

Ken Barss / John Ballou interview

- Mary Atai: This interview is taking place at the Historical Society building on September 22, 2018. I'm Mary Atai, and I'm interviewing **John Ballou**, the former Police Chief of New Boston, who was police chief from 1970 to 1990.
- And also **Ken Barss**, who was the Fire Chief from 1965 through 1979. Then he continued to be a fire warden after 1979, right up to 1982.
- Ken Barss: That is how I was able to complete my 20 years in the department.
- Mary Atai: Okay, we're going to talk about those experiences. There is a plaque at the current fire station with both of your names on it, because you were there when the fire station was moved from the old engine house next to the town hall. It was moved across the street to the current fire station. That was a lot of work you put in to accomplish that move. John was a fireman at that time too. Both your names are on the plaque.
- What do you remember about your experiences prior to moving to the new fire station? When you were in the old fire station, tell me what that was like? It was a very small building.
- Ken Barss: Well, let me see, I made notes here, but I didn't follow on any particular thing.
- Mary Atai: Well, just think back. What do you remember, John, when you were in that small building, because you started in 1963 on the fire department, right? As a volunteer fireman.
- John Ballou: We moved here in 1962. I joined shortly thereafter. I don't remember much about the old building, except it was small and you couldn't get much in there. There wasn't much room to have meetings or anything like that.
- Ken Barss: No. We had to have meetings in the Town Hall.
- John Ballou: We had to move the equipment out when we could or meet in the Town Hall.
- Ken Barss: Back before they changed it all over to offices the lower Town Hall was just a small wide open space with a small stage that was a little less height than this. We used to have to have our monthly business meetings over there.
- In 1966, we decided we had to do something for a bigger station. At that time, we had all kinds of ideas of where we would like to have it built. Let me see. We started a building fund and that was by a raffle. We had a raffle that gave away 100, 50, 25, 10 and three fives every month. It was like \$200 we gave away a month. That was our main thing for earning money, but that thing worked charmingly at that time. It was headed up by Murray Pringle. Pringle used to have what we called the drug store where the jewelry store is now [Tate's Gallery].

Ken Barss: That's where Pringle lived, and he had some experience wherever he'd come from before in running a raffle. He helped set that up. From there we proposed or we thought about locations like the cement barn up by the dentist office, owned by the Daniels's, as a possibility. We thought about Vic Daniel's land. He had a little piece down as you go up to the elementary school, on the left hand side. There's land there, but as it turns out, it's pretty wet. We thought about that location. We thought about over here where the real estate office was [bottom of Clark Hill Road]. Now it's accountants in there, but that site was available. Also, on Mill Street way in the back between Parker's and over there, there used to be a big icehouse, over as you go toward the walking bridge. The old icehouse location is the way I'll put it. That location was thought about as a possibility.

Then the New Boston High School went out about that same year, but at that time, I don't know as we thought heavily about using that. As years went on, we finally convinced the town to give us the money to go ahead to build a station. We also thought about the old schoolhouse as being possibly renovated so that we could back trucks in.

By then John was the Chief of Police, and we thought about combining the fire and police departments because we'd been to Goffstown and looked over their station. We'd been looking around to see what we thought we needed for space and size. Back then we thought it would be a good idea.

We also talked about removing the old fire station where it's at, and possibly somehow fitting in a larger station on that same site.

Mary Atai: Wow, lots of options.

John Ballou: Didn't we talk about the ball field as one of the ideas?

Ken Barss: No, not the ball field. The old fire station, and there's pictures I've got in there of the old station, and the stable that was behind it. We used to go in from this side [River Road side]; you used to go up a ramp to get inside. That's where this truck was kept.

It wasn't the first one, but one of the mobile truck type fire engines, the Speed Wagon as I learned the name. I thought the REO was the only pumping truck or truck pumper we had, but there was a Speed Wagon, which had chemicals on it and so forth.

Getting back to that special meeting there to consider the sites. We went before the town meeting, because back then we had town meetings. We'd get in there and argue and almost get into fist fights.

Old Fred Chancey used to say, for a vehicle, it has to be an International. We didn't want Fords. Back then it was all Ford chassis. Boy, he was a fellow lived down river. In fact one of his kids still lives in the home that has all the old cars around, Carl Chancey. That's where Mr. Fred Chancey lived and he was a great International man. He used to get up and say, if it ain't an International, I ain't going to vote for it.

Anyway, that gets off the subject again. We tried, I'd say two or three times. I know each year I'd get up and argue about it, because as a fire chief I felt I had to do that. I never could convince the voters that went to meetings to give us any money to build a station. Then along about what was it? '66 was a date I'd found somewhere. The high school was shut down. In '66, I found somewhere that the school district decided to give that site and building to the town. For a few years that sat and the kids got in there and threw stuff all around. It was kind of vacant.

Mary Atai: Do you remember this as being a contentious decision in the town? Because we do have letters from townspeople that were just furious that this building was going to be torn down. They didn't want to tear it down because of all the memories. And they also thought it could be used for town offices or something that made it useful, and the fire station could be put somewhere else.

John Ballou: Yeah, just remember this, and it's still true to some extent today I think. Fire and police, that kind of thing should be done for nothing, by somebody. Not me, but somebody else, and we shouldn't spend any money on either one if we can help it.

Mary Atai: It's getting much better. It's taken all these years, but yeah, to expect everybody to volunteer to be a fireman for years and years and years, and volunteer to be a policeman for years and years and years is an alien thought for me. I haven't seen it anywhere else I've lived, but I guess it's a New England thing.

