

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

***HISTORY OF THE COBB COUNTY BRANCH OF THE NAACP AND CIVIL RIGHTS
ACTIVITIES IN COBB COUNTY, GEORGIA***

**AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF THE HIST 4425 (ORAL HISTORY) CLASS AT
KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY, FALL SEMESTER 2009**

INTERVIEW WITH LT. COLONEL JANET PRINCE

COBB NAACP/CIVIL RIGHTS SERIES, NO. 19

CONDUCTED BY CLAY ANDERSON

THURSDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2009

Kennesaw State University Oral History Project
Cobb NAACP/Civil Rights Series, No. 19
Interview with Lt. Colonel Janet Prince
Conducted by Clay Anderson
Thursday, 12 November 2009
Location: Cobb County Sheriff's Department

CA: This is an interview for my oral history class. I'm here with Lt. Colonel Janet Prince and I'm going to be discussing the integration of the Cobb County Sheriff's department. First, Ms. Prince, where were you born and when, if that's okay?

JP: I was born in Florida, the city of Mims, born in 1960.

CA: Tell me a little bit about your family, mother, father, brothers or sisters?

JP: My parents are still with me. I have fifteen siblings.

CA: Wow.

JP: I'm somewhere in the middle. A lot of these are stepsiblings and that kind of stuff, no, my mom wasn't that energetic but I do have quite a large family. We grew up in Florida, born and grew up in Florida; I first started law enforcement in '85 where I worked for the sheriff's office in Brevard County, which is in Sharpes, Florida. I moved here to Georgia in 1990.

CA: When you were growing up, was there any—I don't know anything about Mims, what's the demographics of Mims?

JP: Mims is just a little small town outside of Titusville, Florida, which is where we actually lived. Titusville, you're probably more familiar with where Titusville is because that's the entry port to Cape Canaveral so when you hear Kennedy Space Center, that's pretty much where Titusville is.

CA: How was it growing up in Titusville, or in Mims?

JP: I was born in Mims but actually grew up in Titusville. It was a very small city, no major industries to speak of. You either went away to school or worked in the health field, or law enforcement, there really wasn't much to do basically. It's a small town; it's comparable to the city of Smyrna. Growing up was, back in the '60's and '70's, I wasn't of course, always had an instinct that I would go into law enforcement, I actually thought growing up that I would be a teacher and I wanted to go to school to become a teacher. My father was a law enforcement officer so maybe that's where I got that interest from but I stayed there, I left Titusville soon after my graduation from high school in '78.

CA: What sort of activities did you do in high school?

JP: I just played basketball.

CA: What was your favorite class?

JP: History.

CA: Excellent. What's your favorite time period in history?

JP: Probably the Revolutionary era.

CA: Why is that?

JP" Just the main characters in that era were pretty interesting to me. I don't remember that much from it but I remember being very interested and my teacher saying that I kind of excelled in that area of history and I just kind of liked that time period.

CA: What did you do when you got out of high school?

JP: I attended Albany State College in Albany, Georgia for two years. I didn't graduate at that time; I left college to get married. My ex-husband was in the military so shortly after marriage we moved to Germany where I lived for three years and came back to the States and I think we stayed in Kentucky for a year or two and I eventually returned to Titusville and it was at that point that I actually went into law enforcement.

CA: How was moving to Albany?

JP: It was nice. I had my mother's family is from that area so I was very accustomed to the area, spent summer vacations there so it wasn't anything that was enlightening to me since I had been there so often.

CA: I'm not familiar with Albany. Is there any army base there? How did you meet your husband? Was he in the military or was he a student?

JP: No, actually we grew up together. He's from Titusville as well so we were kind of high school sweethearts. I've always known him.

CA: So did he go to Albany with you?

JP: No, actually he went in the service after high school, and I went to college and it just so happens that I was home on break and he was home from a military return and we just kind of got back together.

CA: How was the, going from Titusville to Albany, how was going from Albany to Germany?

