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Arkansas State Police Project

Interview with

Arvel "Buddy" Acoach
9 June 2004

Interviewer: Michael Lindsey

Michael Lindsey: Where were you born and raised?

Arvel Acoach: West Helena

ML: Did you go to high school there?

AA: Yes. I graduated from Central High School in West Helena.

ML: What was your motivation to join the state police?

AA: My motivation was my dad. He was the chief of police at West Helena for fourteen years. He started out after he came back from World War II as the night marshal. He drove the city's dump truck, carried a double-barrel shotgun, and shook doors. Six years after he was employed, he became the chief. It was two-man department at the time, and when he retired he had seventeen officers working for him. When I was growing up I was always intrigued by the troopers he would bring home with him for dinner. He was always doing programs for PTAs and schools, and he would call people in the state police to do safety programs. I

was always intrigued listening to their conversation. Captain Dwight Galloway was the troop commander at Forrest City, and I grew up knowing him and his sons and a lot of people in the law enforcement community. I just became intrigued by what the eastern Arkansas folks called the "big hat law." That was just what I always wanted to do. I grew up in that environment and knew that was what I wanted to do. My dad was always trying to talk me out of it, but he finally gave in and told me that if that was what I was going to do, then I should do it right.

ML: Can you tell me a little bit about the application process and how you got hired on?

AA: When I left West Helena in 1964, I went to Arkansas Tech [Russellville]. I was commissioned through ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] the day I graduated form Arkansas Tech, and went into active duty with the [U.S.] Army. My branch was the military police, and my last duty assignment when I left Vietnam was to be provost marshal at the Pine Bluff arsenal. This was during the early 1970s and when the SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] and the Weatherman [a radical left splinter group of SDS] and the Black Panthers [the Black Panther Party was an African American civil rights organization] were going to steal the bugs [biological warfare weapons] that we had at the Pine Bluff arsenal and put them in the water supply. They had made that threat very apparent. It was at the end of the Vietnam War, and they were protesting the government and a lot of things. As a result of that, I had to write a security plan for the arsenal pertaining to this specific threat of stealing the biological warfare center's stuff.

Through this process, I came into close contact with Captain Buck Halsell, who was the troop commander at Dumas, and Colonel Ralph Scott. We became close to each other because of this. When I got to the end of my obligation time after three years in the military, I asked Colonel Scott, "Who do I need to talk to about getting an application, because I am ready to go to work for the state police and leave the army." Major L. E. Gwynn was the personnel officer. That was what started me going to work. I went to Pine Bluff in June of 1970, and around September or October we got the threat [from the Black Panthers]. I guess it was in October or November when I talked with Major Gwynn and Colonel Scott, and it was March of 1971 when I went to work. In those days, that was pretty fast. Normally, the application process takes about a year to work, but because of my association with Colonel Scott, Major Gwynn, Captain Halsell, and Captain Galloway, my name was known prior to my putting in the application, and this helped speed up the process.

ML: Did they send you to a troop school immediately?

AA: Yes. I went to a troop school in May of 1971 for five or six weeks. I still have my three-ring binder of notes from that school. It is amazing how similar some of the things they taught back then [are] to what they teach today.

ML: Is there something that comes to mind about how it might be different today?

AA: We used manual typewriters to type our notes, and they may be using computers to type their notes now.

ML: Is the accident investigation and criminal investigation the same today as it was then?

AA: I am hesitant to answer that because I have talked to some people involved now, and they are using a totally different methodology to teach recruits. I think that has a great bearing on the fact that the people who come out of troop schools today without a background in law enforcement don't understand accident investigation, nor do they understand testifying in court. That is negative, and I hesitate to say that because it would offend some people, but the citizens of Arkansas are paying the price. They [troopers] should be getting the best training possible, and they aren't getting that. I have been a trainer all of my life, both in the military and the state police, and I know what it means to be properly trained. They have to be able to answer the basic questions of who, what, when, where, and why, and be able to articulate to a jury six or eight months later an event that took ten or fifteen seconds to accomplish. If they aren't able to answer those questions, then they can't do their job as a law enforcement officer for the state of Arkansas. I have talked with prosecuting attorneys and judges around the state, and they tell me they are amazed at the inability of troopers to testify in court. That is attributable directly back to the training school.

ML: What was your first posting after training school?

AA: Van Buren, Crawford County. There were three troopers working in Crawford County at the time: Ross Valentine, Chuck Webb, and me. I replaced Ed Blackard, whose wife had killed him in a domestic dispute. I inherited his car and equipment, and that carried a bit of a stigma, knowing that you were riding in a car from a trooper that was no longer alive. Damon Wilson was the troop commander and was known affectionately as "Slick." The adage about Captain Wil-

son was that there was the Arkansas State Police and there was Troop H. Captain Wilson ran Troop H. As a new trooper I learned a whole lot under his guidance about the importance of the Arkansas State Police, and from the values he instilled in the people that worked for him. I will give you a couple of examples. In troop school we were taught that we were primarily responsible for the highways and interstates in the state of Arkansas. When I came back from troop school, I thought I knew everything. I thought I knew what was going on. After dad retired, he and my mother ran a nursery in West Helena. Whenever she would come to west Arkansas she would drive the pickup and get a load of nursery products to sell back in West Helena. One day I was in a philosophical discussion with Captain Wilson about accident investigation. I told him that Crawford County had deputies out there that were policemen just like we were. It was aggravating me to no end that every time there was a wreck on a county road we had to go work the wreck for the sheriff's office. I asked him about this during the discussion. Captain Wilson answered my question this way—he talked out of the side of his mouth—"Acouch, if your mom comes over here to get a load of shrubs from Parks Nursery out there in the county, do you want Deputy So-and-So to work the wreck?" I said, "Of course not, Captain, he is a dumb ass." He said, "Well, let me ask you this, Acouch. If your mom comes over here and has a wreck on such and such a road, do you want Deputy So-and-So to come work that wreck?" This was another deputy—and by then the light bulb had come on. Do you want dumb asses working wrecks on your family? Our responsibility is to the citizens of Arkansas and we have to provide them with the best possible service.