Ken Barss: Well, it's because it's a smaller town. A lot of your smaller towns didn't even have Police Chiefs. They might've had a constable, or whatever they were called back then, you know? But, a lot of these small towns they didn't have much problems. That's why. Maybe an occasional argument, and they'd get into a fist fight or something, but that got solved. Somebody got beat up and went home and got patched up.

Well my notes tell me that sometime after the school was turned over to the town, we asked to have that building razed. Taken down. And I'm not sure what that date would be, I'm not exactly sure at all.

Mary Atai: It was 1971 that they tore it town.

Ken Barss: Okay. I know it wasn't long before we went to work after it was taken down. Oh you remember Milton Elliot?

John Ballou: Yup.

Ken Barss: We had a wrecking ball come in to basically knock it down, and Milton Elliot ... we'd given him an okay because it had a slate roof. And he was a contractor and he was up on the damned roof trying to get the slate off when the wrecking ball was ready to ... We had a heck of a time getting him the hell down. And I remember getting him outta there so he didn't get clobbered with that big steel ball as they backed it in.

John Ballou: Old Milt had his problems.

Ken Barss: But he ended up, when we knocked it down ... 'Cause I think we'd given him the project of actually taking away the debris, and filling in the foundation, and so forth.

But, it got done as you said, in '71. In '72 that's when we proposed the fire station on that site. We got the approval, and like I told you, from something that I found, and I saw it somewhere, that station was built for Forty-seven thousand dollars. We put it out for bid, and the Kennedy brothers, who happened to be local builders, they got the bid. And so they started on it sometime in late '72 and we'd given them a year to finish it.

And we moved in there in '73 along about I think it was October of '73 that we were able to move into that building.

Mary Atai: And there was a ham and bean supper to celebrate the opening.

Ken Barss: Yeah. And the raffle, if I remember right, and here again I thought I saw it somewhere ... The building fund raffle, by that time we had seven thousand dollars that we donated toward the building of that building. So, the town basically, from my memory, paid forty thousand dollars, because the building fund had that to add. And that building fund did bring in a lot. I can't tell you offhand how much money a month or anything, but we had a monthly raffle, a buck apiece.

When I worked at Hitchiner I'd say I saw a lot of people. I personally had 100 tickets that I sold, so I had a 100 bucks every month coming in, just from my things, you know.

Ken Barss: So anyway, we had an architect too. We didn't just draw this out on a piece of paper. We had Alex Majeski.

John Ballou: Yep.

Ken Barss: He was our architect, and he was the one that came up with the size. We wanted a hose tower, and we also wanted a bell. We salvaged the bell. That's something I was gonna look at this morning.

John Ballou: I forgot about that.

Ken Barss: To see if the bell was still on the roof. We had the bell put on the roof from the old school building. We'd salvaged it.

Mary Atai: The school bell is not up there.

Ken Barss: Well, when they fixed the roof, they had to redo the roof here some years ago. Somebody must know where the hell the bell went. Because it was Jim and then Dan McDonald, right?

Mary Atai: Well when they built the building and they put the roof on, they put a siren up there. Do you remember that?

John Ballou: The siren ended up on the bell tower, we tried to put it up as high as we could, and we had it on the bell tower.

Mary Atai: And it was up there for quite a few years.

Ken Barss: Yup. Then it did give up. They had to have it rebuilt. The parts came from France. This was after my reign of terror was over.

Mary Atai: Okay. So now the siren is back up on the bell tower. There used to be that great weather vane there, you see that one [now kept inside the Historical Society building]. This was up there for years and years. It says N.B.F.D. [New Boston Fire Department].

Ken Barss: Oh yeah, I don't know, but did that ever end up on the new building?

Mary Atai: It was on the new building too, I believe.

Ken Barss: Because Charlie Davis found that damn thing up at the town dump. And I don't remember the whole story, but I think Rena [Davis] even mentioned that in here. And there's a picture of it right here.

Mary Atai: The story I had read is it was on the old fire department -

Ken Barss: It was, but it got taken off -

Mary Atai: It got put on the new fire department, but it had gotten trashed. And it had to be saved.

Ken Barss: It got taken off and trashed before the new building evidently was done.

Mary Atai: And then it was on there for a while, and then they took it down ... Not that many years ago and gave it to us to keep here. It really needs to be re-gilded. The original gilding was done by Reginald Hayes. Do you remember Reggie Hayes?

Ken Barss: Sure do.

John Ballou: Yeah. And his wife, Beulah.

Ken Barss: Okay, see I remember somehow or another, Charlie found it at the dump. So when it got taken off the old station, it must've been held somewhere, by somebody and when we talked about it, Charlie somehow found it at what we used to call the town dump.

John Ballou: That's because it was a highway garage, that used to be our town dumping area. That's a little to the right where they got big mountains of stuff up now.

Ken Barss: We got it back and I've forgotten about that. But we had a hose tower, and that in our opinion, was the way to dry the large diameter hose and lay it out on racks. We could hang it up, and that's what that is still there. I guess they still use it. I'm not sure if they

do or not, but that's how we dried our large diameter, the two and a half inch size hose.

Also that same year we talked about possibly having some annual get together, and that's where the ham and bean supper came in to things. And the ladies auxiliary was pretty active. My wife and Jim Dodge's wife and several of the women were pretty active in town and with the fire department. When we had a big fire, they'd come running out with hot coffee and doughnuts and sandwiches, or whatever.

And in fact, they would be back at the station. We had a fire right here in town one time. The guys were so iced up they'd have to melt the ice off so they could get the damn fire coats off.

Mary Atai: Was that the Fred Cann fire? I read that was a very icy situation. Charlie Davis was involved in that one.

