7-23-2002

Scholl, Earl (Doc) Oral History Interview: History of Law Enforcement in Holland

Matthew Nickel

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/holland_law

Part of the Archival Science Commons, and the Oral History Commons

Recommended Citation

http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/holland_law/9


This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Oral History Interviews at Digital Commons @ Hope College. It has been accepted for inclusion in History of Law Enforcement in Holland by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Hope College. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@hope.edu.
Oral History Project 2002
Joint Archives of Holland
Holland Police

Interviewee:
Earl “Doc” Scholl
(edited)

Conducted by:
Matthew Nickel
23 July 2002

ABSTRACT: (Topics Appear in similar order of Transcript)
Earl Scholl, Nickname “Doc”, Medical Work, Emergency Unit, How he came to be an officer, Helping the Community, Changes in Holland, Childhood, Family, Mentor, Desire to help people and how to help, Response to help, Story of Mr. And Mrs. Lee, Social connection of Police and Community, Hardening of the Officer, Story of the young single mother, Humanity in the officer, What scares an officer (Story of a Sunday afternoon domestic call), Domestic Violence, Officer’s role outside the traditional part of the job, Changes in the community, Traffic, Stress of an Officer, Difficult calls and reaction, Family concerns involving the job, Challenge of Medical Training, Rewards of the job, Selective enforcement, Seatbelt safety, Favorite ways to help people, Friends, Community perception of police, Police perception of the community, Growing
Interview took place in the basement of VanWylen library, on Hope College's campus

ES: He was a tall guy.

MN: Ollie Wieringa?

ES: Ollie Wieringa.

MN: Yeah, I interviewed him a few weeks ago.

ES: Good for you.

MN: He was neat guy.

ES: Yes. He came up to me one time years ago, in church, and he said, “Are you on the Holland Police Department?” Then he introduced himself and we talked a little after that. We talked a little bit after that. Quite a guy.

MN: I am curious, how did you get the name “Doc”?

ES: I got the name Doc, right after I started on the police department I used to ride with an officer by the name of Darryl Raterink, who is now retired, and “Rat,” which was his nickname. We used to stop for coffee at the Notier Funeral Home on 16th and Fairbanks and have coffee. Well at that time, both funeral homes ran Ambulances. Dykstra’s and Notier-Langeland ran ambulances out of their facilities. I remember one day, Rat and I were sitting there and two guys come running out and they jumped in the Ambulance and they took off on an Ambulance run and I thought “That looks kind of cool, looks kind of exciting!” So later I talked to the guy in charge there by the name of Steve Stegaman, and I
say hey, I said “You know, I get three days off a week, it would be kind of interesting working ambulance.” He goes, “Yeah, we’ll bring you on. But you have to get advanced first aid.” That was no problem. So I went to the American Red Cross and got my advanced first aid and I started running Ambulance. I don’t remember the exact dates, but Steve came to me and said, “If you want to run ambulance you have to do a thing called EMT.” Emergency Medical Technician. I said, “Well, what does that encounter?” He said go to Grand Valley State University and get your emergency medical state license to run Ambulances. I got some V.A. funds because I am a Veteran. At that time the course ran from April through August and it cost $150 for a basic EMT Life Support. Anyway, I got my EMT license in 1974. And my wife bought an old plastic tackle box and Steve filled it full of medical supplies and they gave it to me as a gift. I started putting that in my own personal vehicle, because I felt, if I ever came across a situation, I had the training and no equipment, and this had happened where I have come across automobile accidents on vacation, or just around town and helped out. So then I wrote a letter to the Chief Charles Lindstrom requesting that if there was a bad accident or a medical emergency that I could be sent, not only to keep up skills, but to use my equipment, and he granted that request. I used to carry my medbag from the car, my personal car up to the police station, set it in the hallway, and after briefing, I would take it and put it in my patrol car, and the joke started, “Well, here comes the doctor.” Me with my medical bag, and just a couple guys started calling me that and pretty soon it snowballed, and in 1976, I became a traffic officer who did accident
investigations. At that time the Sheriff’s Department, Ottawa County Sheriff’s Department had developed what they called an E Unit, or an Emergency Unit, and it was a Paramedic Unit, which I was very interested in. I came very close to applying to the Sheriff’s Department for a paramedic E Unit Officer. But I had already had five years on the police department in Holland here and I thought, well, five years is quite a bit to give up and be transferred. So I got together with Steve Stegman and I said to him “It would really be kind of neat if the city of Holland would have an E Unit, and Emergency Unit. I don’t know all the developments, but we pushed for it, and I kind of want to think that I was a little bit instrumental in putting the bug in someone’s ear. But anyway, in 1977 we got a Ford Station Wagon, a Ford LT station wagon. It was equipped with basic life support medical equipment. And at the same time the fire department also started a rescue squad. Then I was in the E Unit, the Medical Unit from 1977 till I think 1998. Then it was disbanded and all EMS was turned over to the Fire Department. But I continued to carry my medical bag after the E Unit was dismissed from the police department. I had another made up and I kept that, and I have it in my own personal car again today. But that is how “Doc” started. Probably 90%, 80% of the people I know call me “Doc”. It was a great honor, and what was really nice was when the police department, when I retired, I kind of put a request in that my number “Tom 8” which I carried from 1976 till I retired, was the only unit I ever used in those twenty some years, those 25 plus years and the police department in connection with the Ottawa County 911 retired my number. [Laughter] It was a great honor!
MN: Should hang your badge on the wall as they would in sports arenas.

ES: I got a proclamation from the Police Department presented to me at my retirement party and it says that my number has been retired, kind of like a hockey jersey. [Laughter]

MN: Yes, exactly!

ES: It was a great honor. I could of brought it and you could have made a copy of it. And then they presented my badge, a patch and a plaque with 30 plus years of service in the city of Holland. I think if we would have kept the E Unit, the Emergency Unit till later years, I think I would have stayed. Because that was my love. I enjoyed running the accidents and the medical emergencies and helping people, but I had a good career.

MN: Sounds like. What was it like being on the force, off the top of your head, what did it feel like?

ES: Well, my background was kind of a poor childhood and I was a very very poor student. Didn’t ever go to college except for a few courses at Muskegon Community. I met my wife’s uncle who was Sergeant Glenn Geerts who is now retired from the Holland Police Department, and he said, if you are interested in Police work, join the reserves, which I did. In 1970 I got on the police reserves in April of 1970, and it just felt great. I felt accomplished. At that time I was working at a local factory which I despised my job. It was just running the machine and you didn’t further your education, it was just a repetitious job. Anyway, I signed up for a couple of courses at Muskegon Community College in October of ’71 I was hired full time by Chief Lindstrom, and I was very proud of...
myself for what I had accomplished, as a police officer. And then I was in the patrol division for five years and then I transferred over to traffic where I was from '76 till now. It was a, to be on the police department is, back in the early '70s it was, I think the people respected you a little more. It just was a great feeling to be out there and to be able to help people. They looked up to you and you could help people in different situations.

MN: What do you think was the connection, what do you think, perhaps why would citizens and the community look to you guys, do you think?

ES: Holland was a much smaller community back then and pretty much Christian based religious community and just, I think they had a lot of respect for the police and what we did for them. It is just so different now, than it was when I first started.

MN: What do you think changed?