JP: Now that was a big culture shock. The one thing I do remember being in Germany was the weather. I mean, coming from a place like Florida, where, it was constantly hot,

everybody associates Florida with the sun and that kind of thing. Going from there to never having been in snow and ten degree weather, it was a culture shock. I didn't venture out too much when I first moved there but I did get a job eventually on the base as a cashier and pretty much worked that for my length of stay over there.

CA: Did you and your husband live on base?

JP: We lived off base so we rented an apartment or loft from an older couple in Germany and I can't remember how we met them but we did not stay on base so that was pretty interesting. We really got a feel and taste of the culture and how they live and what they appreciate and their values. It was very interesting.

CA: Did you pick up a lot of German?

JP: No, I didn't. But what was odd, I had my daughter there and the same couple that we rented from also babysat. They communicated with her in German and she amazingly understood it. I spoke no German of course and neither did my husband but that was kind of interesting.

CA: So is your daughter fluent in German?

JP: She's not fluent. She lost it somewhere along the way. It was interesting to hear her communicate as a toddler in German and she knew what it meant.

CA: You say you didn't venture out a lot in Germany. What did you do?

JP: Once I got acclimated to the weather, I think that was the biggest hurdle for me, but once I got acclimated to the weather then went out to see all those places that people would go, the Black Forest, Switzerland, you know, those kind of places. It was nice.

CA: Did you visit the Berlin Wall?

JP6 I did not.

CA: We have a section of the Berlin Wall outside at Kennesaw State and it's spray-painted and everything. I didn't know at first what it was. I thought it was some sort of art some student had done.

JP: You've got a piece of history right there.

CA: I came up and read the black and said, wow.

JP: So you moved from Germany--how many children do you have?

CA: Two, one was born in Germany?

JP: Just one was born in Germany. I was actually pregnant with the second one when I returned to the States.

CA: When you returned you returned to Kentucky or Albany?

JP: We returned to Titusville for just a short period of time and then we moved to Kentucky where we stayed for probably about a year and a half.

CA: Was that because of military?

JP: Yes, my husband was stationed there.

CA: How was it being in Kentucky? Still cold.

JP: I don't remember much. It was probably still cold but I don't really remember that period in my life. I don't remember much about it because at that time I had two toddlers, I was kind of a stay at home wife so I didn't really do much, I didn't work, I just stayed at home so I don't remember much about the city at all.

CA: Do you remember any—growing up in Titusville, I guess this is backtracking and then going to Albany, how were race relations? Did you have any problems or was it just family or like a family atmosphere I mean.

JP: I can't recall any incidents where race was a factor in anything that we did so no, I can't give you any negative stories. Everybody treated everybody with respect and everybody got along from what I could see and that was just never an issue.

CA: After your year in Kentucky did you move back? Where did you move?

JP: At that time that I was divorced and I returned home to Titusville?

CA: You and your husband were high school sweethearts and things like that, how was moving, I hope that's not too personal a question.

JP: It's not.

CA: How was it moving back?

JP: It wasn't a shock because we kind of both had agreed what our relationship was and so when I returned home it was just me simply returning home and of course now I had two kids to return home with. My husband stayed in Kentucky where he was still stationed so my focus in life at that point was, okay, now what do I do to take care of my kids? I looked around at jobs without having much experience, only as a cashier and only being a student for so long I got into law enforcement initially based on the pay. It paid more than most other jobs that I sought and that's kind of how I got into it.

CA: So when you joined the police force were you just a regular officer?

JP: It was the sheriff's department that I joined. I was a correctional officer when I was first hired-on with Brevard County?

CA: Is it a big county?

JP: It is. Brevard County encompasses the cities of Titusville, Coco Beach area, Merritt Island and other small suburbs, but it's comparable in size to Cobb County.

CA: How was the crime? Was it a factor?

JP: Well, the crime was pretty high in that area. What do you mean by factor?

CA: Well, was it, just that, was it a problem?

JP: Oh yes, the crime rate was high, I mean, you name it they did it. Anything that was drug related or burglaries, but the percentage or the rate of the crime in that area was very high.

CA: You said you moved to Cobb County in 1990?

JP: Yes.