Ken Barss: No. No, the Fred Cann fire was years ago. I don't even know if I was a member, but I remember it somehow or another, 'cause my uncle, Carl Barss, was a fireman, maybe even fire ward at that time. And he talked about being there and using the old pump, because we had a pump that we used to be able to slide out of the truck. And I don't remember now which truck, or whether it was any of the trucks that I had anything to do with.

But we had to slide, and you'd take four, five, six good men to take this thing out. It was that heavy and big. I don't remember too much about it.

We had the fire there, and I'm not sure if it was icy or not. Probably was. We started what I call ... the ladies had the ham and bean supper with coleslaw and all the rest of the stuff and ham. And we started that and the proceeds from that were put into the New Boston Fire Department Scholarship Fund. And that scholarship would be for a New Boston High School senior, financial aid to college, presuming in the field of community service. And here again, I've told you my feelings on that.

And we hoped that this November ham and bean open house would be an annual situation, to be able to show off the equipment, and show off the station and the various things we had been doing. And the ladies from 5:00 to 7:00 would put on the ham and beans supper.

They still carry on something like that to this day, but I know that they've had spaghetti suppers. And now they charge money to go, where the donations evidently we felt that was ... We got more money that way than we would have charging back then. It probably wasn't more than \$5.00 each or whatever.

John Ballou: Probably less than that.

Ken Barss: Yeah, probably was. We got a fair amount of money. And like I was telling you earlier, I ended up going down to Goffstown at least once, and maybe two different years to present our scholarship money on behalf of the New Boston Fire Department to a

senior from New Boston. But because we had our high school in Goffstown, we had to do it that way in order to present it.

Mary Atai: John, let me bring you in here.

Ken Barss: Okay, let me think a little bit more.

Mary Atai: You must have joined the fire department around 1963, because it was shortly after you came to town.

John Ballou: Well, his father was chief at the time, I believe. [Bob Barss, Ken's father, was Fire Chief]

John Ballou: Yeah, we had a fire up on 77 where it must've been Sullivan lived back then. But now, it's Hechtl's, where Hechtl's is.

Ken Barss: That's ain't 77, John, that's 136.

John Ballou: I'm sorry, 136. Excuse me.

Ken Barss: He's the Police Chief and I gotta remind him.

John Ballou: Listen I'm older than you are, so be careful.

Mary Atai: Uh-oh.

John Ballou: You know you remember better than I do.

John Ballou: I remember that fire because probably that was the first year I was on.

Ken Barss: Yeah, the Copeland's owned it.

John Ballou: Yeah.

Mary Atai: Okay. Bob Barss, your father, Ken, was our chief from '50 straight through '57, and then he was still in the department, but he did not become fire chief again until 1964.

Ken Barss: I told you, Paul Mansfield worked in there as fire chief sometime.

Mary Atai: And Leslie Tower. Does that name ring a bell?

John Ballou: Les Tower? Oh sure. He used to be road agent.

Ken Barss: He was our road agent.

Mary Atai: Also Bob Bose.

John Ballou: Bob Bose, yeah.

Mary Atai: Paula LeBaron's father. Right?

John Ballou: Yeah, he was Paula's dad, yes.

Mary Atai: So those men were chiefs in there. And in 1963, Willard Dodge stepped up for a year, and then in 1964 your dad did it again, and you were a fire ward for the first time.

Ken Barss: I don't think that's quite right. If I remember, and here again that's my thoughts that dad was fire chief lets say, '63 and then Willard was chief for one year, and then from Willard, my memory tells me that I took over as chief in '66.

Mary Atai: Okay, well the town reports say Willard did it one year in '63.

Ken Barss: Okay.

Mary Atai: Your dad stepped up again in '64, and then in '65, you became the fire chief. So I don't know why your dad would've done that one more year.

Ken Barss: Okay, well I don't remember -

Mary Atai: You know what I think it might've been? You had not been a ward before, and you had to be a ward for a year before you could become chief, so he gave you a year to be a ward. That's what I think.

Ken Barss: And that could be, because I don't remember. It's like the fire wards for instance. We went from a three man fire ward board to seven, and that was done, I found somewhere in some of my stuff, in '63, '64, it was earlier than I'd thought. But I thought that I was involved with getting that changed -

Mary Atai: It happened in '65, so you were the fire chief. So maybe you were involved in getting that changed.

Ken Barss: Well, I thought so, but the way I read either in the book here or whatever, you know it's alright. Like I tell you, it's good that John came and I really wish Jim [Dodge] was here, but maybe his memory ain't working so good anymore.

John Ballou: I don't know.

Ken Barss: But he was involved with a lot of things and that's why ... And then Dan McDonald, I bounced some stuff off him, but Dan didn't come aboard. We were receiving the American La France in '81 [a fire truck]. That's when Dan McDonald came aboard the fire department. He told me that.

John Ballou: I'll take your word for it.

Ken Barss: I invited him over. That's when he brought me this book. I called him up to hit him up about what they called the fire department, was it still The Constitution 2 or is it

known as the New Boston Fire Department? He said, "No, today it's the New Boston Fire Association."

Mary Atai: So they separated out from the Constitution?

Ken Barss: Yeah basically. But people don't realize, you go on the fire department, you don't get voted by the town or the selectmen. They don't appoint you to the thing. You come in and ask Dan if you can join the fire department. And that's how it still works, and that's how it used to work.

Mary Atai: Right.

John Ballou: It's not going to be able to work that way much longer though.

Ken Barss: Probably not.

Mary Atai: So you think it's going to change?

John Ballou: It's going to have to be by hire, by selectmen, or appointed people.

Ken Barss: It's still not an employee thing.

John Ballou: You can't find people today that can leave their job, if they're close enough to leave it, to fight fires or police, whatever. It's going to have to be full-time.

