

Interview Transcript for Todd Miller

For HUM 2504: Introduction to American Studies, Prof. Dr. Emily Satterwhite

Occupation: VT Parking Services Officer

Time and Place: October 26, 2011, 3-4pm, VT Parking Services Office on Tech Center Drive Blacksburg, VA

Interviewers: Julia Engelund, Junior Communications major, and Kelsey Shaffer, Junior Psychology and Sociology Major, both from Yorktown, VA

TM= Todd Miller

JE= Julia Engelund

KS= Kelsey Shaffer

KS: So, could you give us your name and your official job title?

TM: Um, I'm Todd Miller, and my official job title is Parking Enforcement Officer.

JE: Um, would you like to provide your age as well?

TM: I'm 43. And, and, I feel a lot older than that [laughs].

KS: What is your educational background?

TM: Um, I am a graduate of Christiansburg High School. Right down the road, um as far as college I don't have much college. I did go in the Army for about four and a half years and I did take some surveying classes, and, and that. Um, I also have some, a lot of police training. I was a police officer for 7 years, uh, after coming out of the Army, uh, I've been to various schools, and uh, and had various training with that. Um, I've had a lot of communications training, um, a lot of PR training, [laughs] a lot of dealing with people, so, I'm pretty comfortable with that.

KS: Are you currently doing any school or taking any classes through your job?

TM: Uh, no I'm not.

JE: Was any of that schooling specifically for this job, like training you needed to be in the parking services?

TM: Uh, no it wasn't. Yeah, that uh, uh, as far as parking services training we've um basically that background helped me get that job because at one time I was a police officer at Virginia Tech. I was that for probably about uh, 20 months. And I knew the campus, and uh, I live close, and uh we're familiar with the surroundings, familiar with the parking rules and regulations, but it uh, helped fit the profile of what they're looking for.

KS: So how long have you been doing this job?

TM: I have been doing this job for um, six years and nine months. February will be seven years.

JE: Nice, okay. Um, how did you switch over into the parking services business?

TM: Uh, basically before I did this I worked in a door manufacturing facility, and um, I worked days and night and different shifts, and uh my body starting telling me "you need to do something that's not going to run your body down" and uh, uh, my wife has been at uh, Virginia Tech for a long time. And uh, 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, uh get out from under that and for me to do something else where I could build some retirement. I already had some retirement, uh, uh, before, but I could, uh, grow, keep the retirement going with Virginia Tech.

KS: So uh, you mentioned that you're married. Could you tell us what your wife does?

TM: My wife is a uh, a grants administrator. She works in sponsor, the office of sponsor programs. And uh, she's been at Virginia Tech about 24 years now. And uh, she keeps me out of trouble pretty much [laughs] And uh, no, uh, she has been, uh, she's from Blacksburg originally so, she's from the area. And uh, I met her, she was actually over here, she actually worked for a different department, but uh, she uh, she seems to be hanging in there. She has

good days and bad days, so she's trying to make 30 so, getting in there now, so hopefully someday we may have a little something [laughs].

KS: So um, about how many hours do you work a day and how many days a week do you work?

TM: Well if its not a football season week, a football week, I normally work 40 hours. Umm, 8 hours a day 40 hours a week. Um, if there is a home football game, we have a lot to do with athletics, uh. We, uh, work, um, usually, this is the other parking enforcement officers, like myself, we will work until the vehicles are towed out of the contributor lots, which are down here around the stadium, and that usually takes us close to midnight and then we'll come back and we'll probably work Saturday, probably another 12-15 hours, depending on, you know, what time. So those are long days there. But um, on an average week its just 8 hours. I work 8-5.

KS: What are your responsibilities during a football game?

TM: Um, my responsibilities, um, actually the day before, uh to assist in putting out the signs that go up in the lots, uh, that let people know what's going to happen on game day. Um, 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. Um, we put cones on the street to try and help, you know, corral traffic at the pregame time, to keep traffic going the way they want it to go. Um, as far as responsible for the area, um, 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 personale that are assigned to those areas. Um, 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.

JE: So uh, for you, what is it like being a parking service ranger?

TM: Well, uh, it's good for me, uh, because I'm an outdoors person. I'm not, 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. Um, 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. I don't know if I'm claustrophobic or [all chuckle] what the deal is but uh, no it's uh, it's a good job as far as getting out, you know the campus. I've been here long enough, I know lots of people, know the departments, so you see people you know, that are out doing different jobs on campus for different departments. Um, you do meet people a lot of times, people that are not in the best circumstances after they've received a ci-ticket or something, something like that, but that's part of, um, that's part of what you do. Um, and you have to, and I try to explain then, if they don't know, if-if they feel like listening to me, I'd like to explain what they did and you know what the citation was for, if it was something I just did or something like that. But we want to educate people, as well as enforce the rules of parking.