ES: Well, I think the influx of businesses coming in and the city's growing and you get different cultures coming in. A lot of the churches adopted or sponsored different cultures to the area. Industry has grown, all over Holland. It gave, right near Lake Michigan, a lot of people like the area. I think we just boomed, and with growth, you have problems. Holland is still a good community. I grew up in Muskegon and I don't think I would ever move back there.

MN: So you are not a native Hollander then?

ES: Nope, I was born in Germany and I was, my father used to own a restaurant in Montigue Michigan, which is north of Muskegon. My mother passed away when I was eight years old and I went to Muskegon and I lived with an aunt who raised
Earl “Doc” Scholl - OHP - 16 July 2002

me. My father had drudged around and came to Holland and he got me a summer job here and I consequently ended up staying here. That was in 1966.

MN: When did you move to America from Germany?

ES: We came here, I believe, in 1950. We originally went to Muskegon. I think my father went to school there and then he purchased this restaurant up in Montigue. And then consequently my mother got cancer and she died in 1956. He went his way and that was when I went to live with my aunt.

MN: You mentioned you were married?

ES: I am married and I have two children and two grandkids.

MN: Oh wow! What is your wife’s name then?

ES: My wife’s name is Marcia. Marcia is a Holland native, and I met her working at the Meijer store on the north side when I was in High School. She was a cashier and I was a bagger.

MN: What are your children’s names?

ES: My son Steven is 31 years old, he is married, his wife’s name is Rachel. They have two children, Nicholas who is six, and Taylor who is two. My daughter is Shelley and she is married to a gentlemen by the name of Todd Neldon. They have no children. They live in Allegan. Todd works for Kalamazoo Public Safety and my son Steve works here for Hope College Public Safety.

MN: You said you became a police officer by being in the reserves first?

ES: Yes.

MN: Is there anything that prompted you to make the switch to work as a full time officer?
ES: I just saw the opportunity to help people, and I thought police work would be a good avenue to do that.

MN: Was there any individual or anybody who was a mentor, someone who really encouraged you to make that move or was it something that you found on your own?

ES: I think I looked up to my wife’s uncle Glenn Geerts who retired as a sergeant. I got to ride with him prior to becoming a reserve and that stemmed my interest. I didn’t think I would make the grade because of my education, in fact I think I was the last high school graduate to ever be hired at the Holland Police Department. Now it is a minimum of an Associates degree and then Bachelors degree for most of the officers, a four-year degree. I fell in at the right time.

MN: Did Glenn encourage you a lot to join?

ES: I don’t think he encouraged me, but just being a reserve and watching the other officers do their work, it looked interesting, exciting!

MN: What was it like helping people, so many officers say, I really want to help out. I hear you say that too, maybe it is not even tangible, what is that desire, how did you want to help and how did you try to help people?

ES: Most of my career I helped them in automobile accidents, and a lot of them of course in medical emergencies. Periodically if you felt the bond between the people, I would go up to the hospital and see how they are doing. I can remember one incidence, myself and officer Dave Pedersen, who is currently still on the police department. He and I helped an Illinois family at a crash at 32nd and US 31. They were from out of state and their vehicle was smashed up and one of
their children, two of their children were ejected from the vehicle and one had a very severe head injury. And, I remember Dave and I after we got off duty we took their luggage to Spectrum, or Butterworth Hospital at the time. Just to help out the family and recover it from the vehicle and took it to Grand Rapids. It is just such a rewarding feeling, just trying to make the world a better place, our country a better place to live.

MN: I bet when you help out, people really, how do people respond?

ES: Just appreciative. I know at my retirement party, an open house at the fire department. We were... I was overwhelmed at the amount of people who came, I bet you there were like 300 people my wife estimates. I still don't have a final tally, but I have not had time to sit down and read the guestbook, but there was a gal who came and most people who come through the door you recognize them as friends or relatives or acquaintances. One gal was standing there and I thought, who was this lady? She came up to me and she said "Hi my name is Lois French. Ten years go you helped my husband and I believe he was in an automobile crash. He, I think needed a ride home or couldn't get ahold of his wife or anybody and he lived in Zeeland, so I ended up taking him home. He is since deceased but she remembered that, and just wanted to come and thank me and I was pretty over taken by that. But I think the highlight of my career as far as friendship goes, I was working Tulip Time and this is in 1978. I got dispatched on a medical emergency to Windmill Island on a man down. When I got there was a group that had been on a tour bus from the State of New York. This elderly man had suffered a CVA or it looked like a stroke to me. We treated him at the scene.
We transported him to the Hospital. Of course at the time, we had to do a report on it, so not getting the victim’s information at the scene, you’d go up to the hospital. While I was at the hospital, this gentleman’s wife was sitting there and I think they were both, well he was 81 years old at the time. I went over to his wife and I said, “ma’am…” Because the bus was leaving, they had to go back to, they had another stop in Ohio and then they ran him back to New York, so these people were stuck here. So I went up to the lady and I said, “Lady, do you have any arrangements, where are you going to stay tonight?” She says, well, I don’t know. I was thinking, I will get a motel room. Well, you won’t get a motel room here in Holland at Tulip time. So I said, “I’ll do some checking for you.” I called, at that time we didn’t have that many motels like we do now, an abundance of motels. I called around and there was nothing available and I did call the Point West Inn, which is no longer there anymore. They said yeah, we have one room for one night and that’s $50. At that time that was a lot of money. So I went to Mrs. Lee. “I found a room for you but it is $50.” She said, “I can’t afford that.”

“Well, let me do some further checking.”

So I went to another room and called my wife. I said, “I have an elderly couple he is going to be in the hospital here at Holland Hospital for at least three days, and his wife is a retired Baptist school teacher.” I said, “They need a place to stay.” So she said, Marcia said, “Okay.” That day after I got off duty I picked her up at the hospital and I brought her to our home and got her settled, and then took her back to the hospital for a visit with her husband. She stayed with us for three
days, after the three day period he got out of the hospital and I took him to a local travel agent and got him some airline tickets, they purchased airline tickets and we took them to the airport and they went home, we got a nice thank you letter from them and an invitation to go out and see them in New York, so later that summer in August, my wife and two kids, we went out to see them. We went out twice actually, over the years, and one time to Arizona where they resided in the wintertime and they came back here once or twice to see us.

MN: That is so neat!

ES: That was a neat experience, they are both deceased now, but I believe he lived till he was 91 years old. It was a neat experience.

MN: Oh wow... What is the social element like, how does the Holland community and the Holland Police interact? How have you seen them interact in your career?

ES: Back when I first started we had Detective Marty Hardenberg, I remember he went around to a few schools, just prior to my time, and then we had a school officer by the name of Paul Birch, and he is also retired. Paul was our school officer, and he just did the various different schools. I think, of course domestic violence became a problem. The police department started the community services unit and they had a couple of people who worked out of that unit following up on domestic violence and child abuse and things like that, and since then the programs have really expanded. They had the DARE program, now they have started, the county started the WEMET, a drug team unit. So there is a lot of different programs that the police department does. I think they do with other organizations they work together with to better the community. Holland High
School has a police officer in it now full time and that is something that I thought I would never see. Policeman in a school. They have assigned an officer to the school at, it is call Central High School for second opportunity students. It’s quite interesting to that how police officers have had to go into our schools, it is sad but needed I guess.