Mary Atai: So, it's going to have to in the future, not be this volunteer fire department situation but rather a full time-

John Ballou: There'll be some volunteers still, you know, for a while -

Ken Barss: Well, back I recall, I'd forgotten about it, but we used to have ... I used to call it 35 members. But I did recall looking back and it used to be 25 sort of active members. They'd come to meetings and go out if there was a fire. And then there were 10 call members they'd call. They'd have 10 call people. But as I got into it, there were 35 members at peak.

Now today, I asked McDonald about this when he was at the house the other day and he said it's wide open. If somebody wants to join, we try to make sure we don't have any max. He said, people come and go, and people have all kinds of knowledge and are interested in different things. If you're just voted on, you don't happen to go to the fire school or whatever. It's asked of you to come and go because it's a monthly fire department training thing where you take out trucks and pumps and ladders, and learn how to do various things.

Plus, I don't know if they still do it, but I used to convince some of the people to go to what they call fire schools. They used to have one every spring up at Gilford. And that was a bigger town and the state would get involved with teaching people how to fight forest fires. They would teach people how to fight building fires ... how to do it. How to

use the air packs, the masks and stuff. All sorts of things. There was one in the spring, and it seemed to me there was another one in the fall in Troy, New Hampshire.

John Ballou: Yeah, Troy used to have a, what do they call that? I can't think of the name of it now. But Troy used to have a fire fighting set up.

Mary Atai: Now, while you were in charge, Ken, did the fire department start using EMTs then too?

Ken Barss: Well, yes. Even before we had the new station, and I don't remember that we had much more than a hefty first aid kit and what was that unit called that we used to have, John?

We had a unit that the fire department had, that we'd go out ... I don't know what it did. We could take it to the scene -

Mary Atai: Like an ambulance?

Ken Barss: No, no, it wasn't a vehicle, it was a big suitcase that had something in it. I don't know what the heck it did. It didn't help with heart attacks.

John Ballou: It was something that could help people breathe, but I don't know what -

Mary Atai: Oxygen?

John Ballou: I don't remember anything like that at all.

Ken Barss: Well, I remember, but not what it was called. But back then for anything serious we had to call an ambulance out of Manchester I guess.

John Ballou: No, it was Duffy's.

Ken Barss: We are had something. I don't recall ever using Weare, but someplace we'd call from Manchester to run out here, to get a person if we couldn't transport them.

John Ballou: Duffy's Ambulance.

Ken Barss: I don't remember the name.

We'd have to wait for an ambulance to come if we had anything serious. Then when we got into the new station, a rescue squad, of which Dick Moody was one of the key people. He probably remembers a lot of different things that happened.

He was sort of the rescue squad captain, I'll say, and we had different people under us to put on more than a Band-aid. And I think Roland Sallada and Charlie Davis bought us one of those things where you can learn how to do compressions and breathing.

Mary Atai: Like a Resusci® doll? Resusci Annie?

Ken Barss: Yeah, a doll.

John Ballou: Annie?

Ken Barss: Like an Annie.

Mary Atai: CPR?

Ken Barss: Yeah.

Mary Atai: That only started in the early 70s.

Ken Barss: Yes. It was after we'd gotten into the new station, actually where we had some room to do some of these things.

Mary Atai: Did either of you work with Corky Trimbur?

Ken Barss: Yes.

John Ballou: I thought that was leading up to her joining.

Mary Atai: Yes, I'd like to hear your thoughts -

Ken Barss: 1977 Corky Trimbur came on the fire department and she was a nurse. I guess it wasn't the only place she was a nurse, but at the Peterborough Hospital she was a Registered Nurse that worked from 3:00 to 11:00. Some of these things I didn't realize, but anyways, she was a nurse.

Wasn't long before we got her in the rescue squad also. But in the Fire Service, she wore a jacket, and she could help. We didn't have her haul a hose around or whatever, but she could assist.

John Ballou: I bet she could.

Mary Atai: Actually, she wanted to be medical, but they made her become a fireman.

Ken Barss: Fireman, yes.

Mary Atai: Before she could be on the medical team.

Ken Barss: And she was the first woman ... I'll put it that way.

Mary Atai: Yes.

Ken Barss: I think that's what I remember. And after she got on, and she did get into working with Dick, and it wasn't long fore she was captain of the rescue squad. She brought aboard the people to teach EMT's.

Ken Barss: She was able to do that, I don't know.

Mary Atai: Yes, I do believe she herself taught EMT's.

Ken Barss: Yeah, and then she got other women to come aboard, as rescue only. I don't know if it's written down any place, but I remember that we called people rescue only. And there was only another woman or two that thought they wanted to be a fireman as well as, but there were another one or two. Yeah, she got that going.

And then of course it wasn't long after '77, she got aboard and we decided we ought to have an ambulance. Because even though there was not a lot of need, but that waiting 30 minutes or whatever it is for somebody to run clean up here out of Manchester, that didn't work out very well.

So we started working on getting an ambulance and we went everywhere to look at ambulances. We had a guy, I recall flying us down to Connecticut, or someplace. We went and met him down at the airport. Most of us had never flown much, but he had a twin-engine prop, about six, seven passenger rig. Bo Strong and Jim Dodge and I, and I don't know who else, we flew down. It was nice. It was okay.

Mary Atai: Scary. Those little planes are scary.

Ken Barss: We had never been in a plane, most of us hadn't. I hadn't anyway.

Mary Atai: That's not the best experience to go first time on a plane. Rickety little things.

Ken Barss: Hitchiner flew me out to Ohio a couple of times when we were looking into some new system that somebody had out there that we wanted to get involved with, but that's neither here nor there. The big planes, I had to sit ... I wanted to see out the window, so they put me right by the wing. I was amazed how much that wing moved up and down. But anyway, it wasn't that. The biggest problem I had was my ears.