KS: Would you say that that's the average experience for a parking services worker or?

TM: I think it is. 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. [all laugh] 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 if you park in a wrong spot and you get a citation or a parking ticket for it. So uh, yeah you, I, I try to treat, calm 'em down, and approach people in a calm manner when I talk to 'em. And, and you know at least not make 'em worse than it is if they're already upset, then I try, don't wanna make it any worse. Uh, 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 [all laugh].

JE: So, would you say you enjoy your job?

TM: I do, I enjoy it. I don't enjoy every part of it. Uh, sometimes like I said there are long hours that are involved. Um, football we work a lot of stuff like that. I don't say I don't enjoy it, it just wears me down. Being here for so long you're kind of ready to get away from Virginia Tech so, but um, but no overall it's not too bad. Um, um, I, I'm, the way the climate, and I know a lot of people that are really, that are without jobs right now, so you know I feel pretty fortunate to have a job with decent benefits. Um, right now I'm crossing my fingers that I'm doing what I'm supposed to be. That they don't let me out the door tomorrow, so.

KS: So you've mentioned working people with a potential difficult part of your job, would you say that that's the most difficult aspect or is there something else?

TM: Uh, no. I, I'd, like I say working with um, um. I'm sorry, repeat that one more time, I'm trying to understand what you're saying to me.

KS: Um, basically the question was, what's the most difficult aspect of your job? We know you've already talked about working with people so, would you say...

TM: Oh, that, just the negativity, as far as confrontation with people is usually the hardest part, sometimes it's um, trying to give a person the right answer and they don't accept it that way. That's basically all we can do. Um, at time's its difficult, uh, this is a big university, and um, information doesn't always flow smoothly [laughs]. Especially when we're at the bottom of that receiving end of that information, and sometimes if we don't get the information, and we try to do something, it doesn't always, it takes a while to correct it. And you know, as far as at Virginia Tech, they're always building and changing the area. They're always building and adding parking lots, and we're the people that enforce the lots and sometimes the information doesn't go out, you know, how to enforce that, but we do get it right eventually. It will happen, but you just have to be flexible when things like that happen. Um, we, we, I like to be informed all the time with whatever is happening and um, you know, it's a big university, and it doesn't always, doesn't always flow smoothly, but most of the time it does.

JE: Um, what would you say um, are there any perceived risks with your job?

TM: Yeah um, there is just risk based on what we do, um. As far as physical risk, whether you're in the process or have already done it, um, when we travel through these parking lots, um, any time you're in there, you're in danger of someone backing into you. Um, as far as confrontation, um, there again, I, I felt like there was more of a chance of it when I used to work night shift when I first started here, because I was by myself. And daytime its more visible, people going to classes. You know at night time, I think students, you know there classes are over, and you know you're out there, and its, it's potentially, somebody in a bad mood could probably harm you, if they wanted to. And we're not police officers, we're unarmed, just have a handheld that we might through at them [laughs] or something like that. We don't have anyway to defend ourselves so, we do have radios that we can contact the police department if we feel, feel like its unsafe. And we've done that before. Um, I've had people that have refused to, um, um, they've gotten tickets and things like that, and they've threatened and refused to move their vehicle and things like that we've had to call police and get involved, and, and then we've resolved it that way.

KS: Have you had any close call or any problems like that, like particular stories that stand out to you that you'd like to share?

TM: [leans back in chair and sighs] Well, its not really funny, I guess it is now. We had, we had a, um, I was checking the meters in Squires, and, um, [pause] I just saw the car there, there was some clothes and some things inside the car, and um, the meter, it was flashing zero. So I just you know, started putting the ticket. I said well okay, so I've got an expired meter and I go ahead and put the information in and walk to the back of the vehicle get the vehicle information, go to the front, round the vehicle, get the meter number, put everything in there, uh, print it out, put it in my hand, uh, uh, get ready to put it on the windshield, all the sudden out of now where [throws hands up] a person pops out from under a sleeping bag and jumps out at me [interviewers laugh] and he was not in a good mood. He just, he's like "what are you doin'?"!

