

Narrative: Todd Miller, Parking Enforcement Officer, Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, Virginia

Interviewers: Julia Engelund, Kelsey Shaffer

10/26/2011

I'm Todd Miller, and I'm 43, and I feel a lot older than that [*laughs*]. I am a graduate of Christiansburg High School. As far as college, I don't have much college. Actually my wife's from Blacksburg, so we live out towards the Blacksburg end of the county now, but uh, Christiansburg-Blacksburg area, that's where I'm from. So I'm about as local as you can get [*laughs*].

My official job title is Parking Enforcement Officer. I have been doing this job for six years and nine months. February will be seven years. I make probably in the neighborhood of um [*pause*], probably this year, probably 25-26,000 dollars. We do get a lot of pay in overtime, with five percent going to retirement, and then they gave us a two percent raise. When I make overtime, I make more money in overtime. So, it's a pretty good thing. I've been right in that range for the last two or three years. So I'd like to push towards 30 but I'm not there yet [*laughing*] but I'm trying. I would like to see us get a little more pay, and the department will tell you that, too. I would like to see us go up at least another pay band.

I was in the military and then I got out and got in police work. I did go in the Army for about four and a half years and I did take some surveying classes, and, and that. I also have some, a lot of police training. I was a police officer for 7 years. Then I got out of police work and then I went to a factory. And then I went from the factory to here, so that's where I'm at right now. I wish that I would've had different, I wish somebody would've kicked me back then, that I would've done something besides going in the military. It was, it seemed like the right thing to me, 'cause I hadn't had a clue. And my parents, I don't think my folks...I come from a family that we were divorced, my father raised me and my brother and my stepbrother. And I didn't really know. It seemed like, I'd been talking to the recruiters at the high school for a while, and it seemed like a good fit for me. But I kinda wish now that I went back and waited just a few weeks and maybe went to a community college and try to think about it, what I wanted to do. You know, hindsight's pretty 20/20 right now [*laughs*].

Basically before I did this I worked in a door manufacturing facility, and I worked days and night and different shifts, and my body starting telling me, "you need to do something that's not going to run your body down." My wife has been at Virginia Tech for a long time; she's a grants administrator. She works in the Office of Sponsored Programs, and she's been at Virginia Tech about 24 years now. And, uh, she keeps me out of trouble pretty much [*laughs*]. It was a good

opportunity for us both to be employed over here. And I get good insurance and benefits and Virginia Tech has that so it was a good opportunity for me to get out from under that and for me to do something else where I could build some retirement. I already had some retirement, before, but I could grow, keep the retirement going with Virginia Tech. As long as she has her job, we're doing financially better than with me. She's the, she's the bread winner. It wasn't always that way, but she is now [laughs]. So I'm letting her do her thing. I'm very supported, supportive of her so.

I like working as Parking Officer because I'm an outdoors person. I'm not really the office type. I was in the factory for a while and can do that kind of work but I prefer being outside. I like it on days like today, it's actually nice. You can enjoy getting out and you know, getting around, um, don't like to be confined in a small area.

My responsibilities at work. Actually the day before a football-- to assist in putting out the signs that go up in the lots that let people know what's going to happen on game day. There's thousands of people that are going to be coming in, some know where they're going, some don't know where they're going. We put cones on the street to try and help, you know, corral traffic at the pre-game time, to keep traffic going the way they want it to go. My area responsibility is this side of Southgate Drive all the way to the top of the hill to Health and Safety, actually the lot above that. Those are football lots for us, and I'm responsible for the personnel that are assigned to those areas, making sure that they're there and doin' what they're supposed to be doin', which is basically checking for passes and making sure the right people get in the right lots, and the wrong people don't get in them.

You do meet people a lot of times, people that are not in the best circumstances after they've received a ticket or something like that, but that's part of what you do. And you have to, and I try to explain then, if they don't know, if they feel like listening to me, I'd like to explain what they did and, you know, what the citation was for. But we want to educate people, as well as enforce the rules of parking.

I think you'll know right away if you can handle this type of work. You won't last a week if you don't. You'll know that because the first time somebody comes out, and you have to be able to handle confrontation a little bit. I don't go looking for it, but sometimes it's just there [laughs] and sometimes it's just going to happen. You're just going to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, and there's really no way to sugar coat if you park in a wrong spot and you get a citation or a parking ticket for it. So I try to treat, calm 'em down, and approach people in a calm manner when I talk to 'em. And at least not make 'em worse than it is if they're already upset, I don't wanna make

it any worse. If you go lookin' for hostility, you know, if you come across as harsh, then you might get the harshness from individuals as well. So you try to treat people as you want to be treated. And it tends to work better for me anyway [*laughs*].

I think I'm a pretty good, um, I think I'm a team person, and I potentially could have some leadership skills, that I could probably do some good maybe, if that opportunity comes around. Being the number of years we put in, I would like to see some kind of a, I guess some kind of [promotion like to a] supervisor underneath my supervisor's job. We do have a sergeant that's over us that does things, she does have some admin duties and I don't know if that's what I would be. I mean, I don't mind that, but I'd like to see at least maybe one or two of us have something. I wouldn't call it a corporal or something like that. Some sort of senior officer, where you can, you know, help direct other people, that's what I'd like to see.

A story that sticks out to me from work, well, most of my good stories are from being a police officer. So, I'm working the graveyard shift, it's about 2:30 in the morning, and my sergeant comes over, he's patrol sergeant, and he comes over and he says, "I think you guys need to take a little time off, why'nt you just go on?" So I said, yeah I'll go home. So I get home a little after 3 probably. And my wife's, uh, what I forgot to do, well, actually, I opened the door up and I come in. This is before my canines, this is in between dogs right now, so I don't have any early warning stuff going on, waking us up. But I go home, I try to turn the light on and get in the hallway, I got a little room there before I get to the bedroom. I can take the police stuff off. And I'm trying to get the shirt off, I have a vest underneath and I try to crack the vest where I can get it off. And I'm walking in the hallway, all a sudden I hear this woman say, "What the hell's going on in there?" She pulled her gun out from under her bed and she drew down on me in the hallway. 'Cause I forgot to call her and tell her I was coming home. She thought I was breaking in the house when I pulled that vest, oh, she thought someone was breaking in. Or she come out of a dead sleep and she came out there and met me in the hallway. I never wanted to see that front end of that pistol again. She scared me to death. I was like, "It's just me, I'm home!" Oh, I caught a few words for that. But, yeah, that was, that was not good.

To read the complete conversation, please see the transcript.