Mary Atai: Stopped up?

Ken Barss: Oh Lordy, that first day after we were out there, it ached like a son of a gun. And they told me afterward you either swallow, or you do something as you're coming down, take big breaths or whatever. But that's neither here nor there. We're getting off the subject a lot.

Ken Barss: That's what happened, we finally did purchase, I think through that fellow ... we purchased an ambulance which happened to be a Ford.

Mary Atai: And that would've been what year about?

Ken Barss: '78. And it got ready and it was in Goshen, Indiana. I'd written it all down someplace here in my notes and I didn't do a very good -

John Ballou: Land of Goshen.

Ken Barss: Yeah, Goshen, Indiana, and it was gonna cost us quite a bit and we wanted to get it here before the 4th of July, because we got it in July ... Or late June and July. We wanted it here to show it off in the parade that year, the 4th of July Parade.

So Jim Dodge had a fairly new truck that he got from Willard, I think. It was a Ford pick-up truck. It was Jim and I, and a young man that worked for Jim at the time, Dave Sullivan. And we rode out to Goshen, Indiana, all by road, got to the thing, took delivery of it, and took turns driving it home. We had a lot of fun coming home with it, 'cause people would get right off the road when they saw us coming. We thought that was so funny. We never had that kind of experience before.

Mary Atai: You weren't running the siren, but they just -

Ken Barss: No, no we didn't have to. Didn't use the lights either.

Mary Atai: They saw you and they got off the road.

Ken Barss: No, they got right out of the way. I chuckle to this day how it went. And so forth, and we got it here and cleaned it all up and got it in the parade. But we were unable to put it into service right away.

At that time, that particular chassis, there was not a front wheel drive mechanism that Ford made to put under it. So, we ended up buying an after- market and had it put under that chassis before we took delivery ... or before they took delivery to put the ambulance box on the back of it.

Mary Atai: Because you had to have four-wheel drive in this weather up here.

Ken Barss: Yeah, that was a stickler with us. Once we got service to get four-wheel drive, that's the way you have to be. But that was us.

John Ballou: Well, in parts of this town, you had to have it.

Ken Barss: Yeah, and you still had lots and lots of dirt roads which, in the spring, were terrible, but in the winter they were just as bad with snow and so forth. So, anyways the four-wheel drive mechanism-

John Ballou: The 4-wheel drive got stuck a time or two.

Ken Barss: Yep.

Mary Atai: So, your fire trucks would get stuck in the snow too? Right?

Ken Barss: Yeah, it could.

John Ballou: I got buried a couple of times though, driving the truck around.

Ken Barss: But the ambulance, we weren't able to get the ambulance into service until that year, '78 or '79 until about November, just before the open house. Or maybe they asked at the open house. It wasn't long before we put it into service.

But, during that time what I recall I did, and I don't think any of the others did, but I'd take various rescue people in it every night. Every night for a month or two. We'd go from here and I'd show them the best route I knew to get to CMC, Elliot, VA, Concord, Peterborough, the two hospitals in Nashville. We'd only do one, go right to the emergency entrance and park. We'd even go inside, introduce ourselves, and they would give us a little talk. It took time, but I did that evenings for God knows how long.

Mary Atai: Because all those people were volunteers -

Ken Barss: Yeah.

Mary Atai: And sometimes they'd be there, and sometimes somebody else.

Ken Barss: Some of them had never even driven things bigger than a car, not that this was huge, but I had to let them ... You know, I might drive, but I'd let them try it also, once that I thought they could drive. And some of them didn't really want to drive. So that's how we got that trained, and we put it into service.

And Corky was a very big help in getting it set up, maybe the actual rescue tools, because somewhere along the way I saw where The Grange ... I think I got a picture in some of that stuff. The Grange gave us a \$400 check to buy things. It was presented by Frances Towne.

Ken Barss: I got a picture of Frances handing me a check for \$400 and I don't know what year. I probably have written it down here someplace. She donated a check for a hydraulics system, which was instead of a power motor today, there was just a jack and different things to spread, and pull, and tug people away. And we were saving our money to do that from the same building fund. And we called it then the Building and Equipment Fund. The Grange give us \$400, and I don't remember how much it cost, but that was a nice gesture on their part.

Mary Atai: So you enjoyed working with Corky.

Ken Barss: Oh God, yes. I gotta tell you this story.

John Ballou: She was a character.

Ken Barss: She gave me hell one night. We got a call and we had ... And I'll get to the alerting system eventually, I guess. We had a call on our Red Phone Network that there was somebody up on Crotched Mountain that needed transportation from the mountain to Peterborough.

Well, big-hearted me said, "Yeah, I guess we could do that." Corky comes on and says, "You remember we're not in the transportation business for other towns." Oh! You're

right. She straightened me out, and I'll never forget that. Boy she was ... and I don't remember how that exactly happened. We didn't get the truck or ambulance out to go. But somehow or the other through our system then, maybe radio... I forget. Maybe she was even on the phone. I don't remember how it all worked. But she says, "We won't be doing that." We had a policy.

In fact we had to make rules. We had people that needed to go for doctor's appointments after we had the ambulance. They thought we ought to come and transport them.

John Ballou: Yeah.

Ken Barss: But we had to come up with some rules and regulations about the truck, or the ambulance. And that was one of them. We did not go out of town to do anything.

John Ballou: Liability is involved.

Ken Barss: I guess today if we are needed another ambulance because they had a bad, bad accident or need for it, I think we'd go today. But back then we had to kind of limit stuff a little bit. Maybe because of our insurance on the thing. I don't remember how that all worked.

But boy, I'll never forget, she'd get right on my case.