You're not supposed to do this to me!" You know, and he had told me that he was, he was a veteran, and he didn't deserve this treatment and everything like that, and he wasn't taking the ticket. And I said we'll I'm not doing that. You don't need to be giving me this and that. You know it took me a couple seconds cause he startled me, cause either usually they're in there, but he just popped out from the driver's seat, and he just popped up out of a sleeping bag. He was sleepin' in his car. And uh, I was like I don't know about this. So I called the police department, and they, they talked to him even though they had to come over and talk to him for a little while and eventually I guess he, he calmed down and he just didn't wanna do, he didn't want to take the citation or anything, but. He didn't try to hurt me or anything, he just, he was just irate. Um, I, I can remember when I first started there was a couple times when some people, I think we had put some, me and another officer that's no longer here, had put one of the orange boots, that we do on a vehicle. And the guy showed up and he come round and threatened to uh [makes small punching motion] kick, [all laugh], kick tail or whatever else like that. And we pretty much just had to sit there and take it [all laugh] says were not going anywhere, and he, he eventually took off and left, cause he was just, he was just mad at us, ya know. He was gonna jump across the car at us or something like that. And I'm like what's this guy doin'. But nah, that's been about it. Um, I, I had a couple close calls, I've heard with other, hasn't happened to me, but some other people either unintentionally or intentionally tried to back up towards and officer. And then, it hasn't happened to me so I don't know but uh, I don't know but I think that they had called the police, and got their tag number or something on that. That, that's been a few years ago.

JE: Okay, Um, so what would you consider the benefits of your job?

TM: Um, the benefits of my job are, are working outside, you're not in a confined space, um, uh, there are good benefits as far as the, you know health and medical benefits, the leave, the time off, um, I fish a lot, um I am a hunter. I go, I go out, well I don't really do good at that, but [interviewers laugh] anyway I can, but yeah, I do like the time off, um as far as Virginia Tech I haven't had that kind of benefits any other place I've worked. Workin in the factory I got a week, I got five days off for like three years and then I got ten days after three years. But here you can really accumulate a lot of time, if you save your time and you have a chance to take some vacations and do things like that but um, yeah that's one of the best things about it. And you do sometimes do good things, you do things for people, when we, people appreciate ya and when we, we do uh, unlock people's cars and go and also jump start their vehicles if they have problems with it. And you, you get to see people, not the negative side. You get to see people that appreciate what you're doin' for em. And people really appreciate when their battery, it's freezing and it's the dead of winter and, and you can get 'em going again, so they don't freeze, so. It's a good, there's some reward there. You know, just helpin' people. You gotta kinda be a people person. And um, you gotta take the good with the bad but overall most of its good.

JE: You said that you get time off. Are your hours any lighter when school's not in session?

TM: No, we actually tried something last year. Normally, its 8 hour shifts but we tried somethin' uh uh last summer that we actually worked 14 hour shifts, and um, that wasn't the whole, that was, that started, in the end of May and it basically lasted for a moth and a half I think. It was kind of a pilot thing where we were trying to see how that worked. And uh, I loved it. I love having three days off every week. That was nice for me. I, I can do somethin' with that. Of course my wife, she has usually assignments for me to do so, it works out for both of us. So um, but no, that um we did try 10 hours for a little while and I would stay on it if they would go now but you know 8 hour shifts is, is a good thing. I don't mind that. Monday through Friday, that's wonderful.

KS: How would you describe the dynamics in the work place between the people that you work with?

TM: I think we have a good dynamic. I think the, the uh, people that are here now, there is a new person here, but the core group of people here, uh especially the people who do what I do,

uh we work really good together. Uh, um, we look after each other. Uh, we're small. There's only six officers right now. Um we're a small group, we try to look after each other. Uh, take care of each other, and you know, when someone's busy doin' somethin' else we try to you know take up for other, help each other out and use teamwork. And we need it, especially when we do work for football, um, everybody has a task they have to do. Um, to do for that since it's such a big deal, and you know, it's gotta go on. And um, we seem to work really well together. Um, we help, we help each other out whenever we need, if someone needs help we'll go help 'em. And they will do it for me too.

KS: So um, would you say that you and the people that you directly work with have a good relationship with your superiors as well?

TM: I think that we, um, I think that we have a good relationship with 'em. Usually when there's um, we work good independently so we don't [laughs] deal with the superiors a lot. They um, I think they're aware of what we're doin', um [pause] uh, [pause], we don't have an awful lot of contact. I mean we, we speak and, [laughs] you know, pass things up. I keep going back to football season—everybody is involved in that. Um, and uh, our superiors basically kind of choreograph wh-what goes on and they're our go to people when we have to have something done through athletics or something like that, or try to get in touch with people, or something like that. So, they're really helpful to have a good relationship with, as far as during the day, if there are problems, sometimes there are assignments that come up, and they want, something that has to be done, and area that has to be, coned or blocked off or signed. They're good about getting information down to us. But um, yeah I think that we have a good relationship.

KS: Would you say that you work with equal numbers of men and women or people of different races or is there a distinct um, like category that work here?

TM: Uh, well, when you combine the cashiers and the men, we're, we're about even. It's about, it's about equal. Um, my direct supervisor, is a, is a woman. And then their manager is a woman, um and we have uh, probably four cashiers, so yeah, we're probably pretty close. They've probably have at least one more than we do [chuckles].

JE: Would you, do you think this effects the job in anyway?