CA: What prompted the move?

JP: What prompted me to move here I got, I thought anyway, stagnant in my job. It was becoming routine for me and the crime rate was a factor in that move because I didn't want to raise my two kids knowing that there wasn't that bright of an outlook for them to remain there and they were very small at that point so I decided to make a move. I began looking for employment here and the reason I chose Cobb County was because one of my co-workers back in Brevard County happened to come up here for vacation and she had been contemplating leaving the job as well and she said, "Well, they're hiring in this place called Cobb County so you ought to call." On a whim I called them and contacted their personnel here and they said, "Yes, they were in need at that point of females because at that time they didn't have that many females on the force. I got in touch with them by phone and maintained telephone contact setting up interviews and that kind of thing and sent them all my records and everything that they required and was hired in about two or three weeks.

CA: Wow. How was the transition to Cobb? Was it taxing, were you nervous?

JP: Well, I tell you what was funny, my transition to Cobb, it just so happens that I had a best friend that was also moving to this area and I told her, I said, "Well, that's perfect, maybe we can just go in on a buddy plan." My parents had agreed to keep my kids until I got situated here. I didn't have a problem going from one law enforcement agency to another

but when I got here my friend, Elizabeth who was the one who initially told me about the job, she said, “You’re going to be surprised when you get here.” What happened was I came here and found that the jail, which they have since added on to this complex, but the original jail was actually designed after the jail that I worked at so it was like walking back into my old home. It wasn’t that big of a transition for me work-wise because I was very familiar with what the rules were, and of course, everybody thought I was just super smart but they didn’t realize that I worked in a jail literally identical to this one.

CA: How about non-work related transition?

JP: Non-work it was probably more or less, it was a little intimidating coming from a very small city to Atlanta where that’s where most people congregated for entertainment and that kind of thing so it did take me awhile to get accustomed to learning my way around in a city that was probably—city life that is—something that I hadn’t really seen. It was exciting and I was pretty adventurous, I was out there on the weekends and just exploring everything there was to explore here.

CA: Now when you moved up here with your friend did you move to Atlanta or to Cobb?

JP: We moved to Cobb.

CA: When did your kids move up with you?

JP: My kids came about a month later and I had already pretty much been promised the job so there was no issue. It was just me now trying to find a location for my kids so I found an apartment in Cobb.

CA: Where in Cobb?

JP: Smyrna.

CA: Smyrna. Where did your kids go to school?

JP: They went to Argyle Elementary.

CA: What about high school?

JP: They went to McEachern.

CA: McEachern. I think you might have said that, I’m sorry. When you first got here working for the Cobb County sheriff’s department what did you do first? You worked in the jails . . .

JP: I worked in the jail in Florida and actually began the jail here so when I started here in ’90 I was a deputy sheriff one which is the basic entry-level position that all people worked and I worked the jail for about four years until I was promoted to sergeant.

CA: How was working in the jail?

JP: I always loved working in the jail. And maybe that was my comfort area because I had worked it for almost five years back in Florida but I enjoyed it, I enjoyed intermingling with the people, the individuals that came into custody, you have to have a knack for doing this kind of work and you've really got to leave your judgments and opinions and biases or anything that you may have outside the door and it was just interesting to talk to so many people in so many different situations that you just wouldn't fathom could happen to you. And I enjoyed helping people. The jail which is where I still work today is still has pretty high on my list of achievements as far as this career.

CA: What do you do in the jail? Do you intake the people?

JP: Today.

CA: Yes.

JP: I've been promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel so what I do right now I pretty much oversee all of operations that occur here at the jail.

CA: When you began what would you do?

JP: I would work different areas. As a deputy sheriff we worked in the jail. You'd work in a housing unit where inmates were located so you would make sure that they were provided the basic necessities such as food, clothing, laundry, medical, you name it, because they don't have a way to get it of course, being incarcerated so we provide them with the basic necessities. I also worked areas such as intake when they're first received in the jail and released when they book out; I've just worked different areas of the jail.

CA: How do you see, do a lot of people come back? Do you see a lot of the same faces?