Mary Atai: Okay, you mentioned the Red Phone System. Go ahead and tell us how that worked.

John Ballou: The Red Phone System.

Ken Barss: Of course, the alerting system, when it first started, you'd call and the telephone office was up High Street here. I forget who lives there now.

Mary Atai: Louise and Dana Robie live there now.

Mary Atai: And you remember the Leland's?

Ken Barss: Yes.

John Ballou: Yes.

Ken Barss: Well Bill Leland, yes. He'd have a method there where he'd kick the siren on. At that time the siren was on top of the Town Hall.

Mary Atai: This is the same siren that later ended up on the new fire house?

Ken Barss: Yep, the same siren. But let me follow along with what my thoughts were here. Well, that's how it worked originally, and then somewhere along ... And I guess they'd ring the bell in the church, and they had all different kinds of ways. But even when I was on, we had what was called a Red Phone System. In other words, there were several

phones and they were red in color. In various locations, different people had them. And I'm not sure if it went into it here, but I found it somewhere.

John Ballou: I had one at my house for a while.

Ken Barss: But for a long time, there were different phones around. Those phones would take the emergency message. In turn they could hit the siren from those locations, so they'd set that off, then from there each one of those red phone recipients had lists of people to call, and those people they called had other lists of people, so it was a phone plan to get a hold of people. You know? That's how it worked for a while.

Mary Atai: When there was a fire.

Ken Barss: Or an emergency.

Mary Atai: So that's how they'd let you know.

John Ballou: Yeah.

Ken Barss: And then we went along and some time I think, in the mid '70s, as my notes read here, we ended up buying what we called a Base Station Radio. And those, not only had one in the fire station, but we had one at my home, and I don't remember, I think Jim Dodge and Justine Dodge had one, and I don't know who else had one. But there were a couple or three of them. And from there, at that same time, we put an antenna up in Mansfield's field up there by where Tommy Mansfield lives now [Joe English Road]. Presently that thing got moved from that field when they built a better station. They put it up on Ridgeview.

Ken Barss: The big tower up there. And I guess there's even a generator. I don't know, but that's when that happened.

Plus we also purchased 18 pagers, and we gave them to 18 firemen. Maybe that's all we could afford at the time, I don't know. There were three red phones that had the base units and they could blow the siren and they could also alert these 18 people anyway that there was an emergency. And from there I think there was some call lists. I think my wife and Justine [Dodge], whoever else had to call those who didn't have pagers.

Then each truck, of course was equipped. We had radios in the fire trucks when we had the old original station, but they were what they call low band. They were forestry radios.

John Ballou: Yeah, they were low band radios.

Ken Barss: Low band things of some kind and they could talk between themselves but that's about all that would amount to. There wasn't any base station antenna anywhere or whatever. So we equipped all the trucks with a radio that could talk pretty much

around town. But they did move it further up, because they found that there were locations in town where there were dead spaces.

And so that's why after my reign of terror they moved it again when they upgraded equipment and so forth. That's how the alerting system would work. It went from the telephone office, so he could ring the siren, and I don't think he did anything more than that for a member, right? Maybe they'd come on if somebody heard the siren and said, "What the hell is going on?" And probably he could tell them.

John Ballou: Billy Leland.

Ken Barss: You're right, it was Billy. I couldn't remember his name. But anyway, so that's how the alerting system went. And before that I'm not sure what the devil they did. I know when my dad was a fire chief he was also the Civil Defense protector.

Mary Atai: And you also did that for a time, John. Right?

Ken Barss: Yeah, and that was back after World War II. And in some areas-

John Ballou: We wore the steel helmets.

Ken Barss: Yeah, I remember when we went to school we used to ... We'd have drills, not only to hide under the desks; we used to come across and go over here by the hardware store and the cellar there. I don't know if it was there or whether it was the apartment building there. We used to go down there. They had a place down there that was safe.

John Ballou: Not safe if a bomb went off.

Ken Barss: But there were various places around town that had rims off of railroad cars. And somebody would go out there. And evidently those things would ring and make noise if you pounded on them. "Cause they had them hung on a tripod thing and this cable came down and held up this old railroad rim, or wheel, and somebody would go and beat on that. That was another method of alerting people.

Which I didn't read anything about it, but I recall them having that 'cause up on Joe English Road there was one on Paul Barss' farm. When we were kids, we grew up just up the road. Paul Barss was my uncle, actually. He was my father's brother.

John Ballou: They probably rang the church bells.

Ken Barss: They rang all the different bells, I read that somewhere that there was a church that was up on top of Meeting House.

John Ballou: There's a big stone right there.

Mary Atai: The old church on the hill. That burned down in 1900.

Ken Barss: Yeah there you go. They rang that bell because that was pretty high up, but that's how they alerted people there was an emergency. They switched after I finished my reign of terror. They hooked up with Goffstown and then the 2626 number went in ... Or I guess it's 911 now, but I guess 2626 -

John Ballou: Yeah that's not used anymore.

Ken Barss: So you do the 911, and that goes right to Goffstown. And then they figure out what the problem is, and if it's the police I guess their method is to get hold of them. If it's the fire for rescue or fire, or whatever, they can signal and put out the alarm.

Mary Atai: John, can you tell us, when you were Civil Defense Protector, what did you have to do?

John Ballou: Oh God. I don't remember that.

Mary Atai: Do you remember some of the things? What did you have to do?

John Ballou: Nothing.

Mary Atai: I mean, what were you supposed to be doing?

John Ballou: In case we were attacked, I was supposed to be doing something with the police and fire, organizing both, but I don't remember doing anything in particular.