TM: No. Not at all [shakes head from side to side while speaking]. Yeah, they do a great job. I have no problem. And they're, if we have to call something in, we actually have a dispatcher, um, umm, she's a woman, and she does a great job. She used to be a cashier. Um, and she's there to help us, and whatever we need, you know we do that. And the cashiers look at, they even work for football too, so they get, they get to help us. Graduation and special events everybody's in this together. Um, they do, their, their normal jobs and duties during cashier during normal work week and special events come up and they end up working that with us, um, on several occasions. They work graduations with us, um, we've done April 16th, you know we all work that together. Uh, sometimes we'll work different stuff during the night, of course we can't do the stuff because the office has to stay open during the day but we'll you know, when they're not working, they do help us do stuff.

KS: Are their policies here at work that you disagree with or don't normally follow?

TM: No, [shakes head back and forth while speaking] they're pretty good policies here. They're pretty much straight forward. Most everything is common sense. Um, with what we do, uh, um, I don't see any problems with the, you know anything being, um, [pause] as far as our job, they pretty much let us do what we need to do. Um, if we tear something up then we have to do paperwork [chuckles and smiles slightly]. That's just the way it is. I try not to tear anything up. Um...

KS: Has that happened to you before?

TM: No-not my work truck—my personal vehicle. That's a different story [JE laughs]. No that's um, I was gettin' ready to go to the picnic, we had a , uh, summer picnic. It was wonderful. It was a beautiful day. And when I had to get some cones up, we had something we had to do, and I was, I was, I guess I was hungry or somethin' and I used my personal truck to get some

cones up and I was in a hurry, and I backed into one of the other state vehicles. [Throws hands up and shakes them] tore my, tore by baby up. It didn't hurt that truck, that truck's an old tank, but it tore my truck up, but that.. Once my wife, I knew my wife wasn't going to hurt me too bad, and she she knew, she was just kinda happy that it was me instead her. Um, yeah, I was okay with it. I didn't mean to get off of subject.

KS: Oh no, no it's cool. Whatever direction you want to take it in [TM laughs and says he is sorry] is totally fine. No, this is about how you want to respond to the question so.

JE: Um, so I know you said you're married, so does she help supplement the income?

TM: Oh yes, yes.

JE: I know you said she works here at Tech, as well.

TM: That's correct.

KS: So how does that affect your financial situation?

TM: 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.

KS: Um, if you don't mind, um, telling us how much you make or in a certain range

TM: uh..

KS: If not, that's perfectly fine. Feel free not to answer.

TM: Oh no, that's fine. Um, I make probably in the neighborhood of um, of [pause] probably this year, probably 25-26,000 dollars. Um, we do get, um a lot of pay in overtime. Um, with the adjustments to the, um, as far as the five percent increase and 5 percent going to retirement, and then they gave us a two percent raise, when I make overtime, I make, I make more money in overtime. So uh, it's a pretty good thing, that's. 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 [laughs while speaking] but I'm trying.

JE: Um, what are your future career goals?

TM: Um, I just want to be a good asset to the department. I wanna be somebody they can turn to. Um, I think I'm a pretty good, um, I think I'm a team person, and I potentially, I could have, you know, some leadership. Skills there that I could probably do some good maybe, if that opportunity comes around. Um, being a group that's been here so long, there's not a lot of turnover right now. So I mean we've got one guy that left and one guy that actually retired but uh you know, that uh, it's a pretty good place to work. Like I say, if ya hang in there, umm. And Virginia Tech, it's a big pond out there, you know sometimes you might see something out there over somewhere else, uh, one of the other departments. I don't know which one will have me besides parking right now but, maybe somebody. I do have several—two brother-in-laws that work on campus too so, I think they'd look after me a little bit.

KS: So you see yourself, um, staying within this department and definitely at Virginia Tech?

TM: I just don't know, yeah, as far as this job, I don't know which other job I would blend into, beside maybe the police department, and the police department is the only job I would fit into, and I'm not real big on working night shift again. That's just a thing that doesn't appeal to me. I've done it for a number of years, so I didn't, and that's what you got to do when you're over there. But uh, I'm almost, I'm getting to old to go back to school and chase people and stuff like that, so this is about my speed right now.

KS: Is that the reason that you switched career paths, toward parking services?

TM: Yeah, yeah that was, that was kind of it. I was ready for somethin' different. Once I got of, um, uh, police work the first time, I got back in, I guess the civilian workplace out there, and it was okay, I liked it. But the, you, you, you still don't have the benefits that go along with your pay, uh, you might make a little more out there, uh, but the benefits here are still good, even with the pay going up as far as cost and everything, you still have a lot here. And um, I'm kind of accident prone. I've had two surgeries over the past three years so it's a good thing for me to

be here right now, so [pause], um, that helps me out. [Pause] And if I have any more injuries my wife will put me out to pasture so, [all laugh].

JE: Were those, um, work related injuries?