Another example of Captain Wilson—he was a stickler for the uniform. The best way to work your day off—back then you didn't get suspended like you to today, where you go fishing for two days and don't draw pay. The way you got put in purgatory then was working your days off. If you did something you weren't supposed to do, then you would work your days off. We worked twelve-hour days back then. In Captain Wilson's troop, you'd better not be out of your car without your hat on. That was a cardinal sin. The other cardinal sin in Troop H—Troop H went all the way from the Missouri state line to Mena [Arkansas]; it was a big Troop—was wearing boots that didn't meet Captain Wilson's profile for what a trooper should be wearing. He had one-inch heels and you did not wear a cowboy style boot with a shanked heel. It had to be a one-inch heel. There was a shoe store in Van Buren that was going out of business and they had Acme boots for $20, which was a pretty good deal. Normally boots cost you $60. I went and bought a couple pairs of those boots and put them up for a rainy day. I got a good spit shine on a pair and went into headquarters one day to get gas. Captain Wilson said, "Acouch, pretty good fishing boots you've got there." They weren't shanked, but they had a two-inch heel. I said, "Captain, I see troopers down in Little Rock wearing them all the time." He said, "Well, if you want to go to Little Rock and wear them, I can probably make that happen" [laughs]. He probably could, too. I learned my lesson to not go to headquarters wearing boots like that for the Captain to see. His ideals were instilled in me early on that there was the Arkansas State Police, there was Troop H, and that his pet peeves were pretty good pet peeves. I learned a lot under his tutelage. He defended me with

the administration. I did my job and the political structure in Crawford County didn't always like what I did. It didn't make any difference to me. If you violated the law, you got a ticket, regardless of where you fit into the community. The sheriff didn't like that because he couldn't tell me to tear up a ticket. If the Captain told me to go to the courthouse and talk to the judge, then that was a different story. I was not on the sheriff's Christmas card list as a result of that. After I got my probationary year in—and that was a big deal—I overheard the captain talking to the director about me and the complaints the sheriff had called in to Little Rock and the governor's office about how I was just writing tickets. Consequently, I got transferred across the river to Sebastian County. I was also sent to Warrensburg, Missouri, to the Traffic Management Institute for three months. That gave me the opportunity to learn more about other agencies and how they did things. It gave me an opportunity to broaden my perspective of the state police and understand the inner workings of it. I came back to Sebastian County in 1975, and the guy that I went to Warrensburg with made sergeant. Then we had an administrative change. Ralph Scott left in 1971, and Bill Miller became director. After Bill Miller, the director was Doug Harp. Bill Miller had made Deloin Causey his administrative assistant, and he was the one I went to Warrensburg with. We went up there and shared a room for three months. Doug Harp was coming in and he asked Deloin Causey to setup an internal affairs division within the department to do background investigations and investigate major complaints against personnel. Deloin came to Fort Smith and asked me if I would be willing to transfer to internal affairs. I had already been accepted to go to the FBI [Feder-

al Bureau of Investigation] Academy at Quantico [Virginia] in 1975. While I was at the FBI Academy, my transfer from highway patrol to internal affairs came through. In fact, I wrote my student paper on the development of internal affairs and brought it back to my new assignment in Little Rock. I came back in October of 1975 and went to Little Rock. I moved my family down there and stayed in purgatory for two years.

ML: I have heard people say, especially if they had worked outside of Little Rock, that they didn't like to go there. Can you say why you didn't like Little Rock?

AA: It's not that I didn't like Little Rock. This is the way Sergeant Causey talked me into going to Little Rock: he said I would have the opportunity to see the inner workings of the state police and learn a lot about it. I did have a pretty good background from my experiences in the military and through other endeavors I was involved in. I saw it as an opportunity to expand myself and get a better understanding of how things worked. I had been married about three years when I went down there. I married a lady that worked in probation and parole and then she went to work for the prosecuting attorney. We had brand new children and we moved to Little Rock. I would leave, on average, [at] 5:00 or 6:00 every morning, whether it was to do background investigations on a new employee, or to investigate a complaint. I would get back home at 8:00, 9:00, or 10:00 at night. I had to introduce myself to my kids [when I got home]. My wife resigned from her job as secretary in the prosecuting attorney's office, and she was a full-time mom. It was real difficult on her as it was me. While I was assigned to internal affairs, I was working for Major Gwynn, who was in charge of personnel and

training. Bill Read, who was the firearms instructor for the state, either left or was promoted, and Major Gwynn called me and asked me if I would mind taking over the firearms training responsibilities for the department. So whenever I wasn't doing internal affairs investigations, I was doing training. I was gone more than I was there. The only time I got to be with the kids was on weekends. I spent a lot of time at the academy in Camden. Deloin Causey and I were involved in training at the academy. When you are down there, you are living there the same time the troopers are there, and that takes time away from your family. There was a trooper there that came through and was stationed at Charleston. My wife's family was at Charleston. She was in the process of getting family farmland. I made the decision that if we ever got a chance to move to Charleston and build a house out in the country, I would never ask for promotion and I would never ask for reassignment. I would stay in highway patrol and do that and give our kids an opportunity to grow up in one school district. Friday Joe Garrison was the trooper in that school, and he was from Jonesboro. I asked him during school if he was going to try and go back to east Arkansas after he got his probationary period in, and he said he was. We made a deal that before he put in his request for transfer back to Jonesboro I was going to put in my request for transfer to go to Charleston. He followed through with his agreement, and by the time his paperwork got to Little Rock I submitted my request for transfer. In 1977, Colonel Harp approved my transfer back to highway patrol. Buren Jackson was the troop commander in Fort Smith at the time. I was up in that area on an investigation, and I stopped by and asked him if he would have any objection to me being