MN: I guess when people go through their careers sometimes they experience unusual experiences, things not from the norm, did you have any of those kinds of experiences? Unusual learning experiences that maybe influenced you or made you see your career in a different way?

ES: I think one thing, I always felt that treating people civilly was very important. You don’t see that in our community, in some aspects of our community. To this day I don’t understand why people treat each other the way they do. It is just crazy. And people that use the system. The social services system, where they can just get a job. I think police officers get a little hardened and cynical because you see people use the system and it gets very frustrating when a grown human being has the capability of making something of himself. I mean, I did. I was a high school graduate, poor. Very poor student, and I made something out of myself, and I am proud of that, and I don’t know why people just use the system. I can tell you a story about a gal I used to pick with one of my other part time jobs, I don’t know if you want me to go into that or not?

MN: Sure.

ES: I’ve always worked part time either ambulance, I worked ambulance for 13 years and I drove Dial-a-Ride for a while. A gal I used to pick up at an old motel here
in Holland which is now torn down. I picked her up one day, and she always called me Officer Scholls. I think she had quite a bit of respect for me but I always went to her parents on domestic violence, just a hodgepodge of kids, and just a crazy situation. Anyway, this gal lived on her own and she had like three or four children, she said to me one day, I picked her up and said, “Where are you going today?” Take me to the Washington Square mini-mart that is one the corner of 18th and Washington. You know, why don’t you walk across the street to Family Fare, you can save yourself a bus ticket, and you can get your groceries right there and walk. “Oh no,” she said, “I get my bus ticket free.” “I can charge my groceries at the minute-mart,” where she is going to pay double. As we pulled out of the parking lot, she said to me, she said, “You know officer Scholls, if I can have one more baby I can get enough money from the government to get a Curtis-Mathis Color TV. Curtis-Mathis at the time was right next door to this old hotel, motel, called the Tulips City Motel. I just shake my head. Oh, six, seven months later I picked her up again and I said, “Where are you going to go today?” She said, I am going to go the minute-mart. Oh guess what Officer Scholls, I am going to have me a baby! And now I am getting my color TV. Unbelievable. Probably these kids had two or three different fathers. Just mind boggling. Unbelievable.

MN: As an officer, how do you keep from the cynical, without becoming hardened about seeing these kinds of things?

ES: I don’t know, I think I just blow it off. My wife over the years, she says, I wish I can blow things off like you can. But I had an old sergeant, years ago, Clarence
VanLangevelde. We called him CVL. He was quite a guy from the old rough talking sergeant. I learned a lot from sarge. I sat down one day with him and I was talking about a young couple that I went to. A domestic, a family fight. And they were newlyweds, didn’t have many friends in the area, didn’t have any church affiliation. I said to him, I said, “you know sarge, I have been thinking about inviting them kids over tomorrow, our house, for dinner. Be friends with them.” He says, “Listen here, when that door closes behind you, you leave it here, or you are going to find yourself in trouble.” He was right. I mean you want to help people, but there is a limit. You have to cut it off and leave it there. You are not going to save the world, you are not going to be able to help everybody. That was a good thing he told me. Because I think if I would have, he would have gotten very frustrated. And people, as I became a more mature, older officer, I learned more about society. They take advantage of you. People will take advantage of you if they can. I am willing to help to all lengths, but don’t take advantage of me. Don’t try to pull the wool over my eyes. And you will get that in this job. It was good information sarge gave me.

MN: Good advice.

ES: Yes. Good advice. He was a neat guy.

MN: Do you think that a lot of people would have taken advantage of officers in that situation? Do you think that is typical?

ES: Yeah, I think in some situations. I mean we deal with different levels of quality of people. For instance, our city Mission, that is a great organization, but people take advantage of it. Just because they don’t have the fortitude to go out and look
for a job to better themselves. There is work out there if you want to work. It may be work that you don’t want to do. I mean, I worked at the factory. I hated it, but I was dedicated to it. In fact when I left there to come to the police department I took a twenty-five cents-an-hour pay cut per hour.

MN: That is a lot of money.

ES: In 1971 that was a lot of money. Pay cut to come to the police department. People can do it, but they don’t want to. I don’t understand that part of society.

MN: Do you think there is a reason?

ES: I don’t know, it will always be, I mean, you see people who have been sleeping in our lobby at the police department, which some of the sergeants tolerate and others don’t. But they have no place to go, they are alcoholics and the mission would take them because they can’t be intoxicated or have been drinking to stay at the mission. Homeless people in Holland, I never dreamed I’d see that. Never. But we have them.

MN: Is there anything, on the job, was there anything that made your heart skip a beat or maybe made you nervous?

ES: Yeah. I responded to a, I think going back to, backing up a little bit, when I was still on the patrol division I got dispatched to a domestic on a Sunday afternoon, which, like I tell people now, nobody wanted to work back there on Sundays because nothing happened. Now you don’t want to work on Sundays because everything happens. But this was a day like today, sunny beautiful day. But one o’clock Sunday afternoon I called my wife.

She said, “How are you doing?”
I said, "Good."

She said, "What is going on?"

I said, "Not a thing."

Ten minutes later I was on the floor getting my butt kicked by two ex convicts. I responded to a house on east 17th street on domestic, along with another officer. When I pulled up, I was about a three or four year rookie yet. Hadn’t had a lot of experience. When I got up to the house I got out of the police cruiser and I could hear this ungodly screaming coming from inside the house. I am thinking, where is my backup, I hope they are coming. I felt the need that I had to get in there, to intervene with whatever was going on. I walked up to the door, the door opened, and this guy, about six foot six he says, "What the hell do you want?" "Well sir," I said, "I understand there was a little disturbance here and I said, would somebody call the police.” Like I said, he was about six foot five, six-six, big strong guy, reached out, picked me up with one hand and set me inside the house. And I thought, I am in trouble. To go back on the story, this gentleman who picked me up was at his in-laws house with his wife and a drunk friend, they were all drunk. Conversation lead that the father-in-law said to the son-in-law that his daughter could have got better, could have gotten a better mate. He hauls off and punches father-in-law in the nose. In fact father-in-law was sitting on the sofa bleeding from the nose when I entered the residence. So anyway, I am in the house and there is a lot of screaming, yelling, smoke filled room, beer bottles all over. I thought, I got to get some help here and I reached over to get my portable, and his drunk friend of the guy who had picked me up, came across the room and
he grabbed my wrist and he said, “you are not calling any more M-- F-- cops over here.” I pushed him against the wall and I said, “Hey dude, just be cool. I am going to tell my dispatcher that everything is okay here.” About the same time, the guy who hauled me into the house grabbed me around the throat and he literally flipped me over his coffee table, the telephone went flying and I remember laying on the ground screaming in my radio for help. The guy came across the room and he was kicking me in the side and the other guy was trying to get my gun out of my holster. That was probably the most scared that I had ever been in my career. But help got there, and I did get an elbow off into this guys mouth and he got off me and my backup got there, I told the other officers that these two guys were under arrest and they both said, “we are not going anywhere.” They had just gotten out of the jail. Not too long ago, they both served time for Robbery Armed in Jackson Prison. There was quite a scuffle, someone had pulled a knife, one of the two guys, but we could never prove it. But we got outside and had quite a fight, and eventually we got them handcuffed and down to the police station. That was probably the most scared, the most afraid I have even been in my life. Gangster trying to get a gun out of your holster. That was very scary. And I thought, “Boy do I want any part of this?” Because I had gone to a few bar fights where everything, usually when the police show up everybody calms down, you know, they have respect. These guys were just ruthless. I think I am sure that if he had gotten my gun out of my holster I would have been dead.