JP: There is a lot of recidivism, I mean, a lot of repeat customers. That's kind of how it is. What's probably more sad about is is that you can somewhat understand it, someone that's been to jail several times that they won't have as many opportunities on the outside as you or I would based on a criminal record because that limits them as to what they can and can't do but it's to see generations of people. You know, I know that your mom was here and now the son is here the daughter is here, so it's not just repeat offenders, it's generations of offenders.

CA: Which one do you like working with better, men or women in the facility?

JP: Probably the men. The women tend to complain a lot more than the men. There's really no difference whether you're a woman incarcerated or a man. Both maybe parents and all of their situations are distinctively different.

CA: How do you see the jump in—of course, with Cobb County's population increase unfortunately so does crime. How do you see it different from 1990 the types of crimes that people came in the jail for compared to 2009?

JP: I think what we see as being different may be those crimes that are related to drug addiction or some type of substance abuse so there are a lot of white-collar crimes being committed. There's a lot more thefts going on or robberies or those things where people are more apt to forcefully take something to supplement their habit. I think that age of drug users here in the county has increased as does the population and with it comes those types of property crimes; we see a big increase of it.

CA: The age groups, how do you see the age groups? Has it gotten younger?

JP: I don't really see a big difference in the age groups. It's always been a demographic of those that are between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four. I don't see it actually averaging any higher or lower than that particular group.

CA: Have you ever seen someone come in who you know personally, a friend or something?

JP: Not really, being that I'm not from here, so it's not like I would see an old high school buddy or college or somebody I might have worked with when I was younger but just seeing those same people over and over again, coming back into custody but I've never experienced any friend or someone that I knew personally.

CA: Of course, domestic violence and things like that come on the rise. Have you ever known what someone has done and felt animosity towards that person? Of course, you've still had to remain neutral.

JP: No, and that's one of the things that you learn when you start out as a new employee of course you do have those mixed feelings like, I can't believe this person would do that, but then once you mature and once you get experience on the job you come to know that the only way you can operate within a jail facility is to not judge a person while they're here because one, this is pre-trial detention facility, so when they come into custody they haven't been convicted of anything.

CA: Okay.

JP: They're here awaiting trial and once they are sentenced and if they're found guilty or they plead guilty or whatever the case they're sentenced to the state system where they're eventually transferred to a prison system. But here it's pre-trial and we train our staff to make sure that they keep that in the back of their head that they're not, it's kind of like the old saying, you're innocent until proven guilty and that's literally what this is.

CA: How was your transition when you got promoted to sergeant?

JP: The only difficulty and I think not just me but everybody experiences this is having to go from being a deputy where you have your co-workers and you guys may socialize outside of work to now becoming their supervisor. That's the biggest transition I think for anybody going from what we call a line staff position to a supervisory position. The hardest thing is to not so much cut the ties because you can remain friends, but it is knowing that you can be friends and still tell them what they need to do to do their job.

CA: Being a woman, was there any animosity because this is a man dominated world?

JP: Man's world? No. I think most people have become accustomed to the fact that they're putting more and more women into supervisory roles. Me, myself, have not experienced a problem because I have a pretty strong personality, so I think your personality, has a lot to do with it. If you're easily offended or you're easily lead, then I think that there may be problems for women and for men for that matter, but I just never experienced those problems.

CA: How did the ranking go, deputy . . . ?

JP: In the sheriff's office as far as rank you have a deputy. Now that deputy can work in any of three divisions that we are made up of. It's the detention division, the operations divisions and we have our administration division. At the lowest level you are a deputy sheriff. The next ranking is a sergeant. From a sergeant you can be promoted to a lieutenant. From a lieutenant you can be appointed to a major. From a major you are then appointed to the lieutenant colonel and from lieutenant colonel is a colonel.

CA: Wow so you've been appointed twice.

JP: Yes, two promotions.

CA: What happens each time you get promoted? Are there tests?

