

Andy Shaw: This is the oral history project of Century High School. The interviewee is Tim Erwert, the interviewer is Andy Shaw. The interview took place at the Hillsboro Civic Center on May 24th, 2005, at 10AM.

AS: So how long have you lived in Hillsboro?

Tim Erwert: I've actually lived in Hillsboro since 1971 and then I worked here since 1971.

AS: And how did you get the job?

TE: I had just got out of the marine core and we had to go back to school to finish up my college degree. I was looking for a short part time job and I found a full time job at the engineering agency. They allowed me to work a flex schedule as I worked here, so I just stayed here, and one thing led to another and here I am 34 years later.

AS: As the city manager what are the things you do?

TE: Well, I'm the interface between the professional staff of the city and the city council for much of the building and the city. The mayor and the council set the policy direction and prioritize the things that they were to be done in general. ___ and the conjunction of the budget committee set the budget parameters and its up to me to hire all of the staff and or delegate the how to take care of the organization of the city and staff that I'm in charge in terms of direct supervision with all the department managers.

AS: Do you oversee the city, as part of your job?

TE: Yea, I'm essentially the top staff person and so I can, for example, the police chief works for me, the fire chief works for me, the library directors.

AS: What have you seen as being problems in Hillsboro in the last 10 years?

TE: Well, the most recent problem, one of which relating to crime and law enforcement is graffiti. We are having a surge of graffiti right now. Drugs are more of an increasing problem, in the last ten years. Right now its methamphetamine and it's been other things leading up to that point have been cocaine and crack. Its not as at large a problem here as it in many of the other central cities.

AS: How do you feel about the law enforcement in Hillsboro and all the police work?

TE: I have a great deal of confidence in my police chief and the organization that has put together, the police department and the Hillsboro Police Bureau has done. The fact is we are working with limited resources and we could do more with more money. But I think with the resources that they have, they do a wonderful job.

AS: Going back, how do you stop the graffiti and the methamphetamine?

TE: Well each one has different solutions. Methamphetamine are one problem that requires work in the national level and the state level and that is stopping the access the people have to the materials they use to make the meth. They cant stop the demand, people are always going to be hooked on drugs of different kinds, and people just have tendencies to have certain weaknesses that to play upon them the individuals play upon them and people set up traps and get them hooked on them because they can make money off of it. So I have to deal with all of those aspects, I have to try to prevent the access to the drugs they use to make the methamphetamine and it's the cold tablets, and that's difficult I see because those have always been sold at consumer stores. And so now the

Andy Shaw: This is the oral history project of Century High School. The interviewee is Tim Erwert, the interviewer is Andy Shaw. The interview took place at the Hillsboro Civic Center on May 24th, 2005, at 10AM.

state legislatures and the national legislatures are looking for ways to improve that program. But there are lots of other normal household ingredients that are used in the actual process in cooking. So trying to find ways to track the sales of these quantities from somebody's use in the process of cooking it. Methamphetamine in particular is difficult at times because they can have just a lab to cook and it uses all fairly common things and you can do it in a small area. So its extremely difficult to crack down. One of the things you need is an educated citizenry and people willing to tell the police if they see suspicious things or they smell suspicious things and so getting out into the neighborhood and teaching people about what to report is one of the things about policing that has changed in a little more than a decade. It has gone much more of a community policing style, where we enlist the help of the community and to try to educate citizens through the PTA's, liberal groups, through service clubs, about what will awaken them through the eyes and ears and help us see what is going on and communicate what is going on. We cant solve every problem.

AS: When you first started as city manager, 15 years ago, what were some of the problems then?

TE: Meth was a drug of choice at that time and there was cocaine and crack as well and marijuana which has been ongoing. The drug problems were raised since. A lot of crime problems are related to drugs problems because drug addicts need money to buy the drugs and so they steal things and the bad crimes back then were break-ins in residencies and apartments and those types of things. I think now, in recent times there are a lot more car clouts because they can steal stereos and cds out of cars and steal other electronic things that are of more value than used to be than they had if they had at homes, but now they have those things in cars. But its always been a matter of theft related. We've never had a huge amount of a lot of violent crimes and we are more fortunate in that respect. There have been a few murders that have been drug related and some gangs. Gangs have been an interesting situation because there are gangs that have seem to get worse at times and more problematic and then at other times they calm down and die down and became not as much important. And I think right now they are more important partly because of the graffiti and we have had some drive-by attempts at shooting houses. Its all the policing side of what we try to do is to get out in the community and get people undercover who get out there and try to get informants who can give us information about the gangs and it is really hard to do. It takes a lot of work and time and patience but over time it gives us good information. Probably the biggest thing since I've been city manager has been the emphasis on crime prevention. Again education fo the citizen the community policing and to get out there in the community and to teach people what they can do and why its important for him to play that role and we spend a lot of effort in prevention not just crime and law enforcement. When I first started in this business, a lot of focus on the police department was enforcement and arresting people and gave tickets, where as now much more emphasis is on the prevention so we don't have to give tickets.