MN: Were those kinds of incidences rare?
ES: Very rare. But how quick something can happen. I mean, twelve minutes earlier I was talking with my wife on the phone in the police station telling her how bored I was and a few minutes later I am suffering from a nosebleed, and some bumps and bruises.

MN: It seems so unreal.

ES: It happens all the time now. I mean, domestic violence is just incredible. Just incredible. Very dangerous.

MN: Chief Kruitoff had said that domestic violence was one of his major concerns. Domestic violence because it is something that is a learned behavior. With children.

ES: And I saw that in my career. I went to family fights involving Mr. and Mrs. So-and-so. Then their children married, and fighting and so on. It just snowballs. They don’t kill each other, sometimes we are happy to hear that they packed their bags and left Holland.

MN: As an officer, maybe outside the typical officer role, outside of tickets and patrol and beat and everything, what do you think your roles and responsibilities are in the Holland community?

ES: I think being in a smaller community, which now is continuing to grow. I think that living your; being a police officer is very difficult, a very difficult thing. I was not into rescuing people, but I did have to issue a lot of traffic tickets. Traffic services, trying to get people to realize that it’s your job. As far as being an officer off-duty, I think that you had to maintain a civil lifestyle. I don’t think you could fraternize the bars and get drunk and do stuff that we arrested people for.
Every officer is different. When I first started, like I said, I rode a lot with officer Ratcrink, and I thought things were by the book, that it was just cut black and white. Here you have 63 officers on the Holland Police Department and everybody has a different personality and everybody handles things differently. But outside the department, just be a good person. Treat others with respect like you’d like to be treated. Other than that I don’t know what to say.

MN: You talked about Holland growing a lot, is there anything you have seen change in the Holland community, maybe from the beginning of your career to the end, that maybe influenced the policing?

ES: I just stayed in touch with the community. Originally they developed this Community Policing idea where they send an officer into a certain area. I think that is a good idea. We are now into the team policing stage, which I have my personal opinions on, but the concept is good. Traffic is, of course I was in traffic almost all my career, so that was a big concern of mine and it still is. People dive like they are nuts. Everybody is in a hurry. I don’t understand that. It seemed like when we did our selective enforcement blitzes, it seemed like people would slow down for a few weeks and use a little more caution but traffic accidents are crazy in this area. Especially in the county, they have a lot of fatalities, but in the city I think, being a traffic man, I think my concern would be traffic. And roads, I don’t know anything about engineering, but 16th, and 17th street, as you know, they did the traffic columnning, where they narrowed the roads. People are going faster than ever on those roads. From a police officer’s perspective, from a traffic officer’s perspective. There is no where to sit to enforce that speed, any you get
complaints on west 17th street in a business district. And to pull a car over, you are taught to pull a car over in a convenient place, for your safety, for the person that you have stopped’s safety. You have a narrow roadway. If you stop a car and people perceive the police different. Some of them are really afraid and they see the lights come on and wham, they hit the breaks. Then you are stuck. Quite often I will say, “Will you pull up and pull up on a sidestreet.” Some people just didn’t want to do that. And then they hold up traffic. Or if you have a situation where, you know, you want this person to move, they felt they may take off on you, then you stay there, but those occasions are rare. Traffic is, in Holland, is going to be something that future officers are going to have to work with. Engineers, street engineers.

MN: Narrow roads, as a drive in Holland, they may discourage people from speeding, but regardless it certainly seems to encourage accidents.

ES: I have not followed any states on that stuff, but former sergeant, Mark Bos would be a good guy to talk to. He has been in traffic for a number of years now, not only a good friend of mine, a fellow worker, and a guy that I enjoyed working with in traffic related crashes and in selective enforcement. That is just a personal opinion as far as heroics go. Traffic columning. They go faster I think, and I may be wrong, I don’t know. Mark Bos would know the studies they have done, because he was in charge of that division. Whether overall it does slow speeds, if it has increased accidents, I don’t know, but from my perspective speeds have increased. Other problems of the department, domestic violence is probably one of the biggest we have. Drugs and alcohol, the gang problem, that is something I
never dreamed I’d see in Holland. I think being in traffic I try to put a lot of that
in the back of my mind, if they needed me as a backup officer, I would respond,
but really didn’t care to get involved too much in it. It is just crazy why they do
that. The gang members and graffiti.

MN: And Holland is perceived as this sleepy little coastal town.

ES: If you get the opportunity, you should take the opportunity to ride some night
with a departmental officer.

MN: That would be amazing.

ES: Get an eye opener.

MN: I am sure. Definitely change my sight on my knowledge of the police.

ES: It is kind of interesting to see the young people that, especially the one’s who
were brought up in Holland, what I call a sheltered person, and they get to work in
the jail as a cadet or something. They get an eye opener on a Saturday night when
they bring six or seven drunks in fighting and spitting and screaming and yelling
and cussing. I don’t know how, I admire big city police officers, I don’t know
how they do it, because they had a Chicago police officer came and he rode with
us, I think he was doing a little study. He said, You know, we’ve got the same,
Holland has the same thing as Chicago Illinois does, only on a much smaller,
different scale. And I could not imagine, dealing with more than what we deal
with, the violence and the gangs and the drugs and the alcohol and the domestics,
those guys have really...

MN: They have their work cut out for them don’t they.
ES: So I admire that, and they have to be pretty tough guys to work there. Well, any police officer, you got to be a little hardened, you get hardened, the more you are on.

MN: Does it surprise you to see some things? Does it still surprise you?

ES: Nothing fazes me. After several years on the police department, nothing fazed me, what people did to each other. No, it is crazy. I had a, I can tell you a story about a gentleman we had on the roof of a school here. It was Christmas eve, I hope you want me to tell you this.

MN: Sure, yes.

ES: It goes into the compassion part of it. [End Side A] Christmas Eve, and it was snowing and I remember it. We got a call to the community ed. Building which is at 15th and Maple, of a man up on top of the roof, and he was lighting the cornices on fire. He was on the roof and he was pouring lighter fluid on this cornice and lighting it on fire. When I was there, I was in the Emergency Unit, Fire Department was there, and half of the Police department if not all of us were there there. My wife was sitting there, sitting on the edge of her seat, and she goes, “Honey, what if he lights himself on fire and then jumps?” I said, “Well, we will have a flaming asshole. And she says, “Where is your compassion?” I said, “We have been dealing with this bozo for years. Do us a favor and do it.” And that is sad, but that is how you get. I mean, he’s married, this guy was married. One of our officers did go up and talk him down, but we were there for a number of hours, and it is just a waste of tax payer’s money. But then you realize too, when my wife says, “Oh, where’s your compassion.” It kind of turns on a little bell in
your head. You think, “Did I really say that?” When you do say stuff like that what do other people perceive you as. This guy is a real jerk, he is supposed to be helping these people. But you get that way, you just get that way. I understand that alcoholism and suicide and divorce is very high in police officers.

MN: Really?

ES: I don’t remember who did the studies on that, but it is very high.

MN: Do you think that is from the stress?