in his troop. I told him that I wanted to be assigned to Franklin County and build a house outside of Charleston on a farm, and I asked him if he would object to that. He asked me if I had a Charleston mailing address and a Charleston phone number. The answer to those questions was yes, even though it was twelve miles out in the country. He told me that as long as I had a Charleston mailing address and telephone number, the fact that I was in or outside the city limits was irrelevant. I stayed there from 1977 until I retired.

ML: Was there a general guideline that they wanted troopers to live in the city limits?

AA: Yes. They wanted you to live in the city limits of your assigned town, or at least in close proximity to it.

ML: How many people were in internal affairs?

AA: When we first started, Sergeant Causey, who was in charge, me, and one other guy, who didn't stay long. Ron Ball came in and took his place, so there were three of us.

ML: Was it a separate unit?

AA: Yes. We were assigned to personnel, but we were called internal affairs.

ML: When you were a firearms instructor, what was the service weapon?

AA: A Smith and Wesson Model 19. I am not going to say it was the first, but it was the first I knew of—I put on a statewide firearms certification school at the academy. We brought in the National Rifle Association law enforcement trainers to teach liability as well as basic firearms tactics.

ML: What score did you have to qualify with?

AA: We were shooting a 600-point target at that time instead of the 300[-point] they

are using today. It seems like they had to shoot a [score of] 120 out of 600.

ML: Did you continue to teach firearms?

AA: Yes. Even after I left Little Rock and gave up my responsibility for statewide firearms training, I became the trainer for Troop H. I did that until I was assigned to Colonel Moye's office. From 1977, when I went back to Troop H, I was a sniper on the tactical team as well as a firearms instructor. We had the CSA [Covenant Sword and Arm of the Lord] operation in north central Arkansas in 1985. As a result of that operation, I became very close in the administration, especially Lieutenant Colonel Moye, and we closely discussed tactical operations. He oversaw the tactical team training. John Bailey was a lieutenant in Troop A, and he kind of pushed, along with Colonel Moye, special response—or SRT—training. We went to the CSA operation in 1985, and Colonel Moye became very good friends with Danny Colson, who was the hostage rescue team leader with the FBI.

ML: Was this before the CSA deal or after?

AA: This was after. Colonel Moye didn't want to reinvent the wheel if it was already being used by someone else, and through his relationship with Danny Colson, the state police got a lot of information from the FBI on tactical teams and instruction. About that same time, I was in the Arkansas National Guard and I was chief of security police for the 188th Fighter Group in Fort Smith. I went to a security police exercise where I met a guy named Marty Strones, who is the training coordinator for the Department of Energy. More specifically, [he was in charge of] the transportation security division of the Department of Energy. These guys do all of the nuclear weapons movements for the military. A lot of people don't real-

ize that the Department of Energy owns all of the nuclear weapons used for national defense, and they just loan them to the military. The Department of Energy is the owner, builder, and maintainer of all the nuclear weapons, and they have a security unit that moves all of those weapons around. In this training exercise, I met Marty Strones, who was also in the [National Guard?] Reserve. During this two week training exercise, I asked him if they ever did training with State Police agencies. He told me they did, and were always looking for new places to train. I asked him if he had heard of Fort Chaffee, and he said no. This was in May of 1985. In December of 1985 we did our first training exercise with the Department of Energy at Fort Chaffee. Marty and I conjured up this training plan, and I introduced him to the people at Fort Chaffee. In January of 1986 we had a meeting at Fort Chaffee to arrange for another training exercise the following April. Captain Causey, the Troop Commander at Fort Smith, basically assigned me to help the DOE [Department of Energy] put together this training exercise. Colonel Moye came up to this meeting in January. He wanted us to train with DOE because they have state of the art equipment for tactical situations. If there is a new widget out, DOE. has got it. The state police sent about 100 troopers to this training event in April. We had CID [Criminal Investigations Department], FBI, state police, and tactical personnel. DOE paid for the whole deal. All we had to do was show up. They paid for our hotel, our meals, [and] they filled our cars up with gasoline and provided ammunition while providing training that we wanted to do. Colonel Moye saw this as a win-win situation for us. We would be receiving state of the art tactical training that we would never be able to get for our-

selves. As a result of this meeting in January, Colonel Moye went back to Colonel Goodwin and talked to him about assigning me to his office as the special response team coordinator. At that time, we had twelve tactical teams, one in each highway patrol troop. Captain Causey and Colonel Moye reached a gentlemen's agreement that whatever I needed to do to get this thing put on in April, Captain Causey would allow me to work my schedule accordingly. Sometime between January and April, Colonel Moye called me and said he was going to transfer me to his office. I told him that I appreciated his thoughts and asked him if it entailed a move to Little Rock. He told me it did and I said, "Colonel, I appreciate your confidence in my abilities to do this, but I have to decline." He asked me what I meant, and I told him that I had made that promise to my family that if we ever moved to Charleston I wouldn't ask for a promotion or transfer that would cause me to leave. Another thing—Major Maxey, who was out at Fort Chaffee and in on the January meeting, overheard Colonel Moye tell me that I should move down to his office. He told me that if they ever talked about transferring me to this job of providing full-time training for the tactical teams, he would provide me with a desk and a phone and a filing cabinet in the operations office at Fort Chaffee. He said that since this would be where we would be doing the training, it would just make sense to have an office out there. In my conversation with Colonel Moye, I told him what Major Maxey had told me. Colonel Moye went back to Colonel Goodwin and called me a few days later and said that Colonel Goodwin agreed that it was a good idea. Colonel Moye said that, effective immediately, I was assigned to his office, but working at Fort Chaffee, which I did until I retired.