AS: What is your take on having police officers in schools and communities?

TE: That is part of community policing, that's part of people feeling comfortable to be around police officers and not be afraid of them so citizens are more likely to approach

Andy Shaw: This is the oral history project of Century High School. The interviewee is Tim Erwert, the interviewer is Andy Shaw. The interview took place at the Hillsboro Civic Center on May 24th, 2005, at 10AM.

the police officer. It is being there in the community and schools and getting used to us being there.

AS: Have we ever had a lot of domestic violence issues lately?

TE: There are domestic violence issues, and there have been forever, that's been part of society. There are certain cultures where that type of thing is more prevalent because of the fact that the culture teaches the male is the dominant person and is in charge and do what the male says. And if the woman does not what they want, they take out anger on them. It is a very unfortunate thing and so part of the prevention is education in the community and educating the people from the cultures that are set –up that way. There are also some female dominated cultures that have the same problem. We tend not to get as many people from that culture as from the male dominated culture.

AS: And how do you prevent the domestic violence?

TE: Well its very difficult. Trying to educate people that its not acceptable here it may have been acceptable from the culture they came from, but its one of the things by doing that through the schools and teaching the children its not right and trying to get ways to teach the parents that its not right. But again that's something we can do and we also have to train police officers how to react when they get there and how to deal with the situation. Theres actually a majority with disturbances were a major cause of police officer injuries because it can escalate and tempers can be totally out of control by the time we even learn something has gone wrong so our people can get there and our people walking into a very very dangerous situation. We have to recognize that to train our officers appropriately and to deal with that. I think that's one of the other things that is on the policing side. Police officers are much much better educated, much much better trained on how to do their job and training isn't just one time they have ongoing refresher training throughout their career to keep up with speed on various pieces of the job and keep them up-to-date. And as techniques for handling situations change, they have to learn in an ongoing process.

AS: Is there anything that you do different than the Beaverton city manager does?

TE: Well, there isn't a Beaverton city manger and there isn't a Portland city manager because they are different forms of governments. Both of the cities in the state are city managers. One is council manager and mayor and council are lay people and city manager is the head staff person. Portland is a commissioned owned where he chose the council members and staff and its assigned by the mayor's departments and his choice, and the mayor can change those any time he wants. It creates a situation of competition as opposed to operating the city. In Beaverton's form, it's a strong mayor form where the mayor serves as both as chief elected official and the chief of staff official. And so you kind of have both the city mayor and city manager. Fortunately, they've elected someone with administrative skills. So anyway, how do they deal with things in Beaverton, its interesting being because the top staff of official elected officials is the same person. He really is probably more proned to be hit by the community by the things they don't like. He is also hit with things that deal with legislation problems as well. I don't know

Andy Shaw: This is the oral history project of Century High School. The interviewee is Tim Erwert, the interviewer is Andy Shaw. The interview took place at the Hillsboro Civic Center on May 24th, 2005, at 10AM.

because I really have to be within that government to how things work, but that would a really interesting question for the police chief.

AS: Now how has crime changed in the past 25 years?

TE: Well criminals have gotten more sophisticated, they have set-up better networks, and so we have new types of crimes. Electronic related crimes, like lots of our white collared crimes, but again with the meth we have a lot of real passion of burglaries in car clout and apartments. We also have a lot of white-collared embezzlements to computer fraud.

AS: And as these crimes are being committed, what do you think and how do you react to that, what can you do to prevent that?

TE: Well we try to, our police department, tries to change with the changes in the community and the changes in crime. For example, the education. We found that as crime changes the best way to deal with it is to try to take up the educational components because through the school resource officers to try to head off people who are just starting to enter crime at the school level and school age. We try to head that off and make them feel more comfortable around the police and to prevent them. We set up a special unit as needed, we have a special traffic unit because we are getting expanded because we are having more problems with speeding. We have to be flexible to shift and to shift your emphasis on where the problem seems to be most of the time. With the computer crimes we set up a high tech network, which consists of people who are computer experts and we get a lot of high sector people. And that's another thing that is different today, is that police offers a lot of partnerships in the community. We partner up with apartment managers, we partner and help in how they select tenants, whether to avoid a lot of trouble makers congregating in a more complex area. We partner up with the schools and we use the school resource officers there. We partner up with the Chamber of Commerce and try to work with the business in preventing crimes like counterfeit and check verification and falsifying checks and as well as shoplifting. And so a wide variety, and the way we approach them today is perpertrating and teach them, how they as a business person can make it more difficult for them to be successful.

AS: How has the community reacted to the different changes in the law enforcement and the crime?