ES: I think so.

MN: What you see?

ES: What you see.

MN: Was it stressful?

ES: When you pull that car over at night, and particularly now with the gangs fluctuating and you hear this rumors that initiation for a gang is to off a cop. Scary. I watched a presentation one time on, I don’t remember what channel it was, but, there was an interview done, I believe it was a Pontiac, Michigan officer that they were interviewing. The question was: “In your career officer, have you ever been afraid or scared?” And his answer was “No.” Macho guy. I said to my wife, I said, that guy is either nuts or he is lying. Because there is not a police officer out there on the beat that has never been afraid. It is just, I mean, life is precious to all of us. You don’t want to go up to a car and get shot. There is not an officer out there who has not been afraid. And he is lying. And I am not afraid to admit that. I don’t think you should keep things in. Several times, I know of three incidents, where after fatal traffic accidents after I have done my job on the
street, I have gone to the police department and sat there for 15, 20 minutes and just cried my eyes out. I am not embarrassed to say that. You have got to get that out, you have got to release that. Some guys might go home and have a couple of beers. My father was an alcoholic, and I like beer once in a while, but I don’t think I will ever become an alcoholic for what I saw my father do, and then certainly in my job as a police officer with alcohol, brought on to people. It is crazy.

MN: What were the hardest kinds of incidents, violations, or occurrences, what was the hardest thing for you to get involved in?

ES: Fatality of a child on a traffic accident. Or back when we had the E Unit, I ran several SIDS deaths. Very difficult. You get there and there is a dead baby in the crib and the baby is blue and stiff, and yet the parents are standing there looking at you hoping to perform a miracle. You are there to help them save that baby’s life when it has probably been deceased for a couple of three hours, who knows? Those are tough.

MN: How do you handle a situation like that?

ES: Shed a lot of tears, lose a lot of sleep. I would get home at night, I didn’t usually bring the job home, but my wife would sense something was wrong and I would tell her I had a crib death today or a guy getting killed in a traffic accident. Those were tough.

MN: Is it hard on the family coming home, or when you were on the job, was it a difficult job to have with your family?
ES: Yeah, anybody in law enforcement or in police, fire or hospital workers, medical doctors, nurses, anybody who is taken away from their family, it is difficult. You work the holidays and I was a policeman for thirty plus years and the relatives I don’t think they could get it in their head that I was not going to be there Christmas day because I have got work and I am not going to be there for the Sunday afternoon coffee because I have got to work. It is hard to perceive that unless you are there. Unless you are doing that job. Getting back to the family, I think my biggest concern as my kids were growing up was their safety in school, their being teased, I think they heard, “You are a cops kid,” so they were going to treat you different. I don’t remember hearing any feedback from my kids that they had a difficult time. It is like being a minister’s kid. There’s the preacher’s kid, you have got to be shhh, don’t swear, or do this. His old man is a cop, you had better watch out. I was concerned during my career, but I don’t remember any feedback from my kids that there were any problems. My wife has been a saint over the years. She just never complained, never, working holidays. She may say “well, I wish you had tomorrow off.” Holidays, weekends. We are great hockey fans, those four weekends in a row that I worked nights, no hockey. And she was great, a great trooper about that. And even today, she continues that today as I work at my 911 shifts at Holland Hospital. She has never complained. But it is tough and there are other careers too, other than law enforcement. I mentioned doctors and lawyers and nurses.

MN: Service careers.
ES: Yes. You miss the little league games. Last week I got to attend one of my grandson’s t-ball games. “Going to be there grandpa, going to be there?” I’ll be there buddy. That was cool, but tough.

MN: What were the challenges of being an officer in Holland? What was it that challenged you as a person, an officer?

ES: I think one of my biggest challenges was receiving my medical training, and having the hopes of someday running an emergency medical unit. Which did develop. That was a real challenge. Just get through the training, like I said earlier, I was a poor student and school I did not like. But you went to school all of your career. That was probably my biggest challenge to get that unit developed. I am trying to think of some other things that was a challenge. I can’t think of anything else right now.

MN: What about rewards? What made the job so worthwhile?

ES: My reward was everyday and I went home and my wife said “How’s your day?” and I think, well, I policed five traffic crashes, maybe two of them were serious and you have got to go to the hospital, or got to take a person home, or you have got to call that relative and say “Hey, your wife has just been in an accident, she is going to be okay. Can you meet her at the hospital and just to assure that everything is going to be okay. That was my personal reward, just to be able to help them and show concern for that person. Making it through the day safely was a reward, that your fellow officers were not injured.

MN: You talked earlier about selective enforcement, could you describe that briefly?
Earl “Doc” Scholl - OHP - 16 July 2002

ES:  Lately we have been receiving some grants for the police department from the officer highway traffic safety. They designate certain communities for a number of funds to enforce seatbelts and speed, and then there was separate grant for alcohol enforcement. We would go out with maybe two or three of us in saturated patrols and do seatbelt and speed enforcement hoping to reduce, number one, seatbelt compliance, and also reduce accidents and get drunks off the street. Sergeant Mark Bos, he can really give you the facts on that. He was in charge of the program and did a great job, does a great job.

MN: Are there a lot of people who don’t wear their seatbelts?

ES: Yeah, it seems to, when there is a news media blitz I kind of ride around and I see people wearing their seatbelts, and a lot of people not wearing their seatbelts. It seems like when the enforcement time periods come and tell your friends too that you should buckle up. I think the news media could help a great deal, and they do, I noticed the last few articles in the paper, I don’t know who writes them, AP or what ever, but they say this person had their seat belt on, this person was ejected and you hear the old story, “Oh I had a friend that the car burst into flames and if he hadn’t been thrown out he would have burned up.” But that’s over there.

MN: You might of answered this but, what are your favorite ways to help people?

ES: There again I have to refer back to my traffic accident investigation days. If people needed a ride home after a crash or back in the early days when we didn’t have cell phones, which was a wonderful tool that we have in the patrolcars. They are all upset, their car is all smashed up, they don’t know what to do, don’t
know where to go. You can hand them that phone and you know, or call someone for them. Which I did many times, I called and said hey, your sister, or aunt, or uncle, or mom or dad has been in a crash and you need to meet them at the hospital. Just to be there and reassure them and say look, "Your car is smashed up, but you are okay." That's difficult for people to absorb because you can talk to them all day long, tell them that it is going to be okay, but their car is smashed up, to them it is not okay. But sometimes people do realize that it was not so bad. When you have the inconvenience of you car smashed up. It depends on how they perceive it, how their life is going. I have had some people in some very minor crashes and you think gee whiz, what would they do if something really happened serious in their life. Completely, almost hysterical, out of control at some of the car accidents I have gone to.

MN: Is there anything in your memory that just really stands out from your career, anything that you remember that you know, that one day, or that one thing?

ES: I think I would have to refer back to the Mr. Mrs. Lee incident on Windmill Island was a highlight. Not only becoming friends with these people, but initially being able to help. When I first pulled up and say this old man laying on the ground, little did I know that we'd become friends for many years. Just to sit back and think when I get home, that was really something how that happened. But there are so many incidents that stick in your mind. Happy incidents, sad incidents.

MN: I bet you make a lot of friends being an officer.