ML: When were you first designated as a sniper?

AA: When I came back to Troop H in 1977.

ML: Was that the fist time they started designating people as snipers?

AA: No, we had them before then. John Chappelle was sort of the sniper guru for the tactical teams. I didn't do firearms training for the snipers. John Chappell put that together with Colonel Goodwin. When John got promoted, I ended up taking over that as well.

ML: Do you remember when they started branching off from just the sniper and into full tactical teams?

AA: Yes. I was the one that did that.

ML: Can you tell me when and why?

AA: Colonel Goodwin was the director and Lieutenant Colonel Moye was the assistant director. Colonel Moye took the early-out in 1987 when the Legislature put together an incentive package for people to retire. I am going to talk about internal politics for a minute. Troopers worked for troop commanders, who are very territorial, and rightfully so. Whenever I would schedule training for tactical teams—there were seven men on each team and—take Fort Smith as an example; there were twenty-four troopers in the troop, and they had their normal workday and schedule—I had just wrecked that schedule. Their primary function was accident investigation and traffic enforcement. When someone from Little Rock came into their troop and said that he was going to do training on this day, they got offended, and I can understand that. But, it was my responsibility as special response team coordinator—I was very specific when this came about; I didn't want

to be in charge because then I would be in direct conflict with these troopers' chain of command—to affect training for all special response teams, including snipers. For example, on the CSA thing, I could take six of the twelve teams and have taken forty-two people out of highway patrol and [had them] tied up in a special event. We had six tactical teams in direct support of the operation at the CSA compound. We had two teams at three roadblocks, and we worked twelve-hour shifts. From that event, and the conflict I was creating around the state combined with the expense of buying tactical equipment for eighty-four people scattered around the state, you are looking at a pretty extensive budget. I took a lot of information from the FBI's hostage rescue team and visited with them, at their expense, on numerous occasions. I took a pencil and paper and proved to the administration that, number one, they would have a more effective team by having one [team] rather than twelve. I justified that by manpower and how it affected the troop commander. I also showed from a dollars and cents perspective how much it would cost to outfit all twelve teams versus the cost of outfitting one team of twenty or thirty troopers. One of the biggest rubs within the department was that only highway patrol personnel could be on tactical teams. There were no CID allowed. It was a territorial thing. CID was a separate entity from highway patrol, which was generally the first on the scene. Therefore, the troop commander was in charge and [he] felt, "How dare a CID officer come in and tell me how to do my job!" There were a lot of talented people in CID that weren't getting the opportunity to be on a team and provide the citizens of Arkansas a valuable service. Those were the reasons we went to one team; one, it was cheaper, two, we

wouldn't rip the heart out of a highway patrol troop, and three, we could use people from different backgrounds. About the time Colonel Moye was leaving, we discussed this movement. Another thing was on the horizon. A deal was made that instead of reassigning me back somewhere and losing all that we accomplished, Colonel Goodwin assigned me to his office. The director's office also had training. For whatever reason, training went straight to Colonel Goodwin's office, even though it was under personnel. In the process of showing Colonel Goodwin how we would have a better product, along came hazardous materials [Hazmat]. I am going to move away from highway patrol and tactical teams and talk about Hazmat. The federal government was putting out hazardous materials guidelines and training materials for police and fire. The [state's] Office of Emergency Services was kind of the guru for Hazmat. Because of the federal mandate and the training requirements that were coming about, the state legislature passed an act that developed a Hazmat responsibility. The state police, the fire departments, ambulances, EMS [Emergency Medical Service], the National Guard, and the Department of Health [were all involved]. The state police were given the job of coordination. We weren't in charge, but we were the agency that brought all of the other disciplines together to mitigate an incident. This was all being legislated. This created a power struggle within state government. The Office of Emergency Services—or ADEM as they are now referred to—the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management Services really got their panties in a wad. While all of this was going on, Colonel Goodwin called me and Lieutenant Wallace Cansler, who was in charge of training, into his office and told us what

was fixing to happen. He said, "You two need to put together a training program for hazardous materials for the state police." We had to develop Hazmat training for everyone in the state police, because it didn't matter if it was a driver's license examiner, a CID officer, or whoever, they are just as apt to drive up on an accident involving hazardous materials as a troop dispatcher getting a call that says there is an accident involving hazardous materials. We trained all commissioned officers to recognize a hazardous materials accident and follow a checklist on what to do next. We did a lot of training on this. At the same time this developed, I was continuing to explain to Colonel Goodwin that this was another example of why we need a special response team—not SWAT [Special Weapons and Tactics Unit], just tactical. This is a whole other animal that not everyone understands. Now you have to go to chemistry school and learn how mothballs and diesel fuel can combine to form a hazardous material not only as a fire danger, but also as an inhalation danger. So the tactical team did tactical training and hazardous material training. We would then have somebody that was given the equipment, experience, and knowledge to deal with and mitigate situations from a hostage scenario to a train derailment. We started reaching out to the other disciplines and working with them to develop this concept. I proved to Colonel Goodwin that the state would be better served by a single team. Of course, Colonel Goodwin didn't get in a hurry about anything. You had to keep talking to him about something. Maybe after six months of putting your pitch in, he might begin to lean your way. That, coupled with the state police being given the Hazmat coordinator hat for any mitigation in the state of Arkansas, led him to buy off on