TM: They were [nods], they were. Well, I say work related, um, my knees been having problems for a while, but I didn't take workers comp. But we have a really good short-term disability program that we do on that. I can't really pinpoint the time that I did it, so I won't, so I didn't do workers comp. but I'm sure it had something to do with it. Um, they've had me on a bicycle and a little bit of everything over the past year, so, um, I've done a little bit of everything. Um, but so far this year I've done okay. I've hung together, so we'll see what happens.

KS: So where do you see yourself in 5-10 years then?

TM: [breaths in quickly and deeply while throwing his head back and leaning back in chair] Oh goodness. I kind of like this atmosphere, um, you know, I don't know if there's another job on campus that may appeal to me, that I may apply to some time, you know. You never know who, [pause] I've thought about something, some things, that you could do, that I would fit into, um, in other, um, and be somewhat happy with, you gotta be somewhat happy with what you're doing a little bit. You don't have to love it [laughs slightly], but you have to be able to live with it. But um, I would say some kind of a college environment involved, its just uh, I like the people involved in it, it's just a good group. It's a good environment to be in too, it's a good positive environment for the most part.

JE: Um is there a position within this department you would like to move up to or do you like the position you're in now? To stay in it?

TM: I would like to see, um I like where I'm at now. Um being the number of years we put in I would like to see some kind of a I guess some kind of a junior supervisor some kind of supervisor underneath my supervisor's job. Um, we do have a sergeant that's over us that does things uh 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 uh I'd like to see something, at least maybe one or two of us have something. I wouldn't call it a corporal or something like that

JE: some sort of seniority recognition?

TM: some sort of senior officer, something like that where you can you know help direct other people and you know you still have your other people but you have a little bit of supervisor but uh, that's what I'd like to see.

KS: Do you have any stories or anything um you found rather interesting that you'd like to share from being a police officer at Virginia Tech?

TM: Uh, a police officer at Virginia Tech?

KS: Or any of your other jobs.

TM: Any of my other jobs? Well most of 'em, most of my funny stories do come from the police department. Um, they don't all involve me unfortunately [laughs] other officers and I won't mention names. But we've had officers that uh, well when I was over here they had a really good group of older officers that had been here for a long time, and it's a young corps here right now, of officers. Uh, some, a few of the people are still here when I worked here in the mid-90s. But uh, um we used to go out and wan—we used to go off into the areas back in uh, in the uh, the Plantation Road area, we'd go back there and we'd actually go over toward the bear pens and things like that. We'd actually go over and feed the bears. There was a bear over there that was uh, was captured, it was tagged and brought, it was tagged and brought in. It was a

nuisance bear. And we used to go over there and feed it. And we had a, there was an officer, um, he actually worked with me in Christiansburg, and I won't tell his name, [laughs] but he was the one responsible for me coming over to Virginia Tech. He said 'You're gonna love it over here, we grill out, we do great things. We got it made over here.' Um, he brought over here when... everyone was fine was feeding the bears, well whatever reason he's feeding the bear and doesn't take his fingers out of the bear's mouth, the bear chomps down on his hand.

JE: Oh God..

TM: So he cuts his hand and that didn't go over very well. We kinda, I think a memo came out or something, 'don't go in those bear pens anymore.' So he used to eat peppermints and they'd feed him stale donuts all the time, but he used to eat those peppermints like crazy. I guess he got excited but, um, this same officer in Christiansburg, and I hate to talk about people too bad but it's really funny. This has been years ago when he was over there, uh, he worked on the same shift with me. Got a call on the radio and he called for the sergeant on duty I can't remember the number. But uh, he said 'could you meet me over here? I kinda got in an altercation with a squirrel.'

JE: [laughs]

KS: [laughs]

TM: And he, I think the supervisor paused and he came over and he said 'what? A squirrel?' so he said yeah a squirrel bit me. And I said why'd you let it and then he goes I thought it was injured [laughs]. And I went over there to pick it up cause it was in the middle of the road I was gonna help it out of the road. And as soon as I grabbed it, it bit me in the finger and it wouldn't let go. So he got bit by this squirrel, and he's a ma—and he's telling me he's trying to shake this squirrel off his hand, the squirrel just whipping and biting him, biting his finger to death. So we couldn't stop, I almost wrecked the car I was, I remember I was in there, we came over there to him you know and we ended up taking him to the hospital. And the first thing the hospital said was where's the squirrel at? And he said what do you mean where's the squirrel at? They said you need to go find it. So we went over there looking for this squirrel that we never found. Yeah there was a lot of calls on the radio about this squirrel in the middle of the road. That took the pressure off of me. I think him and I pushed a car out, well I remember us years ago, I'm sorry takin' up yall's time but I'll talk a little bit.

KS: Oh no, however, however long you'd like to talk

JE: No yeah, keep going.

KS: It's interesting.