JP: You are tested if you are going for a sergeant or a lieutenant. There is an assessment test or assessment program that we go through, it's a written test, they test you based on difference scenarios through an assessment center whereas you might have to role play and put on presentations, that kind of thing, all or which are work related. All of that comes together based on a score and you have to receive a certain score in order to be placed on a final list. Once you're placed on that list then the sheriff can select whom he wishes to promote, but you have to pass the process.

CA: When you were appointed, who appoints to major?

JP: The sheriff.

CA: How was that? Were you excited?

JP: Yes. I mean, it's pretty special because the higher you go in rank the lower the number of positions that are available in that rank. So when you're appointed major—you actually go from lieutenant that would be what they call an assistant watch commander, at least here in the jail. When you're appointed a major, your title changes to an assistant detention commander. Different promotions and appointments come with greater responsibility, greater authority and you tend to oversee a lot more people under you.

CA: What is your daily routine if you're an assistant detention commander?

JP: As a major, you oversee the activities of a shift during the day where you make sure that everybody that's under your command is following the rules and kind of doing their day to day functions.

CA: As a lieutenant colonel what are your daily functions?

JP: There's quite a bit. Right now one of my main focuses is we're expanding our facility so right now I'm involved a lot in and am a part of a transition team where we're just making sure the policies and the procedures and everything are on track and that we're ready and prepared for the opening of this new facility. I deal a lot in policies here, procedures, post orders, not to mention overseeing hundreds of employees.

CA: As a lieutenant colonel, are you going for the colonel?

JP: Again, with an appointment that's really not your decision. If there's a position open the sheriff will consider everybody that he feels is qualified to perform that function and he simply, solely makes that selection.

CA: I don't know the process for actually becoming head sheriff; Neil Warren is the head sheriff?

JP: Neil Warren is our sheriff and he's an elected official?

CA: Have you ever thought about . . . ?

JP: No. I'm not that ambitious. I'm where I want to be in a position of working in detention. If I am ever, or if I'm ever given the opportunity to be a colonel over this division I think I will have reached my top because that's where I want to be.

CA: With the population increase and the with the increasing crime and things like that, what can Cobb County do as in the school system, the churches, the actual county, what can they do to decrease that trend if at all?

JP: I think, and they do this now, our department as well as the local police departments, the more community involvement, they have such programs as COPS that type of thing and that's Community Oriented Police Services or something to that effect; but just be more

involved in the schools. Go out to the school and talk to them about crime and the consequences of crime and we do that now, so I think for them not to just kind of, a lot of people I think, especially the younger kids, they believe what they see on TV, they're no realistic person or role model as a police officer in their lives to tell them anything differently. Of course peer pressure and everything else is what they're going to listen to so I think as police officers and deputy sheriffs if we step up and get more involved in what they do and care about what they do, it would make a difference.

CA: What type of—of course, drugs play a major role in everything but drugs, what kind of, I mean, do most people who come in here, do they have problems with drugs and alcohol and things like that?

JP: They do. The great majority of our inmates have some issues with drug abuse, substance abuse, alcohol, you name it. About 75 percent of our inmate population has some association with drug abuse, or mental illness, another big issue which leads a person down that path to right or wrong. They end up in jail because they don't have the facilities to house a lot of mental health inmates so they end up here in jail. A good majority, of our inmate population has dealt directly or indirectly with some type of drug or substance abuse.

CA: I guess this goes back to the crime; how do you think that, same thing, going to the schools to decrease the drug and alcohol?

JP: My department has what we call a drug awareness day and we put that on at different schools every year and set up an agenda where we talk students about drug use and preventative measures and teach them some of the decisions they should be making from elementary school to middle school to high school. We bring out a lot of the things that we use to assist us in the detection of drugs, like we bring out our drug dog and drug van and most of the students appear to get a lot from it so we do practice what we preach. We are out in schools and getting involved.

CA: This is just an adult detention center. Is there a juvenile one?

JP: This is just an adult detention center. We do have a youth detention center which is down the road and where they house the juveniles now. Anybody that is at the age of seventeen and older comes to the adult jail. It's not eighteen, it's seventeen.

CA: So how many, well, I know I can't get too specific but is there a large majority of seventeen and eighteen year olds?