Ken Barss: Once the World War got over, and they stopped using the bombing range ... You probably heard of that up here off of Joe English? We used to go up in Paul Barss' yard up there, and we used to play ball with my cousins, and we'd watch the planes come over. They'd practice with their machine guns and they'd also practice dropping bombs into the pond. There's a big pond over in there.

Mary Atai: Did any bomb ever go astray that you knew of?

Ken Barss: It did happen. I forget now exactly what, but something ended up in the yard up at my uncle's too. It may've only been I'll say a cartridge or something like that. Something got bounced out and landed in the yard at his house. But I don't remember exactly what it was.

Mary Atai: Zandy Clark told me that Homer Dodge was delivering groceries one time and he was at somebody's house delivering groceries, and something ... It may not have been a full-fledged bomb, but something fell and blew part of the door off in front of him. And Zandy said Homer never said much until then and then he never stopped talking about that. But how frightening is that?

John Ballou: Oh, I know.

Mary Atai: So that has to be some kind of accident by the bombing range men.

Ken Barss: Well that was back when they used what they call the bombing range over there, they ... you know it was a little scary. It was interesting as a kid growing up to watch them. I grew up in the 1940s ... this is '42, '43 when they were using it. And we just lived up the road a little bit.

Well, you know where Barss Road is? Are you familiar?

Mary Atai: Is that off of Joe English Road?

Ken Barss: It's off the dirt portion.

Mary Atai: Yes.

Ken Barss: You go up there to the first plateau and then you come to all the fields. There's Barss Road that goes out there. And that used to take us over to the bombing range when we were young.

Mary Atai: So you feel as a Civil Defense position, you didn't have a lot of work with that.

John Ballou: No.

Mary Atai: But if something had happened, you would've been the man.

John Ballou: It was a title more than anything back then. If something had happened, I don't know. I got a hundred bucks a year for what I don't know. Nothing for that.

Ken Barss: Yeah, you would get a hundred dollars and you used to jump up and say that. I've got it. It's written down someplace, I saw it.

Mary Atai: You two are such good friends, you just like to bicker.

Ken Barss: Oh well.

John Ballou: We've been doing it for a long time.

Mary Atai: Let me ask you about your secondary position because sometimes you were also the forest fire warden.

Ken Barss: Yep. Forest fire warden.

Mary Atai: Now what did that entail? Was that much work?

Ken Barss: If we had a local forest fire, then it was my responsibility to clear it up. We'd get the vehicles out there and the manpower and put the damn thing out.

Mary Atai: And sometimes you have them, right? I mean sometimes there were -

Ken Barss: I mean you had to come up, you had to make a judgment as to the acreage size, they always say they're bigger than they really are many times. And usually if you had any kind of major forest fire, you'd have a state warden show up to assist you or make recommendations on what to do. We supported, we had the equipment to take care of it as best we could. And we got called. Mutual aid was getting to be a big thing.

And I remember going down to Goffstown with a truck and setting up by the hydrant and ... I just saw that hydrant. We set up at the hydrant and said "What the hell are we supposed to do with this thing?" We didn't know anything. It's on the Manchester by the ... I forget the name of the road.

John Ballou: Manchester didn't know anything to do with sucking water out of ponds either.

Ken Barss: Yeah well that's something else we'll get to here in a few minutes.

Mary Atai: Well, let me ask you about a couple of guys. Okay?

Ken Barss: Yeah.

Mary Atai: One of them being Charlie Davis. Charlie Davis was like everything, all the time, for years, and years, and years. He was on the fire department, he was -

Ken Barss: Oh yeah.

John Ballou: He was chief for a while.

Mary Atai: He was actually the first one that was called Police Chief. Before that it was called Constable. And then I think it was 1951, Charlie became the Police Chief for seven years before George Saint John came in. George O. Saint John, father of the current George St. John.

So Charlie spent 36 years on the fire department.

Ken Barss: Yeah.

Mary Atai: So what can you tell me about him then?

John Ballou: Nice -

Mary Atai: I always imagined he was a nice guy.

John Ballou: He was a nice guy.

John Ballou: But didn't wanna get involved with anything.

Mary Atai: Okay he didn't like conflict? Or what?

Ken Barss: No, no, I think it was just his way.

John Ballou: I don't know how to explain it. He was in the Army I think?

Ken Barss: Yeah. He'd come but he didn't want to learn. He might come to meetings, but he'd want to stand back. He didn't want to get involved with learning how to operate a truck. He didn't want to learn how to go out and use a hand tool or a backpack.

Mary Atai: So, he wasn't really interested in the actual work of a fireman?

Ken Barss: Well, he was interested, but in a standoffish way. If you needed sandwiches, he might run and get sandwiches, or coffee.

Mary Atai: So he was auxiliary.

Ken Barss: Yeah, we had another guy, George Peirce, that liked to sit at the station and run the base -

John Ballou: He could get you anything.

Ken Barss: Oh, he could. He knew everybody. Very nice guy.

Ken Barss: No, if he heard about an emergency he'd come to the station and run the base station radio for us. If we needed something out there, we'd call back from the trucks and say, "Would you call Francetown or Mont Vernon, Goffstown." If we needed more people or anything.

Ken Barss: Nice guy, both of them. Charlie Davis as far as the police department goes. I remember one time when I was a kid, and we didn't finish it, but we were out to take Charlie Davis' car. He had his own car, which was used to do the policing, but we hooked a chain to the rear end and I forget, a telephone pole or something? And we knew damn well if we put out a call, he'd go out there in that car. And he was one that would floor it! Boy, he took off as if he was on the drag strip, you know. Then he'd coast, then he'd floor it again. I don't know what kind of mileage the man ever got. It was terrible.

But we didn't dare leave that, 'cause I knew damn well what would have happened. He was gonna rip the rear end right out from under that car.