TM: We were, we were working midnight shift together, the same officer. And uh, we used to collect meter money at night in the town of Christiansburg. And we were, used to get the meter money and we put in this metal cart, they had two officers that way I guess somebody forms it. That's with one officer there was one behind... I didn't know about, I don't know what we were thinking. But we, you had to do it on midnight shift so we were getting the meter money. And it was cold, it was the middle of wintertime, there might've been a little bit of snow on the ground. And we were walking through there and we were almost finished, we were almost back to where we need to be. And he slips, knocks the cart over, and the change starts falling down a storm drain. So I'm like, what do we do? [Laughs]. Do we grab the change, does the change go in

there? I said do we grab a couple ones out your wallet, do you throw it in there? I said what are you supposed to do? I said you're gonna get us in trouble. But uh, we got the change in there, I don't know what happened to it, it's still down there somewhere. It was, it was pretty funny. But no he's same guy [laughs], same guy. Same guy that was with, he was also in uh, high school with me. He went to high school with me. His nickname was General Hospital [laughs]. Same guy. Anyway, no I won't get into that. But no that's a ... we've had a few times. I saw him at my 25th class reunion this past summer we had a good, we had a lot to talk about. He's actually, he actually got hurt again. He's a truck driver, he got out of police work. He's a truck driver and he um, he for some reason he wanted to join the National Guard. So he drove a truck for the National Guard. Well they, they sent his unit to Iraq. Well before he could get sent off to Iraq with his unit his uh, he got hurt again. So he's sitting there callin' 'em, seeing 'em on Facebook and he's sitting over there he says 'I'm sitting here in the hospital waiting to be deployed.' [Laughs]. So I don't know if he ever caught up to his unit or not but he was at the reunion, so, and he's a funny guy.

KS: I know you talked about um, the idea of better benefits and more time off and everything outside working at the factory, but is there anything else that interested you in police work?

TM: Anything else in, as far as the jobs over there?

KS: As far as deciding to go that path with your career.

TM: Going back into it? Going back to that or as far as me choosing that as my ...

KS: Wait so, I guess maybe we're a little confused like, linearly how like how your career has progressed. Like where have you gone?

TM: Yeah I was in the military and then I got out and got in police work.

KS: Oh okay so you did that before factory?

TM: I did that, then I got out of police work and then I went to a factory.

KS: Okay so then ...

TM: Yeah and then I went from the factory to here, so that's where I'm at right now.

KS: Okay. So then what interested you in going into the military and then after that, into being a police officer?

TM: 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...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 uh, I didn't really know, it seemed like the, I'd been talking to the recruiters at the high school for a while and uh, it seemed like a good fit for me. I had a uncle that was in the army so I thought that that would be something that, that I might like to do. They're gonna pay me and I'm gonna get to travel and do some things and uh, that seemed like the right thing for me to do. Um, but yeah that was interesting I got to see lots of different parts of the country. Um, I got to go to Germany, got to go to Korea, I been to Washington state, I been to Oklahoma, been to California. Um, got to travel a little bit so, for an 18, 19 year old that was it was, it was pretty fun. But I kinda wish now

that I went back and waited just a few weeks and maybe went to a, you know, community college and try to think about it what I wanted to do. You know, hindsight's pretty 20/20 right now [laughs] but when I really uh, it's hard to piece it all together.

KS: So in our class we've been talking a lot about the um, American Dream. What would you say you think about the American Dream and what does it mean to you?

TM: Means to me being able to wake up and have the freedom to go to a job that you wanna do. And you know, being able to make a living. And you know as a family, as a husband and wife being able to you know have the home that you want, being able to provide. Um I don't have any kids, I've got two dogs so we try to provide for them as well. They're pretty provided for. No I think that we're, we're living it everyday. I've been in the military, I've been to places that people really uh, really poor don't have anything and I think we take a lot of things for granted and I try, I try not to do that. I enjoy every day. You gotta enjoy something about everyday when you get up and uh, just be happy that you [laughs] you can go out and do you know do what you like to do and get paid for it. And uh, you know I think we're, I think we're living it. I think it's tougher now with jobs are, you know, really hard to...if you have 'em you better hold onto them. I have a brother that's, who was in a job over here in Blacksburg he was laid off after 17 years of employment but he's actually back over here taking classes at Virginia Tech in engineering. So, um, yeah we, I think we strive to do that. I think there's been everything have to be able to choose what you do or what direction you go in, this is a good thing.

KS: If you don't mind giving me just one second just to change the tape.

TM: I'm sorry, I talk too much.

KS: No, no this is great.

JE: No yeah!

JE: Um, so what do you think is important for people to know about what you do?