JP: There's not.

CA: Do you ever go work in the juvenile facility?

JP: No, that's two different, juvenile, the youth detention center is run by the state and we are a local government.

CA: Do you see yourself staying in the sheriff's department?

JP: Until I retire?

CA: How long? How do your children feel about it?

JP: They're used to it. I've been doing it so long, I've been in law enforcement now for twenty-two plus years so they don't know anything else. I do have that advantage as far as parenting to be able to share with them some of my experiences so hopefully they don't make the same mistakes that I see other people make. They appreciate it. They don't really worry about me since I'm in a jail they don't think I'm out on the road enforcing crimes so they're fine with it.

CA: So all you do is stay in the jail? You never go to serve warrants or things like that?

JP: I did for about a year and a half; they did move me to the operations division where I did work the roads so I do have some of that experience but then I was right back in the jail.

CA: Right where you want to be.

JP: Right where I want to be.

CA: Do either of your children or any of your fifteen siblings . .

JP: No, I'm the only one in law enforcement thank goodness. No, none of them have any aspirations to be in law enforcement.

CA: So of course you have a leg up on all the children, your children don't get to get away with some of the things probably other children do.

JP: No, they can't snow me too often. I've heard it all because I communicate quite a bit with everybody, not everybody, but most people that come into custody and so no, my kids can't pull anything on me. I'm pretty savvy.

CA: The inmates here, do they give you the respect you deserve?

JP: Yes, probably a good 80 percent do; they know we didn't place them here in jail; it was of their own doing. But the key to that is that our staff treats them with respect so we're big on our staff treating them with respect as opposed to forcing them to treat us with respect. We have to make sure they follow the rules, and that there is no abuse going on, that nobody's being discriminated against or anything like that but most of the guys, especially repeat offenders, they'll get away with what they can whether it's an extra meal or whatever games they can play they'll do it but for the most part they resolve themselves to the fact that they're in jail and they're going to be here.

CA: What's the most memorable experience you have had working here either good or bad or both?

JP: Probably the most memorable is my last appointment that I got to lieutenant colonel. That would probably be the most memorable thing.

CA: Have there been any problems actually in the jail, like when you were working here, any problems with the inmates, any problems acting out?

JP: Not with the staff. As far as inmate life here they fight, but it's always among themselves and it's always over something that you and I may look at as trivial but when you're in a jail and you don't have that freedom to just leave or just go out and go to Burger King or McDonald's or something that you take for granted, they fight over things because they have only a small amount of possessions with them so a lot of the fights are over what we consider to be trivial but it's very meaningful to them so we do have to go in and break those fights up and separate them and take whatever disciplinary action that we deem necessary so there's always that constant inmate altercation but it's not really directed at staff.

CA: Don't jails here do eleven, twenty-nine and under—eleven months and twenty-nine days and under and anything over a year goes to the state system?

JP: Yes, anything over a year, you'll be transferred to the state system. But it's kind of tricky and for the most part that is the standard rule. The judge can sentence a person to fourteen months to do in a jail but he has to specifically say he'll do time in the Cobb County Jail. So it's not that they automatically go to the state system; what that is geared to is if they're convicted of a misdemeanor, this is the maximum sentence that you can get. If you're convicted of a misdemeanor you won't get more than a year whether it's served here or in the prison system.

CA: This might sound kind of weird and TV-esque but do the inmates group up with each other by friends, neighborhoods, race?

JP: They do, they do. You can see them kind of group together; now we don't house them, we try to keep a mix of races so we don't have any problems. We really don't have any problems with gangs but there are on occasions through tattoos or whatever symbols or watching them do whatever kind of signage to each other, if they are in a gang and they're affiliated with each other on the outside they tend to hang together on the inside. Other than that we've not really experienced a problem with that type of cross culture as far as gangs beating up on the blacks or the whites.

CA: Right. That's more TV-ish.

JP: Yes, that's more like TV and I'm not saying it doesn't happen because we have to get to the bottom of every fight that occurs in here and sometimes we find out it has to do with

one gang member against another one but once we're made known of it they're separated.