ES: Oh yeah, the connection with the community is tremendous. Business owners stop in and chat a little bit. In fact I was told one time, you know Doc, you ought
to go into community policing, because you are good with people. Well, I would
miss traffic. But, shortly after I retired my wife says, boy you have not had your
police scanner or anything on. It is the craziest thing. For thirty plus years, I have
done it and loved it, had my scanner on a lot off duty. I just, it is done now, I
don’t miss it. It just, I don’t know.

MN: There is a time for everything?

ES: Yes. I had 30 plus years, it was wonderful career, I was blessed, I came out
healthy, and it was good. Connection with the community, I can honestly say, I
do miss that. I miss stopping at the local businesses and talking to people. I had a
great repore with the fire department where I stopped probably on a daily basis
from my coffee break. Both fire stations. I made some good friends at the fire
department. JP's Coffee Shop is one of my favorites. Just years ago when we,
when I was on patrol, we would have to walk doors at ten o’clock, at ten o’clock
the third shift came on. At twenty two hundred hours which we would say. Then
the east car and the west car are the second shift, would walk the downtown
doors. It was kind of unique. If you find a door open, you call over the property
owner and they were just really happy that you found their door open and secured
the place for them, or they would come down and you’d talk briefly and then you
would go on. Except the snowing and blowing days, you didn’t like to walk
doors like that, or the rain storms. But that was a thing of the past too, they don’t
do that anymore.

MN: Too many businesses.
ES: That, and the invention of the alarm system too. For the most part business have
burglar alarms now where you don’t need to check that building. I think it is still
important to check buildings, but back in my day, you check buildings and you
check buildings and that was all you did on midnight shift was check buildings.
But today to, the officers are much busier. There is more activity after midnight,
back when I started there wasn’t any. You could shoot a cannon down any street
in Holland and you wouldn’t hit anything. Now there is traffic all night, there are
parties all night, and it is a busier city than it was back then.

MN: If you could, if someone really wanted to know what the Holland Police
experience was like and you were able to tell them, what would say? If somebody
asked you about your career with the Holland PD, what was it all about, what
would you tell them?

ES: That is a little difficult question because three quarters of my career was in the
traffic services. I don’t know how many thousands of accidents I policed.
Overall as a career, it was great. I don’t know how to explain it beyond that. It
was a wonderful experience in being able to help people, and there is that
adrenaline rush of the lights and sirens of accidents or going to a medical
emergency, it is exciting. Dangerous, today too, if you have to run lights and
sirens it is much more dangerous I think, for one there is more traffic, cars are
going down the road with their boom boxes and they don’t hear it and they don’t
see you. Overall, to sum it up, it was just a wonderful career, I have made a lot of
friends. Both on the department, and within the community I would probably
have never met if I had not been an officer. The opportunists would stop by if
you were on the patrol, and they would say, stop by for coffee when you get your
coffee break in. It is kind of comical because you would stop at a friends house
and the neighbors were looking out the window. It is interesting how people
perceive the police. It is always something is wrong when the police show up. I
think that all through my career that is one thing that irritated me. I put my pants
on just like anybody else, and when I come around, yeah it may be because there
is a problem, or I might come around as a friend or just to stop by and chew the
fat a while.

MN: It seems that that is a very hard perception for people to break.

ES: Yeah, we were at our cottage a couple of weekends ago. It was kind of ironic
because a state trooper pulled up to my neighbors cottage and right away, every
body in the next cottage came out. “What’s going on, the cops here, what is
going on?” I just kind of shook my head and I said to my wife, I said, “That is
just bizarre, that is what used to happen to me.” [Laughter] “What’s going on, the
cops are here!” People perceive the police as different I guess. I think until you
know a police officer, people will have a certain preformed opinion of you. In
fact my father in law, for an instance. He was stopped by a Wyoming police
officer. My father in law was the most gentle guy I ever have known. He said
this officer came up to the car and he says [harsh tone] “Let me see your drivers
license. Did you know you had a head light out?” No sir, my father in law says.
The officer says, “you know mister I can impound your car for being unsafe on
the roadway because you have a headlight out. I am thinking, were did this cop
coming from. Stopping an elderly man and giving him that much guff. I think if
my father in law had not had a brother, as a police officer, a son-in-law a police officer, what would you think?

MN: That would be his perception probably.

ES: You can go all your life and never have any connection with the police other than seeing him in the donut shop or restaurant. You may carry that image of that police officer the rest of your life if you never have an experience with them. I think ministers have the same thing too. Man that has got to be a tough career to have.

MN: I think that people do get those kinds of perceptions. I know the one time I was pulled over for speeding, the guy did the traditional lean right over, and the first thing he says to me is "What's your excuse?" And for me I am sitting there thinking, hey, maybe to him I am just another kid, maybe rock music listening, small sedan driving, always getting in trouble kid. I have seen many different sides of police from all these interviews, and every officer, they are all different. And maybe that officer is like that, but it doesn't mean that all officers are. I think that is a hard perception for people to...

ES: Overcome.

MN: Associating one officer with the rest is not fair.

ES: And as a police officer, perceiving the public is the same way. You see the guy going down the road with the long hair and the boom box going, you think, "What a jerk, get a hair cut and turn your radio down." [Laughter]

MN: Do I need to cut mine?
ES: No, I am just jealous. [Laughter] Back when I was a reserve officer. When you are new you are looking. Children are sponges, they absorb that. I was riding with an officer who is no longer with the Holland Police Department, and we are westbound on 8th street by the old fire station on 8th street. The fire trucks came out. There was a car ahead of us and then we were behind this car and this fire truck came out and this car pulled over, and the fire trucks went straight West on 8th street. And I think they turned north on River. After they went past us, a kid at that time, pulled back in and continued up and the officer I was with he said, “I am going to stop that kid in front of me.”

I said, “What for?”

He said, “Failing to yield to the following fire truck too close.”

I said, “Well, he really did pull over and he is not following them now.”

“Well I am going to stop him because he is an asshole. I stopped him last night and I don’t like him.”

And I am thinking, wow, this is too much, and I am thinking, I never, want to be a police officer like this guy. And consequentially, he is not around anymore. I am thinking now, that is the type of guy that makes society not like cops. And that is something that is probably never going to change, the perception of the police, you have to earn that respect. Which I think I did in the 30 years, and granted there is going to be somebody who doesn’t like you, because of the job we have to do, but for the most part I think if you gain people’s respect, whether he is a lowlife in the street, or the president of a local bank, you treat that person the same. Or try to. Sometimes it is hard. You know you bring these guys in who
are talking about getting you and getting your kids, and doing something to your wife. They are sitting in the back of your patrol car and you are taking them to jail and they are spitting at you and saying “I am going to get your kids.” That kind of stuff works on me. They talk about getting your family and I know where you live, and slit your wife’s throat. You deal with that stuff too. Which is difficult. So you get kind of hardened and you don’t trust anybody, even though the perception works both ways. And I think that is our society. It is going to be that way forever. Look at the LA incident and all the latest LA and the video tape shows this officer slamming this guy into the hood. I was appalled when I first saw it, but then I have learned a little bit more about it. It is just, crazy. But people see that on video, especially today with today’s modern technology where you may be caught on video. I think it is a good thing. You have got to keep the people honest because you do get hardened I think. You get so angry sometimes, you just want to ram somebody’s head in the wall. You get so angry with people with disrespect and… I don’t know.