it. I took the application criteria that the FBI hostage rescue team members go through and modified that for the state police methodology and wrote the criteria for selecting members. The members of the tactical teams would also test new products the state police was considering for purchase. They would go and test it and make an evaluation on whether it was something we could use. They then became the subject matter experts for that piece of equipment. There was a lot of benefit going to the one-team concept. The other part of it was when you start talking about tactical teams there was an assumption that they were all going to be put in Little Rock. Well, that would defeat the purpose. We didn't have to be able to send them everywhere around the state. They said that the National Guard could fly them around the state on helicopters, but at that time of the year in Arkansas you have thunderstorms. [Therefore,] we had to rely on ground transportation. Whoever made the team, whether he lived in Fort Smith, West Memphis, or Little Rock, would be the first to the scene in their area. The [local] troop commander would be in charge at the scene, and the tactical team member in that area would respond and act as an advisor—not a commander, but an advisor. The troop commander would be advising Little Rock on the situation and then Little Rock or the team leader would make a decision for a full or partial call out of the team. Then the closest ones to the scene would go. Basically, what you had was thirty or forty guys that were trained and could give advice to the troop commander and help him plan accordingly. There have been a number of events that have taken place using this philosophy. We did a raid on twenty-one locations with the FBI. The Arkansas State Police was only involved in locations in Arkan-

sas, but there were seven states involved. It was a facsimile gambling operation that went from Hawaii to Arkansas. There were locations in Springdale, Fayetteville, and Fort Smith that were raided simultaneously by tactical teams. It was the largest law enforcement operation in the state of Arkansas, except for the CSA. We had over 300 officers from different agencies involved, and the command post was here in Fort Smith.

ML: Did you think that Colonel Goodwin's commitment to the special response team was as strong as Colonel Moye's? I have heard SWAT team members say that when Colonel Moye retired, the emphasis really dropped off. It may have been because they were no longer on the team. Did the special response team lose some priority when Lieutenant Colonel Moye retired?

AA: Yes it did. He was a very strong advocate and Colonel Goodwin was not. Colonel Goodwin accepted it as a necessary evil, but didn't accept it with the enthusiasm that Colonel Moye did. That was the difference in the style of leadership. Colonel Moye was very up front while Colonel Goodwin was more laid-back. Let me explain it this way. Colonel Goodwin's management style was "If we wait long enough, the problem will go away," whereas Colonel Moye's was "Let's go fix the problem." If you had something going on, Colonel Goodwin might wait six months to react. That is no criticism of Colonel Goodwin. In my opinion, Colonel Goodwin was the finest state police director we ever had during my association. It was just a different style of management, and each had their strengths and weaknesses. I would get so frustrated with Colonel Goodwin. Sometimes I would just get up and walk out of his office. My first wife had

health problems, and she died in 1989 as a result of that. Colonel Goodwin was aware of that, and he gave me a lot of latitude to take care of business at home—probably more than he should have. In fact, Colonel Goodwin and Colonel Moye asked me later how I was able to deal with that. The reason I was able to maintain my sanity was because they allowed me to do my job. I could focus on Hazmat and tactical stuff. I have been given an awful lot of latitude to do some things.

ML: One of the big events in this area was the Ruiz and Van Denton manhunt. Do you have any memories of that event? [Editor's note: In 1977, Earl Van Denton and Paul Ruiz murdered a town marshal and a park ranger. They were both executed by the state of Arkansas in 1997.]

AA: I wasn't even here then. I was on active duty in the [U.S.] Air Force. As a result of that event, every time Ruiz and Van Denton were tried and retried I was involved in their security. In fact, Van Denton was my responsibility. Every time he moved somewhere, I was right beside him. I had a conversation with him in the Waldron courthouse one evening and asked him, "Let me ask you a question." When you are with someone day in and day out you develop a relationship and can ask them questions. I asked him, "What is it like to kill somebody?" He said, "Trooper, let me ask you this. Whenever a cockroach runs across the floor in your house and you reach over and step on it, how does that feel to you?" I said, "Are you telling me that killing another human being is like killing a cockroach?" He said, "Basically." There was no remorse whatsoever.

ML: Another huge deal was the Cuban Refugee Crisis in 1980.

AA: I was knee-deep in that one. You can even go back further to 1975 when we had the Vietnamese who came here following the fall of Vietnam. In 1975 and 1980 I was on active duty with the military, because they came in through the 188th Fighter Group. I coordinated all of the security operations from the time they got on the ground to the time they got to Fort Chaffee. For both of those, as soon as we got them to the Fort, I went back to highway patrol. There was no correlation between the Vietnamese and the Cubans. The style of people we were dealing with was 180 degrees from each other. The Vietnamese were glad to be here and were supportive of the United States. The Cubans were kicked out of the jails and nut houses [in Cuba]. We had a major problem in the Fort Smith area as a result of the Cubans. We had a number of them sponsored out by the local churches. A couple of specific things—on June 1, 1980, when we had the riot, there were twenty-four of us at the main gate. Causey was bleeding like the rest of us. He was the troop commander at the time. Had it not been for Deloin Causey handling the situation like he handled it, we would have had a major problem. The citizens of Barling were sitting up on the ridgeline with their guns, and we were able to keep the Cubans from getting up there. If the state police had been unable to turn them around, we would have had a major bloodbath. I attribute that directly to Deloin Causey's leadership and the personnel there to turn them around. He threw the first blow. A major from the army got hit by [Captain Causey's] baton. It wasn't intentional. Causey was fixing to tattoo a Cuban because he had hit him. When he went back, he hit that major. He [the army major] stayed away from us after that. The FBI came out after their investigation and said that the only rights

that were violated on that day were the troopers standing out on Highway 22. That was a unique experience, to say the least.