TE: Something, that I didn't report, is that Hillsboro is much more diversity than 15 years ago. When the high tech companies started using the area, we had a population that got much much more diverse, and so we have our largest minority population has been Hispanic and it still is. But even the nature of that has changed, than its more varied. Where most of our Hispanic population were Mexican, where now its now acceptable from Latin America and Mexico, and somebody was telling me that there are different ethnicities and that creates a lot of problems with communications. So education is important and education about the cultural differences here and whats acceptable here versus there, is much more difficult. That makes it harder, and what we have to do, is generalize when we have large population groups. We have a group of Asian immigrants from a variety of countries who have lumped together because there are some similarities in those cultures. And then we have Hispanic communities and pretty much all other

Andy Shaw: This is the oral history project of Century High School. The interviewee is Tim Erwert, the interviewer is Andy Shaw. The interview took place at the Hillsboro Civic Center on May 24th, 2005, at 10AM.

countries. But I think Intel have people in there multiple campuses around here from every country except one or two. We have become a melting pot. And so that has created some sticky situations. Our police force has become very integrated. We have a lot more women in the police force. Years and years ago, they wouldn't have tried to be a police officer because it just wasn't something women did. But as women have gotten more integrated in the work force, some realized that's what they want to do, and more and more women are inspired to be police officers. And so our numbers of women in the police force have been steadily rising.

AS: How has 911 affected Hillsboro?

TE: In Washington County, we have WACCCO. And its our 911 agency and that's where the 911 calls come in and dispatch go out, and it's a reliant system. And so what 911 has really done for us is, it has done a number of things, number one it allowed significant cost saving by consolidating the 911 agency and it allows us to track back to event problems called by 911, we can track it to the address and its not capable to trace them, its illegal it shows up on the screen, where that problem is coming from, so we know where the person called from, and so it helps determine a lot about how to respond to a particular call. It also allows us to have the dispatcher to work very quickly. He works with the cars from one city and so they have an idea of where people are and who's patrolling them. It makes for more efficient use of the forces we got, and we can cover more territory. When I started in the city in 1971, the population was just under 15,000 and today its 80,000. Its gone more than a half square miles to 25 square miles and so we have a much much larger territory and a much more spread out diverse population. We also have because of our women have more lookers here than paid, and we have population today. And it used to be we used to be an exporter of workers and so workers would work all throughout Washington County and other places and we had a lot more people who lived in Hillsboro and worked outside of Hillsboro. Then the opposite today, we have more people driving into Hillsboro for work in greater numbers than we have driving out of Hillsboro, but we still have a lot of people driving out, you think they would choose to live close to home but work close to they live and live close to where they work but people don't choose that they travel all these different places and a lot more traffic. And that adds to the traffic that they speeding, tagging through neighborhoods and failing to yield to pedestrians and because of the congestion on the roads you get into road rage, and that's a relatively newly recognized crime.

AS: What do you think about the youths getting into trouble?

TE: Well, that seems to happen at a younger and younger age, and we are trying to prevent that from our school resource officers. We work with students who have instructors who teach D.A.R.E. and teach other C.R.E.A.T.E, where we actually have officers and non-sworn personal police officers that teach inside the classrooms and trying to help kids learn why they shouldn't get into a life of crime and how to avoid it. Those are very important things, but in reality is, there are always been a group of youths who get into trouble and create problems. One of the big partnerships we have are the Social Service Agencies who can help families who are recovering from drugs and families who have troubles and go to counseling. We also partner up with other non-

Andy Shaw: This is the oral history project of Century High School. The interviewee is Tim Erwert, the interviewer is Andy Shaw. The interview took place at the Hillsboro Civic Center on May 24th, 2005, at 10AM.

profit social service organizations, such as Shelter, which provides shelter for women who have been batter and their children, so they can live without their spouses. So again, its forming partnerships where all of that is reported and trying to keep people, try to keep young people away from that. I think we have a lot fo success and have turned a lot of people around but we still have a lot of people getting caught and hopefully getting caught and get turned around. Then we have shortages of jail space and that handicaps our police because when they arrest somebody they cant put them in a juvenile home because there isn't enough room and they are back out on the street. And same with the jails, they are having to release people because they are overcrowded and so they need to be a higher act of crime. And then they arrest the same people again and again.

AS: Is there anything that you don't like that is going on that we [the city of Hillsboro] can improve on the anything you can improve on?

TE: I'm sure there are things we can improve on, but I'm very comfortable with the job that Chief Luoie and staff have done and they have done an excellent job. But I'm sure there are things we can do better on. In terms of crime, a lot of crime I don't like happen, so we try to do things that we can.

AS: Is there anything you wanted to tell, anything I haven't gone over.

TE: There probably is, but I've rambled on about most of it.