I don't know whether or not you'd call it political, but he created a lot of change in the way policing was done. What do you mean?

Parker: Well, the thing that he was particularly opposed to was the fact that you can't select a police force or a chief of police, by political influence. He goes on to show in the many of his surveys or talks that many of the police chiefs around the country were selected because the man was a good barber or a good tailor or a good groceryman or a good something else; he was just a political follower and one who was up in politics and so he was made a chief of police. That was what he was opposed to and, of course, he was in favor of high training and experience for police chiefs and for all police. That's what Vollmer meant, you can't mix politics with police work. Another thing Vollmer would not permit was police taking bribes. His policemen were never permitted to take a present. Do you know anything about the report on police that he wrote?

JRH: No, I don't know anything about that.

Parker: Well, there was a national commission on law observance and enforcement established by Herbert Hoover and George W. Wickersham was the chairman. They went into many phases of the crime problems that were in 1931. The pamphlet is titled: Report On Police. Quite a bit of information in this pamphlet is evidence of the fact that Vollmer had a national influence as well as local. For instance, on page 44 he listed the chiefs of police of the city of Chicago and shows how many police chiefs they had from the beginning. Sometimes they wouldn't be in office more than two or three years and they'd appoint another one. They were all political appointments.

His influence in the state of California was great too. In 1915 he assisted in preparing a bill for creation of a psychiatric clinic in San Quentin and that bill was passed. He was also influential in the state police officers' association. Again, men from all over the state came to him for advise. He was thoroughly sold on police work and trying to elevate police into a real profession and, to me, his whole life was an example of the fact that if you really get wrapped up in something and you're thinking about it a lot you can't help but be successful.

JRH: I was going to ask you not so much about the state, but you mentioned before there had been problems with gambling before he was elected Town Marshal.





Parker: That's right, there were a lot of lotteries and crooks, and that's one of the reasons why they wanted a fellow like Vollmer who was a brave man to clean up these gambling dens.

JRH: Was this as early as 1910?

Parker: No, 1905. This was when he was first elected marshal.

JRH: I'd heard about in the 30's but not . . . .

Parker: No, this was 1905. This was one of his first jobs and gamblers tried to offer him big bribes. He wouldn't have anything to do with them and he went in personally himself, leading his men into these gambling places. In fact, they had to go from a roof through a window into the building on a plank on a cold foggy dark night to get into one gambling place, and they arrested everybody in the place. However, the gamblers had gotten rid of a lot of the evidence. That was one of the early facts that Vollmer learned. You've got to have evidence if you're going to really convict someone.

Vollmer had all kinds of friends, I think the reason that he did was genuine interest in people. He was a good listener and when he was asked for advice and he gave it, it was good sound advice. He was well liked.

JRH: One thing you mentioned before, when a number of people were in your gym classes they later went on into police work. Do you remember some of the people who did that?

Parker: When I started working on my latest book which is entitled "The Berkeley Police Story", in 1967, I went down into the police department. I had thought of the idea of writing a complete story of the Berkeley police from 1905 to the present time. So I went into see William Beall, the police chief, who was a former member of one of my gym classes at Berkeley High School. He was tickled to death. He said, "Al, this is exactly what we want and I'll cooperate with you in any way that I can to get the information". So he appointed Sgt. Merritt Thomas, my liaison officer and he introduced me to all the different captains and took me down to the basement and showed me the old files. They assigned me a desk and I went to work and I worked for three and a half years researching and writing this book. So I had a lot of cooperation. Captain Richard Young, who at the time that I started working on the book was the Captain of the Service Division, was a former member of my gym class at Berkeley High. I can't think of any others right now.

JRH: Those are all the questions I have, I guess you've gotten to the end of your outline.

Parker: Yes, I believe so.



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## APPENDIX A

### SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR AUGUST VOLLMER HISTORICAL PROJECT INTERVIEWS

1. What was your personal relation to Vollmer?  
How did you get to know him?  
In what capacities did you work with or see him?  
What impact did he have on your life, both your  
personal life and your professional development?
2. What kind of a man was Vollmer?  
How did he impress you -- what did he look like, sound like,  
etc.?  
How do you think he impressed others?  
What personal characteristics do you think he had that made  
him an influential man?
3. What anecdotes and stories do you recall from your own contacts or  
others' stories that give a particularly good idea of the kind of  
man Vollmer was?
4. How did Vollmer relate to the people he dealt with on a frequent  
and close basis?  
  
To friends?  
To employees?  
To professional colleagues?
5. In what ways was Vollmer influential in the community?  
  
In Berkeley?  
In Alameda County?
6. In what ways was Vollmer influential in and involved in events in  
the state?
7. What was Vollmer's professional impact?  
  