ML: He is someone I would like to talk with, but he hasn't responded to my letters.

AA: Deloin is a unique person. He is a very quiet and thoughtful person. He was another one that left under John Bailey's tutelage. John Bailey did a lot to wreck the state police. Some people may say that he did a lot to improve the state police, but I totally disagree. That goes back to my training under the leadership of "Slick" Wilson about what the state police is and what is expected by the state of Arkansas. I attribute the start of the demise of the state police to where it is today to John Bailey.

ML: One of the things some people have mentioned, and it may just be a rumor, was that the army guards at Fort Chaffee had weapons that were not loaded.

AA: That is correct. They were not loaded. General "Bulldog" Drummond refused to allow the MPs [military police] to have ammunition. That is the military mentality. You can look the part, but you don't necessarily have the equipment to be the part. The June 1 riot was actually the third event that we had with them. The major riot was right at lunch or a little after. We saw the Cubans disarm the guards at the gate, but at the time we didn't know they were carrying unloaded weapons. They were only carrying .45s, not rifles.

ML: In the days leading up to this, were the state police assigned to patrol that area?

AA: Yes. On May 27, Sweet Willie Wine was at the front gate doing a sweet potato pie cook-off, for whatever reason. The Cubans went out the back gate into the community of Jenny Lind. That night, all of the troopers from Fort Smith and

Sebastian County were brought up here to put them back in. I don't remember how many there were, but 1,000 sticks in my mind. Sheriff Cauthron, the Sebastian County Sheriff, called the Fort Smith School District and got some school buses. The ones we didn't ferry back in our cars were loaded up in the buses and taken back. That was our first experience with them leaving Fort Chaffee. There were a few minor skirmishes on the post, but we were on the outside of it. Then we had a troop meeting and Causey told us that he didn't want anyone going anywhere and to keep our stuff in the car. We were to let headquarters know how to get ahold of us if they needed to. He looked at me and the other sniper—[we] were the only two with walkie-talkie radios—and told me that wherever I went I was to have the radio on and listening. He told me that if anything significant happened at all that I was supposed to get in my car and come [to Fort Chaffee]. He said, "I don't want to have to call you. I better look up and see you there." I think June 1 was a Sunday, because my wife and I talked about me going to church that morning, but I thought that I had better stay with the radio because there had been too much going on. We were sitting outside drinking a cup of coffee, and the radio traffic started getting a little more of this and a little more of that. Captain Causey was already out. I told my wife, "Well, I am going to go ahead and get in my jumpsuit and head on over." We were wearing one-piece jumpsuits. I hadn't more than gotten in my car and it started. We had a minor skirmish at the front gate—I think the 255 gate. They put them back in. By that time, everyone in the troop was there. Around 1:00 or 2:00 in the afternoon it had calmed down and we went to Bruce and Terry's and were eating hamburgers and

milkshakes. There were two guys at the main gate, and I heard them say, "Oh, shit, here they come." They called Fort Smith and said that there was a major bunch of them coming out of the main gate right at them. There were about fifteen or twenty of us at Bruce and Terry's eating, and we all broke and ran and jumped in cars and headed that way. The rest of the afternoon was peeling heads. We were exhausted by 5:00 or 6:00 that afternoon. Pete Westerman, who is a Sergeant at Russellville but was stationed at Waldron then, got knocked down just to the west of the main gate by the railroad tracks. There was a Cuban right over the top of him hitting him with rocks. He was about half conscious. I saw this and headed over there to help him. I was carrying a thirty-six inch hickory baton that my dad carried as a city marshal. This wasn't normal trooper gear. This Cuban was over the top of Pete rockin' him and I thought, "I am going to knock that sucker into next week." I had this baton that was more like a baseball bat. In a split second a thousand things can go through your mind. I was going at this guy, and he didn't have any idea that I was even in the neighborhood. In the process of getting over there to him, I was thinking, "If I hit him in the head it will explode like a watermelon." So instead of hitting him in the head, I decided to just sweep his feet. So I took that baton and swept his feet completely out from under him. His feet went straight up in the air and his head hit the railroad tracks and blood just flew. I reached down and got Pete up. About that time, two deputies from Sebastian County got over there and got the Cuban and another deputy came over and got Pete across the ditch. I was starting to get hit by rocks. There were about twenty or thirty of them coming at me. They hit my revolver and locked it up and