TM: I think what's important is about what we do is to know that we're a good resource of information as far as, uh, as far as parking and as far as the campuses in particular. Um, we're great at giving directions, we know the campus well. We don't always go in all the buildings but we know where to park to get in those buildings. Um, but uh, we're approachable, these guys are good guys, they're goodhearted guys. Doing this type of work we may not always seem like that, everybody thinks you're out to get 'em and things like that. And we're not, we're just trying to, you know, we're trying to make a living, enforce parking and in the best that we know how to do. Um, we want to come across as positive. I try to come across that way, uh, try not to give a negative image. It's really hard to sugarcoat parking, um, it's just you know, it's just what it is as far as citations and of it, we do a lot more than that. But uh, just know, just want to know that people, we can be approached. Um, you know, if you need help we can get you in the right place and we have a direct contact to the police department. We're eyes and ears out there. We can, you know, you can get with us, we can get you to the right people, uh, and if you have any questions as far as a safe place to park or whatever we can also help you with that.

JE: Um, I know you said being able to deal with people is really important, um, what other traits do you think, um, are required to be successful in this line of work?

TM: I think you have to be good with people, but I think you have to be, um, [pause] somewhat assertive. People will try to intimidate you and talk you out of things and you know, and person—you have to be stern but you can be nice about being stern sometimes, and that's a good quality. And I learned that in police work. Sometimes you can get your point across, [more stern] you get your point across, you know how you do that, but you can do it nicely but you need, you know, you have to do it and hold your ground sometimes too.

KS: Um, if—would you say that there is anything about your job that you would want to change if you could?

TM: Pay. [Laughs]. A little more pay. Uh, sometimes it's nice uh, um.. we're really structured. We have several structures of management that go up a tree. We're kinda the lower end of the tree. Um, sometimes we have decent ideas that would, could be passed along, uh. I sometimes wish those ideas would be listened by people that can make decisions to make changes that, you know, for the good. Certain things about parking I think can be improved upon. Uh, certain signs, certain fines, things like that. Uh, we don't get a lot of say in that, being people that enforce it, uh, but sometimes we have good suggestions that you know, that might lead to better rules and regulations.

KS: So then would you say that the amount that you're paid compensates for the amount of work you put in?

TM: No. [Laughs]. And they'll tell you that too. And that's just, that's just how it's structured. I mean that there, we have certain responsibilities, we do have a certain amount of what we do is, falls into another category there. Uh, but um, yeah that's I would like to see us go up at least another pay ban. [Laughs]. Least being, we're not the police department so I don't wanna be anywhere you know, close, but I believe we need to be on the same pay ban as them. You know, we don't have the same duties as they do, we don't have the same risks day to day that they do. We do some but not all of 'em but, I'd like to see us be, some middle ground between where we are and where they are. That's where I'd like to see us be.

KS: Um what would you say is important for people to know about what you do?

JE: We asked that. [Laughs].

KS: Sorry [laughs].

TM: Yeah, you asked that.

KS: Sorry, I was, because I was—

JE: Playing with the camera [laughs].

KS: I knew and I was like he answered something similar to that.

TM: Yeah.

KS: Okay. Well then you go ahead.

JE: The other thing is um, I mean just, is there anything else that you'd like to add or that you think we've missed?

TM: [Pause]. As far as the job, as far as the job goes is that—on the university? [Thinks]. I guess I answered it in the last—just try to be, that, that we're people that are approachable and you know I think a lot of people, there's a lot of easy negativity, um, and that's, that's natural because people will vent frustration and you have to be the guy standing there so you're gonna, you're gonna get it [laughs]. So uh, that's understandable but uh, yeah we're not here out to get anybody, you know, we're trying to do a service um, by the tickets we're trying to keep people honest as far as parking regulations because that there is such a shortage of parking spaces. There's buildings and things are gonna go forward, more things is gonna get added and parking usually seems to be the last one to catch up to everything. It's usually the afterthought as far as what I've seen and uh, we just try to make, you know, make it to work by enforcing it. People will think about it before they park, you know, make sure that they're in a right spot, uh depending on, you know, where they're at so you know so I guess basically that's why we're here. [Pause]. Um, trying think of anything else I can add [laughs], make it look good.

KS: Is there anything else you'd like to say about yourself or your experiences?

TM: Uh, [pauses] I'm afraid to give myself away—afraid to say anything [laughs]. But no I um, I'm a pretty happy go lucky person. Um, I uh, like I said I don't have any children I've got two wonderful dogs, canines, that are my babies. That uh, that are pretty rotten. But uh, no we uh we're pretty simple, we keep it pretty simple. Um in my younger days I used to be a karaoke person [laughs]. I used to sing a lot um, I sang in high school, I sang in church, I did um, enjoy getting that from time to time um I don't do that much anymore because I think the 43 years, I think I'm getting tired and when I get home I think I, I'm just migrating to the recliner more I don't know what it is but uh, um, I'm just kinda glad to be over here and have a job right now.