CA: What type of work release programs do you all allow the prisoners to have and what type of, I can't think of the word, do they have to be a good inmate and perform certain things and have a certain—what type of criteria do they have to have?

JP: Once a person comes into custody after arrest and they don't have the means to get out we do have a classification system that assists in determining housing placements for inmates in custody based on criminal history, how many times have they been arrested, for what type of crimes, have they ever been in this jail before and if they were did they cause any problems. The real key to our classification is that we do try to separate those by charges, in other words we wouldn't put somebody that was charged with murder in a cell block with somebody that's charge with DUI. So the level of offense separates them as well. Now, a judge can sentence a person to custody and let's say, as an example, he sentenced John Doe to a year in jail. Under that sentence he is required to work, so we do have a work release program that's located in this complex and they're actually taken out of the main jail and housed at the work release facility. Those are the people that you see alongside the roads and they're picking up garbage and that type of stuff. They're being supervised, not by our deputy sheriffs but they're being supervised by county workers so we might take those workers and say, "Okay, Department of Transportation, you've got six inmate workers"—we call them inmate workers—"that we will send to you to assist you in whatever it is you do." So their employees will supervise them but that's after they undergo a safety and security class with us. We may send another six to the water department. We may send another three down here to the driver's license. Inmate workers are required to work. We will send those that have experience, like plumbers and painters to different areas and they can do that type of work. The other way to being housed at the work release center is that a judge will sentence somebody to however long but say, "I'm going to allow you to keep your job so that you can keep maintaining child support and you can help pay bills." Those people are called participants and what they do is they're housed there; we allow them, if they meet the criteria, to go out and maintain their job and then they have to come back into custody after that job is over. There are different ways to do that.

CA: Some people, do they live here who are the house, let's say—I've heard about this before, I don't know anyone—but where they spend five days of the week at home and then they come on the weekends to serve their time?

JP: Yes, now the judge can sentence a person to weekends only. The judge might say determine the inmate to be convicted of a misdemeanor, not really that serious but you're going to have to pay for whatever it was you did so the sentence is you to six weekends in the Cobb County jail. So they would report in on a Friday and be released on Sunday until they serve those consecutive weekends as ordered.

CA: What is the most common crime that you see coming into Cobb County?

- JP: Probably drug related charges, whether that drug is cocaine, methamphetamines, whatever, whether it's possession, selling, trafficking, all drug related matters involving some criminal activity.
- CA: I'm not sure whether this is appropriate to answer and you don't have to answer if it's not. I feel that a lot of people who get arrested for DUI and get arrested for drug possession and things of that nature, some, like a middle class or upper class person could bond themselves out. People in the lower class, do you see that as a problem that some people can't get out on bond for not serious crimes like robbery and things like that but things like drug possession and DUI.
- JP: No, and what's fair about the system is that if you are charged with a DUI there is always a bond associated with that DUI which is \$1,000. Everybody has that bond amount. Whether you have the means to post that bond is different so if someone is upper class was arrested for a DUI they may have that kind of money laying around to bond themselves out. Somebody that's unemployed that's charged with a DUI, they can still get out; we'll still let them out on \$1,000 bond; but they have to come up with that money. It kind of leaves out the discrimination because everybody has the opportunity to get out; it's the means whether or not they get out.
- CA: Do you get a lot of—you answered this kind of saying that there was an age group always in there—but do you see the younger people, what type of crimes do they commit? Is it a lot of possession?
- JP: Yes.
- CA: Okay, and the older people, is it the same thing, drugs?
- JP: I think the drug charges are real prevalent among all age groups. We don't see that many older individuals coming into custody. When I say older I mean people that are in their fifties and sixties unless they have been here over and over and over again. People that are older to me seem to commit more serious crimes as they begin to, whether it's a result of dementia or whatever, they tend to lose their grip on life, if you will. But between that age group, eighteen and thirty-four or so, the most prevalent crime is drugs.
- CA: Do you see a swing in violence of the younger—violent crimes of the younger people?
- JP: Absolutely. And with that young group, the common thread of course is the drugs but a lot of them are becoming what I see a lot more violent so you do get a lot of armed robberies and even so much as murder. We arrested a seventeen year old, I brought a seventeen year old a week ago on a murder charge and it stemmed from his friend stealing his soda pop. But when you look underneath it was associated with drugs, he was a drug user. When somebody's in that state of mind, you know, they don't think straight and they let their emotions take over. All of that underlying, common thread is drug use or abuse, in this case.