knocked my grips off. About that time was when the shooting started at the main gate. Don Lafarlette was at the main gate. We were all carrying batons. You have to know Don to appreciate this. He went back to his car and put up his baton and got his shotgun out. He started shooting over their heads at the main gate. When the shooting started at the main gate, it froze everybody else. The Cubans that were coming at me stopped and looked back at the main gate. I saw that as my opportunity to get out of Dodge. [Editor's note: The phrase "get out of Dodge" means to leave a dangerous situation quickly.] I cut back to the highway. Let me back up. Just before this major undertaking took place, Causey got on the radio. Of course, I could hear him on my walkie-talkie. Causey told Fort Smith Headquarters to call Little Rock and tell them we had a major riot going on and that we needed all of the help we could get. Captain Fletcher, who was at Springdale, had already sent everyone out of his troop to Fort Smith. So it was Troop L and Troop H that were involved in this major get together right after lunch. About 5:00 or 5:30 that afternoon, I was sitting in the middle of Highway 22. There was a relief bridge just west of the main gate, and I was sitting in the middle of the bridge [when it] just gave out. Sheriff Cauthron came and jerked me up and said, "I want to know that the hell you hit that Cuban with?" I asked him which Cuban, because I had been hitting a bunch. He said, "I am talking about the one we had to take to the hospital and have 156 stitches put in his head." I never did convince that sheriff that I didn't hit that Cuban in the head. If I would have hit him on the head, it would have killed him. It was his head hitting that railroad iron that cut him. Wendell Carruth was the deputy that took him to the

hospital. [He] told me much later about the sheriff coming there and raising hell, asking which Trooper had hit this Cuban. Word of that got out, and a couple of Barling police officers gave me a varnished axe handle that was about the size of that baton with the date June 1, 1980, inscribed [on it]. That was an interesting day, to say the least. We spent a lot of time with the border patrol after that. Sheriff Cauthron called the governor and the governor called the president and we had a blue ribbon panel out of Washington [DC] down here in forty-eight hours. Border patrol agents were sent here. There were probably 350 of them, in addition to INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service] and a number of other agencies. When I was the provost marshal at Pine Bluff in 1970 was when they had the major riots at Cummins. [Editor's note: In 1970, State Police were assigned to the Cummins Prison Farm Unit during a riot sparked by inmate demands for racially segregated housing.] I wasn't involved directly, but was right on the periphery. I knew the troopers that were there with Captain Halsell. Then the Cuban incident in 1980—if we were to have the same type of situation today, I am not sure the state police is equipped to handle it. They don't have the training or the "want to" to get involved. If something was going on in those days, the state police would get involved. I have talked to people around the state that have said they are shocked that the state police doesn't automatically come in and start manning roadblocks, even in a minor tornado. Instead, they stand around waiting to be called in. The citizens aren't getting the same level of service today, and that is a shame. There are a lot of people that disagree with that or won't accept that. In my humble opinion, it all started in John Bailey's administration because

he circled himself with people that were incompetent and were in less than up-front activities.

ML: It seems like the 1970s and mid-1980s were turbulent times in Arkansas. There was the CSA deal in 1985, and one of the things that brought those groups to the attention in Arkansas was when Louis Bryant was killed in DeQueen. [Editor's note: Trooper Louis P. Bryant was shot and killed by CSA member Richard W. Snell during a traffic stop in 1984.] Do you remember what the lead up was to the CSA deal? I have [heard] other people mention your name in relation to the survivalist groups.

AA: Let me digress. I am not blowing my own whistle. In 1975, when I first started doing training activities, one of the first things I did was to teach a class on terrorism. I still have my three-ring notebook and my overheads. This was before the days of PowerPoint, and you had to make your own overheads. I believe I conducted the first class on terrorism in the state police and in the state of Arkansas. It was really more of an officer survival class than solely about terrorism. I used statistics on officers killed in the line of duty, and I told them to not set a routine because they were being watched. If you went every morning at 9:00 to get coffee at the coffee shop, somebody will notice that and take advantage of it. Don't get yourself in a routine. That was the philosophy of this class, and I sprinkled in a little terrorism, saying that one day people would be watching us and [use this information to] cause a big event. Domestic terrorism came into the forefront at this time. My relationship with the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, which resulted out of the CSA deal, led us to working together and passing along information. I still

work with the Oklahoma Highway Patrol. I probably spent more time in their airplane doing surveillance than ours. Louis Bryant was in a training class I gave on "shoot—don't shoot" scenarios. He sat on the back row of the classroom. He argued with my take on whether to shoot or not. He came from the Fayetteville Police Department, and he had his own way. It is not being negative to him. My class wasn't about right or wrong, but about a give and take. My philosophy about teaching firearms in the state police was that it had to be instinctive. If you have to think about the whole process, then you will probably be dead. You train the way you fight, and you fight the way you train. I brought that to my firearms training. We are going to have to evolve with the times. We started out with prison riots and then went to Cubans and Tim McVeighs. [Editor's note: Timothy McVeigh was executed in 2001 for his role in the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City that resulted in 168 deaths.] Now we have got direct ties between the [Ku Klux] Klan and Middle Eastern terrorists. We have ties between the Irish Republican Army [and domestic terror groups]. Those people are all intertwined. In the job I have today, I see people forgetting why we have all of this extra security [at airports]. How quickly people forget. State police personnel forget. You have to continually put it in front of them.

ML: From your perspective, what was the lead up to the CSA? How did they call you out and send you up there?