JE: Um, I don't know if we asked you, but you said you grew up around here?

TM: Yeah I'm from Christiansburg, which is right down the road. Yeah I grew up here. Actually um I was born in Waynesboro and we shortly moved to Christiansburg and I've lived here most of my life. Um my folks, actually we moved to Colorado when I was about 10 and my folks separated, my parents separated, and we ended up moving back to uh, well I lived in Roanoke for about a year and a half, and then I went back to Christiansburg and been there, graduated high school through there. Went in the service and came back to there and um, actually my wife's from Blacksburg so we live out towards the Blacksburg end of the county now so but uh Christiansburg-Blacksburg area, that's where I'm from. So I'm about as local as you can get [laughs].

JE: Do you have anything else?

KS: Do you feel like there's nothing left you'd like to say?

TM: I don't know what else to say, I'm afraid I might've said too much.

KS: Okay. Oh no definitely not. Well thank you very much for giving us your time.

TM: You're wel—well you're welcome; I didn't mean to wander off on ya and stuff. I like talking to people. This doesn't happen to me because usually I'm on the negative end.

KS: Oh no—

JE: That's the best part of our interviews.

TM: Better get outta there before they yell at me.

KS: Oh well no, we definitely appreciate your input. It helped us out a lot in terms of our project and in terms of, you know, going into the catalog at the library

TM: Did you interview other people at Virginia Tech?

JE: The other people in our class—

KS: Um our classmates are interviewing other people, so.

TM: They do? Other people at VT? Are you concentrating in any serv—just various fields? And you know, various...

JE: Mostly just, not necessarily blue collar jobs, but not like, high salary wages. I know some people are doing police officers. There was a pair doing uh, someone who owns a bike shop down on Main Street. So just kind of, local labor workers.

TM: Okay. Yeah this is a good police dept too. They, they're, they're really sharp. They have a lot of good people. Um, I knew people from years ago that are uh, when I was at Christiansburg that work for the county and people over here are investigators right now uh, they have some good experienced people here. Uh, one of the guys that's actually running for sheriff was an officer at Christiansburg with me for a short period of time. He actually was a ride along with me years ago, so. I look at these guys and I say, man these were just young guys there, they're doing well for themselves. But no, that's a, that's a tough line of work to be in. They earn whatever they get [laughs] cause it's a, and college is a different climate but you still have a lot of the same type of concentrated, different problems and things like that, you know, just different kinds of things going on. I don't envy them a lot of times but I appreciate what they do. Uh, I did it for a short period of time here but, um, no the parking hours sound better right now [laughs]. I will tell you one experience and I'll, I'll go. This reminds me, okay. I'm in Christiansburg, uh, this is kinda funny, it's true. Coulda been bad, but it's funny. Um, I'm working the graveyard shift, it's about 2:30 in the morning, and uh, 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? I tell, I don't remember what happened, but he goes, I think he says you have a lot of time to use up so you need to take some time. Do you wanna go home? Well yeah so I said yeah I'll go home. So it's probably 2, 2:30, 3 o'clock. 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 get in the uh, all a sudden I, you know, I try to turn the light on and get in my, 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 taking, 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, 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, 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.

I don't know I'll get in trouble, I'll tell you a hunting, I'll tell you a story about me and uh, black powder season and then I'll stop. This is, I have this very old, very old style of black powder rifle that I bought off a guy I worked with. Had the big hammer that goes down, it looked like a musket. And, [sigh] I come in, it's in the evening, the sun's about to go down I come in and, my wife's I think she's in the shower or something and I'm in there taking my gear off. In the little room there, it's my little room there, we'd stripped the carpet and everything off of it and had concrete and we had like a scatter rug. And I lay this rifle up against the corner of the wall right here .and for whatever reason that rifle wanted to kick out and it flipped around and when it flipped around it fell down on that hammer and that hammer, somebody forgot to take the percussion cap off of that rifle. When it did, it shot through, inside that house, through the corner of that wall, went through the other side of the wall and lodged in the back of the wooden stand on the fish tank. Now when this went off my wife was in the shower she came out of the shower. And needless to say I'm in this room it's filled with black powder there's thick sulfur smelling smoke in this room, I'm looking around for blood to make sure I didn't shoot myself once she realized that I was okay, it was not pretty it was not a good conversation I had to get rid of that gun pretty soon after that. I was like this can only happen to me. But uh yeah I had to paint the wall and patch the wall I had to do some carpenter work. It was, I think she'd just shoot me out now that was early on in our marriage so I think she'd shoot me out now I was like this can only happen to me let's not try to be so safe but I was at that time. But no that's all I got, I'm sorry.

JE: [Laughs] Okay

KS: Well, all right then thank you so much.

JE: Yes thank you.

TM: All right, I don't know if I was any help to ya.

JE: Definitely were