MN: Was it always like that. I mean when you started with the Holland Police were those idle threats, those, was it like that then too?

ES: I think it was more of a closer knit community, we didn’t have the big influx, the melting pot like we do now with the different cultures and ethnic groups and everything. I think it has changed. It was a small community and a lot of people knew each other. Yeah, things have changed.

MN: Sometimes it seems to me that, I don’t know, it is still like a small community with big city problems. It just seems like with the big city mentality that seems to
be coming into Holland, but there's different parts of the community that just
don't mesh well anymore, and just don't communicate. When you stop that
communication it just seems to me that the community starts to drift and you start
getting people and anybody can end up like this, just closing their mind to another
individual or another group for whatever reason, be it they are young, old, or this
background or that.

ES: One of my first calls as a police officer just blew my mind. I grew up in
Muskegon Michigan, in a black neighborhood. I had many many black friends.
Played basketball together. I think our high school at that time, in the later sixties
was 50/50 black/white. No big deal, you don't think anything of it. Going back
to one of my first calls, at a local store downtown, came in as a suspicious person.
So I got there and I walked in the front door ad I walked up and the elderly lady
was behind the counter and I said, "What is the problem Ma'am?"

She says, she looks around to see if there is anyone is around, and she
whispers to me, "There is a black man in my store." And I am thinking, how do I
respond to this lady.

I said, "So."

"Well, I have never had a black man in my store."

"Okay Ma'am," I said, "How is he dressed?"

"Well he had a white shirt and tie on, dress slacks."

"What did he do?"

"Well he just came in and he said he was looking around."

"Okay," I said, "Well, if you have any further problems call us back."
I went out of there thinking, holy smokes, this is unbelievable. Unbelievable, from my perspective, growing up in a black neighborhood, coming to Holland, Michigan. You talked early about something in my career that jumped out on me.

MN: That sounds like it would.

ES: And I was a brand new rookie, and this occurred in 1971.

MN: It just seems funny to me. My dad grew up on the west side of Detroit, large minority. He even went to a school where I think there were fewer whites than black. And he even played on the basketball team. He played on a all black basketball team, didn’t even think anything of it. All the mothers would say, “Throw the ball to the white boy.” [Laughter] You know, he laughs about it now, maybe it is just that he raised me with his mentality, but I am still dumbfounded we are not comfortable in the different cultural backgrounds.

ES: You know, going back a little bit, before I was a police officer and I had moved to Holland, and there again, I was stationed in South Korea in ’69, ’70, and I had a bunch of buddies that were black. I just played hoops with them and had fun with these guys. This guy from, I think he was from West Virginia, his name was Larry Rogers. You know what Earl, he said, “When we get out, back to the world (meaning the United States), we got to get together.”

“Yeah that’d be cool,” I said. “You come to see me and I’ll go see you.” Well another day passed and we were sitting around talking and somebody was asking me about where I was from and this and that. And I said I practically got drafted out of high school. I moved to a city called Holland, Michigan. And I said, “I
can’t believe how prejudiced the people are there.” And Larry pipes up and says, “Man you want me to come to your town, I might as well get shot.” [Laughter]

Oh man. It was funny. Crazy, life is interesting isn’t it?

MN: Certainly is.

ES: Yeah, I had a great career, it was good, but it was time. I had another officer tell me one day. Mike Pathuis, one of the officers that I was in traffic with. Him and I started together, we went to the academy together, or what we called at that time Police Recruit School, and he had 30 years in last October and he tried to talk me into leaving. You know, cause things change. I mean we had thirty years on and things change. “C’mon,” he says, “You can’t believe, no stress.” I said, “No I am not ready yet, I am going to take a few more accidents.” Another guys says, you’ll know, one of these days you will wake up and you you’ll know. And you think, yeah, right. I would have had 31 years in October. A year from October I would have had 32 years and then you are maxed out as far as your pension goes, that is the highest you can go, 32 years. I woke up one day and I thought, I don’t enjoy it anymore. Just too many changes. And the officer, I don’t remember who told me that. One of these days you will wake up and you are thinking, this is nuts. So I get the calculator out and I did a little figuring with my pension, and it was no problem to leave. Plus with good health with a good wife and my kids, I have grandkids now. Yeah, let another young person come along who wants to be a police officer. I thought the same thing when I was trying to get on, some of those old duffers, get out of there, I want that job.

MN: All them old guys, eh? One day they’ll be in their position.
ES: I used to think that when I went to retirement parties and these guys have 32 years on, and one of our former captains had 40 years on. And I am thinking, I can't imagine being on the police department 30 years. And here it is, come and gone for me. Charley Caulkins next Tuesday night will have his retirement party. Another 1971 officer that started. I think there are only three or four left who started in 1971. There were ten officers hired in 1971 by Charles Lindstrom. I think it was the biggest development or expansion of the Holland Police where we're at. Chief Lindstrom started the Evidence Technician program the Traffic Unit, Community Services Unit, the department really went places, expanded.

MN: It sounds like you are going to hit some more of those kinds of changes just as you were retiring too. Even before.

ES: Yes. Team policing, we are going to be going into a new building. Of course I, for the last nine years we have had computers in the police car.

MN: That is so amazing!

ES: But the equipment too, Matt, just in my patrol car and in the Traffic Unit, we had front and rear radar, where we could clock cars front and back, front and rear antennas. Computers. Telephone, cellphone, laser speed controlled devices, handheld laser that determining speed. And the onboard video camera. All this technology is just, that when I started back in 1971, we had a two-channel radio and now we have a 99-channel radio.

MN: Oh my gosh!

ES: And what will the officers see thirty years from now? Ten years from now? Even since I have been in the department and working also part time as a dispatcher, the
changes I have seen, they have come out with GPS [Global Positioning System],
you can follow the police car where ever it goes. The technology is just.

MN: Was it hard to adjust to all that?

ES: No, personally no. I think some of the officers, of course there are not that many
older officers around, but I think it is human nature not to like change. I can think
of an officer that, well he would have been retired now anyway that passed away.
Bill Rossel, he had a brain aneurysm and he passed away at 45 years old. That
was tough for the department because we had never had any loses within the
department. I think one officer, John VanIngen, who retired as a detective
sergeant, he was the only police officer I know of who was shot in the line of
duty. Yeah, a lot of changes. New building coming. When we moved in that
building in 1971, wow, we could put 14 police cars in the garage, we had 12
individual jail cells. We thought we would never fill them up. Now, we can

MN: Is there anything you feel compelled, that I have missed?

ES: No, but I am just very proud to serve the city of Holland and work for the Holland
Police Department for 30 plus years, a year and a half as a reserve officer. Made
a lot of friends, had a little excitement. It was good, I was blessed. But it is time
to move on now. Like I said, let a younger officer have it now who has been
waiting to get hired. I know the feeling, but it went like that. It went so quick.
Yeah, it was good.

MN: Thank you so much for the interview, congratulations on the retirement.

ES: Your welcome, my pleasure.
MN: Enjoy your busier lifestyle.

ES: It is crazy but there are some changes coming up at the hospital and I think I am going to get into more of a permanent part time job schedule and be able to level off with that. The hospital too, it is great, I mean we have got like six, I think there are six retired police officers there.

MN: Is there really?

ES: I kind of joke around and say it is the South Side Precinct! [Laughter]

MN: Who is all over there then?