AA: We in the Arkansas State Police knew that there were extremist operations like the Klan and Posse Comitatus spread around the state of Arkansas. [Editor's note: The Posse Comitatus was a right-wing extremist group that contended that

the true intent of the country's founders was to establish a Christian republic where the individual was sovereign, and that the Republic's first duty was to promote, safeguard, and protect the Christian faith. Members of the Posse Comitatus were involved in a shoot-out in Arkansas in 1983 that resulted in the deaths of two U.S. marshals.] Nobody in the state police, even CID intelligence, except for maybe Gene Irby and Bill Bufford, knew the magnitude of what was going on in Three Brothers, Arkansas. Gene Irby and Bill Bufford were the two guys who broke that thing wide open. The way I heard it was when Captain Causey called me to say that I needed to go meet with Colonel Moye about an operation that was fixing to take place. Tactical team leaders met in Colonel Moye's office to discuss a meeting he had just had with the FBI and what was going to take place. That was the first I knew anything about it. It was prior to me working directly for Colonel Moye. I wasn't the team leader of the SRT team in Troop H; Thomas Henson was, but for some reason—either he was gone, or something—I was sent down to the meeting. We went to Little Rock and they told us what was going to happen. They said there were six teams going, and we were to stay in motels and drive unmarked cars. We were to keep it very low-key until it broke. When that happened, we were up there for four or five days on this operation. You would go into the local McDonald's when your shift changed. We worked twelve-hour days. The shift change was at midnight. You would go in and establish your routine. It took you about two hours to get there and two hours to get back. Once you got to the motel, you went to bed because in less than ten hours you were going to have to be back at work. The same place you would eat breakfast or su-

per at, you would hear people say, "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. Coming up here and picking on those people. They are just Christian folks out there doing their thing. I have got an aunt that lives right down from their compound and they come down every summer and mow her yard and won't let her pay them a thing." Then someone else would say, "I have got a grandmother that lives down the road and they come down and cut her firewood for her." Well, after it broke and the arrests were made, they started executing the search warrants and recovering the things in the bunkers. They started saying, "What took y'all so long to decide to come up here and do something about that. I had no idea they were like that." Once word got out that we were taking grenades and LAW rockets and things they changed their tune and asked us what took so long! My education on this really started in 1985.

ML: Are there any changes in technology that stick out as being important?

AA: There have been enormous technological changes. You can use Charlie Edmonds down at Paris—where he got shot—as an example. If [former Director] Don Melton had not bitten the bullet and agreed to buy state of the art body armor for the tactical team, Charlie Edmonds probably would be dead. It has evolved through necessity. It is whether or not you have an administrator willing to bite the bullet and spend the money. Fax machines [are another good example]. The first fax machine in troop headquarters—I jokingly made a comment that all those fax machines would be useful for was sending jokes and recipes back and forth between headquarters. It wasn't too long after I said that when we had the fire at Ozark. One of the things about hazardous materials is everyone in the state is issued one

of these [Hazmat reference book] in their cars. It tells you what the placard numbers for Hazmat on the side of trucks mean. Whenever you look up this number, it tells you the potential hazards and some brief information on how to respond. They don't give you much information. Styrene beads were involved in this fire [in Ozark]. Styrene is a very hazardous material when it is inhaled. When I got there, the Ozark Fire Department, which was all volunteer, was out there in their blue jeans. Volunteer Fire Departments know two things: fire means water and water means fire. [In their opinion] you have to use copious amounts of water to put out fires. Water won't put out a styrene bead fire. It just moves it around. You have to use a chemical to smother that type of fire. I suggested to the chief to just pull his men back. I asked him where were his SCUBAs—self contained [underwater] breathing apparatus. He told me they only had two or three of them. I told him that it wasn't worth the health of his men, so just let it burn. Through our relationship with the Fort Chaffee Fire Department, who had a well equipped Hazmat team—I told our dispatch to get their chief on the phone and tell him what we've got. I got to the plant [where] safety data sheets for this product were and [the company representative] told me in his office, which was on fire. I asked him where he bought it, and he told me the manufacturer. I called headquarters and told them to call a company to get the material safety data sheets and to call the manufacturer and have their chemist get me as much information as they could. In a matter of forty minutes, I had in my hand a piece of paper faxed to the Fort Smith headquarters that showed me what to do to mitigate that situation. From that point on, I knew fax machines were a technology we couldn't live

without.

ML: Is there anything that we haven't talked about—whether it is an event, a person, an incident, or an issue—that sticks out as something important that I need to at least consider when writing a history of the state police?

AA: Not really. The one thing that continually bothers me is the evolution of the state police to where they are today. The state police management has not kept up with the times. We should have a state of the art bomb/biotechnology capability. The Arkansas State Police was, at one time, the premier organization in the state of Arkansas and at the forefront of having the expertise necessary to handle any situation. Today, we are not. It is an administrative call whether the state police wants to assume the liability associated with these responsibilities. We have had a bomb person in John Miller since the late 1980s. He is probably one of the best bomb technicians in this region, with the limited equipment he has to work with. He and I shared an office at Fort Chaffee for three or four years. The department would not allow him the money to buy realistic training aides, so he had to make his own. He would buy a wooden dowel and wrap it in paper to make it look like dynamite. He would do this out of his own initiative and buy things out of his own pocket without ever expecting to be paid back. It is good that we have people like that who are dedicated, but it is not right that management doesn't have the money or isn't willing to divert money from other sources to do that. To answer your question, I will go back to what I originally said that the citizens of Arkansas are being shortchanged by the department. I still consider myself a part of that department, since I spent the better part of my adult life with them. With

the evolution of things over the last fifteen years, the state police hasn't kept up and has gotten tunnel vision that the state police's mission is to only investigate accidents and work traffic. When you read the mission statement, it covers a much bigger spectrum. It is a reflection of the management and the governor, who tells the department what he wants, and the legislature, which provides the funds. A lot of the blame needs to be shared with the governor and the legislature, which is hurt by term limits. Whenever you have legislators whose only knowledge of the state police is a ticket they got fifteen years ago [it creates] a negative connotation. They say that they just won't vote for that [state police] bill, and fail to see the entire picture. Writing tickets and working accidents is a responsibility, but it isn't the only responsibility of the state police.

[End of Interview]

[Edited by Rebecca Willhite]

[JD]