CA: How do you see the future in ten years? Do you see these problems getting worse?

JP: It's going to have to do with where our economy is. If our economy continues to improve we may see a decrease in crime, if not the increase of crime will continue. Second if our legislators, senators and our government officials would step up and put in place treatment facilities that will handle some of these drug issues, there is an available avenue for someone to go and get treatment without having the very limited options that they have now, I think you'll see a reduction in crime.

CA: How many people come in with the problem of drugs that you think, such as possession and that, do you think could pick a change if we just had more of those facilities?

JP: I think they could benefit from a treatment center. Right now people are being treated if they have the money to be treated, or if they have that family support. But if you made it more accessible for those who may not be able to afford it, it still would outweigh them having to come to jail. The taxpayers are going to pay one way or another. One way or another so which way would you choose? That's kind of the way I look at it. We would see that reduction if we had more help available to those that needed it and our economy was rocking right along.

CA: Do you have drug help in here like Alcoholics Anonymous and things like that in the jail?

JP: We do offer substance abuse programs, we offer parenting classes, I mean, we do offer self-help programs but their stay here is short most times because a lot of people come in and they bond right back out so we do offer some programs for them but they're not geared toward long term treatment, it's kind of like a brief overview on things that you might learn from skills and that kind of stuff. It's not designed to treat anybody.

CA: As a wrap up question, was your move from Florida to Cobb County a great decision?

JP: I think it was one of the best decisions I made.

CA: Do you think Cobb County is a great place to raise children and to live?

JP: Absolutely.

CA: I'm a Cobb County boy so I agree.

JP: It is; it really is. It has everything, culture, opportunities, whether it's employment and education, I mean, it's just a great place to live.

CA: Not only from me but from Dr. Scott thank you for letting me interview you today.

JP: Oh you're welcome, no problem.

END OF INTERVIEW

INDEX

Argyle Elementary

McEachern High School, 6

Prince, Janet

Background, 1

Father of, 1

Living in Albany, Georgia, 2

Meeting ex-husband, 2

Living in Germany, 3-4

Children of, 3-4, 6

Living in Kentucky, 4

Rearing children after divorce, 5-6

Entering Sheriff's Department in Florida, 5

Hired by Cobb County Sheriff's Dept., 5, 7

Transitioning from small town to big city, 6

On working in a jail, 7, 8, 12

Roles of a Lieutenant Colonel and deputy Sheriff, 7, 10, 13

Recidivism in Cobb County, 7-8

On crime and population growth in Cobb County, 8

Becoming a supervisor in a jail and chain of command, 9

Being appointed Commander, 10

Aspirations of, 11

On crime prevention, 11

On dealing with prisoners, 11, 13-14, 16

Youth detention in Cobb County, 11

On Cobb County's work release program for prisoners, 14-15

High frequency crimes in Cobb County, 14-15

On the need for drug treatment programs in prisons & jails, 15-16

Titusville, Florida

Location, 1

Race relations in, 4

Crime rate in, 5

Similarities with Cobb County Sheriff Dept, 6

Warren, Neil, 10

This item is part of the following collection:
Thomas Allan Scott, 1943-
Kennesaw State University Oral history project, 1978-
KSU/45/05/001

The collection is held by:
Kennesaw State University
Dept. of Archives, Special Collections, & Records Management
1000 Chastain Rd
Sturgis Library Rooms 215-226
Kennesaw, Georgia 30144
(770) 423-6289
archives@kennesaw.edu

To request permission to publish, reproduce, publicly display, broadcast, or distribute this material in any format, you must contact the Dept. of Archives, Special Collections, and Records Management.