ES: Well there is John VanIngen who was the officer shot in the line of duty. Abraham Perales. That is a guy you might want to contact. He was our first Hispanic officer. He is 70 years old now and just the neatest guy, I don’t know if he would submit to an interview, but I just love the guy. He was on before I came on board, and I think like three or four years. I used to ride a lot with Abe. He would let me do his reports which I learned from him, yeah, he was one of the first Hispanic officers hired. See, who else is there. John DeJonge, retired Sergeant, Mike Pathuis, Abe Perales, and myself and Helen VanderVliet is working there also part time, she was the Chief’s secretary of the police department for oh she had 35 years on. She was always a secretary within the department somewhere. But one of the guys is a retired Grand Rapids officer. He is leaving to become a federal screener at the airports so I hope to pick up his hours which is only 56 within a 10-week time period. Like right now I only work every other Friday, every other Saturday and Sunday. Put a few more hours in
there and back off from 911. I can do 911 a few times a month. It is stressful, very stressful. Twelve hours a day you sit there and phone never quits ringing.

[End of Tape]
Holland Police Officer Earl "Doc" Scholl is retiring after more than 30 years on the force. (5/28/02) - DIGITAL

By NATE REENS
Staff writer

In 30 years of police work, the highlight of Earl "Doc" Scholl's career wasn't a car chase, an arrest or a trial.

For Doc -- a nickname he's had almost as long as he's been a cop -- the highlight was a friendship.

While Scholl, 54, will have thousands of accidents to look back on, the long-time Holland city traffic officer, who retires Thursday, recalls the Tulip Time in 1978 when he met Everett Lee, a New Yorker in town for the Dutch festivities.

Lee suffered a mild stroke while on Windmill Island and was rushed to Holland Community Hospital along with his wife, Scholl said. Upon hearing Lee was going to have to stay for treatment, Scholl began searching for a hotel room for Lee's wife. With Tulip Time in full swing, he couldn't find a room she could afford.

"I called my wife and said 'How'd you like to have a houseguest for a night?'" Scholl said of the phone call to his wife, Marcia. "She ended up staying three days and then we were friends for 11 years until they both passed away."
Scholl visited the Lees in New York, and both couples took a joint vacation to Arizona together.

"That was real nice," he said Tuesday. "It was one of the first times I was able to show my kids that helping people is important."

Scholl joined the Holland police force in 1970 as a reserve, but in less than a year he made the transition to full-time officer. Four years later, Scholl was the first Holland officer with his emergency medical technician license, and he persuaded then-Capt. Charles Lindstrom to establish a police emergency unit.

In 1974, Doc began carrying a medical bag full of equipment on every shift -- hence the nickname. On Thursday, Scholl, who has the name Doc on his police name tag, will tote that bag into his police cruiser for the last time.

"That's the way I started and that's how I'm going to go out," he said. "I just thought it would be a neat thing to do and that it would make the department a little better. The nickname started as a joke, but then it snowballed."

The veteran officer, who in retirement will work part-time in security at Holland Community Hospital and one or two shifts a week at Ottawa County Central Dispatch, worked traffic for nearly all of his career. One of the main calls of duty was responding to crashes.

"It's a funny thing -- when I first started, I hated accidents. People were angry, cars were smashed up and traffic was backed up," he said. "As the years went by, I started to love helping at them."

Holland Sgt. Mark Bos, who supervised Scholl in the traffic team for the final years of his career, said the retiring officer was one of the most dedicated and compassionate people with whom he's worked.

"Doc's the type of guy that you know will get a job done, but he's so down-to-earth that it will be done quickly and nicely," Bos said. "He really believed in what he was doing and that every speeding ticket or seat belt ticket he gave was probably preventing an accident."

Bos said he'll miss Scholl as a friend and as an officer, but he has a feeling he'll still see Doc from time to time for coffee.

"He said he's coming in for coffee because he can't afford it on a retiree's income," Bos said. "I was hoping he'd stay around until I left because he's such a good friend."

Scholl, however, moves on, saying there is a lot to look forward to for younger officers. The city has changed in his years on the force and it will continue to do so.

"There were times back then that people didn't want to work Sundays because nothing happened. Now it's just another day," he said. "There's all kinds of good stuff coming up like the new building. When we moved into our new one in 1971, we thought we'd never outgrow it. That shows
Scholl and his family will host a retirement party from 6 to 9 p.m. on June 12 at the Kollen Park Fire Station. The officer said he hopes people he's run into over the years will turn out to talk and have a cup of coffee.
Wolfpack puts teeth in U.S. 31 speed law

Aggressive police enforcement action is aimed at cutting road's reputation for danger.

Tuesday, September 1, 1998

By ART AJSNER

Staff writer

Perched along northbound U.S. 31 just south of 32nd Street, it didn't take long for Holland Police Officer Earl Scholl to make someone's day Monday morning.

Barely 20 minutes into his shift, Scholl ticketed the first of several motorists for speeding during the department's most recent effort to curb a growing number of accidents on the city's main north-south thoroughfare.

Using a technique known as "wolfpacking" -- in which one officer monitors speeders with a laser...
detector and calls to other officers stationed ahead to stop them -- the Holland Police Department has issued more than 150 tickets in the last week, last week, said Sgt. Mark Bos.

"It's a lot of tickets but we're getting the job done and there

Please see SPEEDING, A5

Continued from A1

are a lot of people that want us out there," said Bos, referring to the numerous honks and thumbs-up signs motorists gave in support while driving by.

Between Jan. 1, 1997, and Aug. 12, 1998, Holland police reported 200 crashes on U.S. 31 within the city limits, 111 of those in 1997. Though none of the crashes were fatal, 32 percent were injury accidents. That put it among the top 10 most dangerous roads in the state, according to the Michigan Truck Safety Commission in Lansing.

"Waverly Road, River Avenue and Chicago Drive are all high-traffic areas, but (U.S.) 31 is bad," said Scholl, a department veteran of 27 years. "It's changed a lot over the years but I never expected to see the heavy, heavy traffic there is now."

By 8:30 a.m., Scholl had made four traffic stops and arrested two Holland teenagers for smoking marijuana from a pipe while driving more than 10 miles over the speed limit. Officers later arrested a third driver for driving on a suspended license for the 13th time.

More upsetting, Scholl said, was that he ticketed three of the first four drivers he stopped for not wearing their seatbelts.

"There's not much that surprises me on the job anymore," he said. "People just don't realize that when your car is going a certain speed and stops, everything inside the car continues to go at the same speed. Hopefully people are getting the message and will think twice the next time they come through here."
And the message is getting across through word of mouth and media exposure, said Bos, who counted only two significant accidents along U.S. 31 since last Monday, with poor weather a factor in both.

The biggest problem for officers Monday was keeping up with the volume of speeders, Bos said.

"We could definitely use two more cars out here because we just can't keep up," said Bos. "I was chasing after someone else as soon I called one off to the other cars."

Scholl said most people try to get out of a ticket by being extremely polite and friendly, but he knows he won't make many friends while working the roads.

"I get a lot of people who ask me if I enjoy writing all these tickets and I tell them what I don't enjoy is picking up bodies off the road," he said. "We're just trying to make it safe for people to travel."

Bos said the initiative will continue during peak driving hours at least twice a week throughout September.

Copyright 1998. The Holland Sentinel.