What were the major ideas and principles that  
Vollmer stood for?  
What were the major influences Vollmer had on policing,  
education, and training? On other areas?
8. Are there other people that had a significant relationship with  
Vollmer that you think would be available for an interview as  
part of this project?



## APPENDIX B

### SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR AUGUST VOLLMER HISTORICAL PROJECT INTERVIEWS

1. What was your personal relation to Vollmer?  
How did you get to know him?  
In what capacities did you work with or see him?  
What impact did he have on your life, both your  
personal life and your professional development?
2. What kind of a man was Vollmer?  
How did he impress you -- what did he look like, sound  
like, etc.?  
How do you think he impressed others?  
What personal characteristics do you think he had that  
made him an influential man?
3. What anecdotes and stories do you recall from your own contacts or  
others' stories that give a particularly good idea of the kind of  
man Vollmer was?
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What were the major ideas and principles that Vollmer  
stood for?  
What were the major influences Vollmer had on policing,  
education, and training? On other areas?
5. In what ways was Vollmer influential in and involved in events  
in the state?
6. In what ways was Vollmer influential in the community?  
In Berkeley?  
In Alameda County?
7. How did Vollmer relate to the people he dealt with on a frequent and  
close basis?
8. Are there other people that had a significant relationship with Vollmer  
that you think would be available for an interview as part of this  
project?



APPENDIX C

August Vollmer Historical Project Interview Participants

DATE	SUBJECT
1. I--June 29, 1971 II--June 30, 1971	John Holstrom
2. July 2, 1971	O.W. Wilson
3. July 6, 1971	Milton Cherman
4. July 8, 1971	General William Dean
5. July 15, 1971	Rose Glavinovich
6. July 23, 1971	Gene Woods
7. August 9, 1971	Al Coffey
8. August 9, 1971	George Brereton
9. August 9, 1971	Thomas Hunter
10. August 27, 1971	Willard Schmidt
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"Changes in Public Attitudes toward the Police: A Comparison of Surveys Dated 1938 and 1971" by Gene E. Carte



# AUGUST VOLLMER AND THE ORIGINS OF POLICE PROFESSIONALISM

## Abstract

Gene E. Carte, School of Criminology

This paper explores the roots of professionalism as a model for American municipal policing by focusing upon the career of August Vollmer, who served as police chief of Berkeley, California, from 1905 to 1932. By the 1920s Vollmer was established as the foremost American police spokesman, and was a strong advocate of the application of the professional model to policing.

Two perspectives are employed for the study: an intensive examination of the actual work and ideas of Vollmer, as evidenced in the Berkeley department and in his national role as an educator, police consultant, and writer; and an examination of the historical setting within which professionalism was developed. Materials used for the examination of Vollmer's career include oral interviews with his former colleagues and associates; personal papers and correspondence; and published sources. The analysis of the historical setting draws upon literature in sociology and policing dealing with American municipal government and criminal justice from the



last quarter of the nineteenth century through the 1930s.

The study contends that police professionalism arose in response to several definite historical trends: 1) the ambivalent pressures placed on policing by moral and civic reformers, corrupt municipal officials, and heterogeneous urban populations; 2) the closing of trade unionism as a method for the redress of police grievances following the suppression of the Boston Police Strike in 1919; 3) and the failure of civil service reform to meet the basic police problems of insecure tenure, political influence, and incompetence.

It is the further contention of the study that Vollmer's model of police professionalism contained within it serious contradictions. The most fundamental of these was the conflict between the detached stance of the professional and the continuing need for policing to adjust to social flux within the community. A correlative conflict was the incompatibility of the crime-fighting priority with the actual role of the policeman as a miscellaneous government functionary.

The professional model in application is studied through a detailed examination of Vollmer's work in Berkeley, where he introduced many technological and managerial innovations that established him as a progressive police leader. Among



these were the use of mobile patrol, recall systems, beat analysis, modus operandi, scientific detection methods, and centralized crime records. Personnel standards were upgraded through intelligence and psychological testing, formal training schools, and the recruitment of college-educated patrolmen. The Berkeley department became a training ground for policemen who joined other departments at the leadership level or entered careers as educators and writers on professional policing. The effect of Vollmer's personality and leadership skills upon the Berkeley department is explored.

Modifications of the Berkeley model are examined as Vollmer applied it during his term as police chief in Los Angeles (1923-24) and adapted it in his writings as a consultant to other urban police departments and as an advocate of centralization in nearly all aspects of policing.

The paper concludes that Vollmer constructed an effective and personal style of policing in Berkeley which was necessarily altered to meet the requirements of heterogeneous urban areas. The professional model contributed to the creation of an ideology that reinforced insularity and increased dependence upon technology and scientific management to solve police problems. Present public expectations do not





justify the continuance of a model that is founded upon detachment from social change and the preselection of priorities and police goals.

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

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