Mary Atai: Yeah, that wouldn't have been very good, Ken. The police used their own cars, to my understanding, right up until 1974, when they got their first cruiser. So you were already Police Chief for four years by the time there was ever a police car. You were using your own car too, John. Right?

John Ballou: That's correct.

Mary Atai: For years. Did they give you mileage?

John Ballou: Yeah. Ten cents.

Mary Atai: Well, at least something.

John Ballou: Yeah, something. Wasn't much.

Mary Atai: And did you have a radio in your personal car?

John Ballou: I did. Yes. And I gave Charlie Davis, who was my Assistant Chief then, a radio in his car as well.

Ken Barss: I don't think I had a police radio, did I?

John Ballou: Yes you did.

Ken Barss: I did?

John Ballou: And one year we put a radio in your brand new Scout. It was done by -

Ken Barss: I had International Scouts for awhile.

John Ballou: It was done by a professional radio installer for the state.

And you remember he ran the screw right through the wiring in that Scout and it burned up?

Ken Barss: Damn near burned up the wire.

Mary Atai: And so you had the radio.

Ken Barss: Now that you mentioned it, I do remember that.

John Ballou: I don't know what year it was, but I remember that.

Mary Atai: If only a couple of you guys had a radio, how did you get in touch with the rest of your volunteer policemen?

John Ballou: Called them on the phone.

Mary Atai: So you could call Charlie on the radio if he was out in his car. But beyond that, you couldn't reach your other men.

John Ballou: No.

Mary Atai: Yeah, that's not a very good system at all, is it?

John Ballou: Well, it was you know, long ago.

John Ballou: 1970's, it was before, well almost before computers.

Mary Atai: Well John, let me talk to you a minute.

Ken Barss: Yeah, let me shut up.

Mary Atai: I just want get a little more of the police angle in here.

Mary Atai: Because even though you're both firemen, you also were both policemen.

Ken Barss: Yes.

Mary Atai: I tend to think you as fire, Ken, and John, you as representing the police.

John Ballou: Well, that's what Ken was most interested in, being a fireman.

Mary Atai: Yes, because once you had a chance to choose to be the Police Chief, you chose that, against your wife's wishes I understand.

John Ballou: Yeah.

Mary Atai: And it lasted 20 years, and you made quite a name as the Police Chief in your role.

John Ballou: It depends on who you talk to, right?

Mary Atai: Yes, you made quite a good name. Both of you made quite good names for yourselves.

It was really early on and your men who worked for you really weren't trained as policemen at all, right? Did they have any training at all?

John Ballou: Initially, no. Unless they were ex-military, which not many were at the time.

Mary Atai: Okay, and so they were just volunteers and you had maybe five guys?

John Ballou: They were trained, I guess by me. They went to part-time schools, I remember the State Police.

Mary Atai: Did they have to? Or was that optional?

John Ballou: They volunteered.

Mary Atai: They were paid?

John Ballou: I don't remember how much now, a dollar or two an hour maybe?

Ken Barss: I'll jump in here. If we were out on the call ...

John Ballou: Yeah, alright.

Ken Barss: Whatever, and we would get an hourly wage of ... It was written down, I forget what it was, a dollar and a quarter an hour?

John Ballou: Wasn't much.

Ken Barss: And we could turn that in to him after we did whatever on that particular thing. We also, on weekends, would take some turns; we used to patrol. Saturday nights was a biggie, right?

John Ballou: Yeah.

Ken Barss: And sometimes him and I-
Before he got to be chief. I don't remember after you got to be chief, whether -

John Ballou: Well, before that I'd go out with you in your Scout.

Ken Barss: Yeah.

John Ballou: God, he'd take me out in the countryside someplace where I thought we'd never come out again.

Ken Barss: We had that 4-wheel drive, and I used to love to take him out through all dirt roads. "You sure you know where you're going?" "No, but there's gotta be an end to it somewhere."

Mary Atai: No GPS.

John Ballou: That's the truth.

Ken Barss: I'll never forget the time I had the Scout, and I don't remember which one. I had Scouts from '63 to '75 I think. We had Officer Dickerman, you remember

John Ballou: Tiny -

Ken Barss: Tiny Dickerman.

John Ballou: Yeah.

Ken Barss: He couldn't do much. He was a big ol' guy. He was in the Scout and we were hustling to go to Goffstown. For some reason we were in a big tear, and he was a big guy and he didn't have hands enough to hang on. I scared the hell out of him in plain English.

John Ballou: I remember.

Ken Barss: And he broke my seat! Because those seats in the Scout would flip forward to get in the back. It was just a little tie frame. He busted my seat. I had to get a new seat.

Mary Atai: Oh no.

Ken Barss: And framework. Scared the hell outta him. I used to drive pretty fast I guess. That's why I was telling you about the importance of having the fire station centrally located?

Ken Barss: Dick Moody used to be the worst one I ever had on the fire department for racing to a fire.

Mary Atai: He must have calmed down some over the years. He's a very steady fellow.

John Ballou: When he got older.

Ken Barss: Now, I'll never forget one time he passed the fire engine going to the scene, and he damn near took them both out. This was going somewhere over South Hill over here. And over here on 13 he decided the fire truck wasn't going as fast ... cause we used to use chains in the wintertime, we used to put on tire chains on the back because they weren't all-wheel drives. They're still not today, but they don't use chains anymore. And the roads are a lot better than they were back then. And the old truck, we used to, I think I put 35mph... That's what I used to put right on the -

John Ballou: On a piece of tape.

Ken Barss: Not over 35 with the chains on, 'cause you know -

John Ballou: It would burn the rubber on the tires.

Ken Barss: One time we had a fire up in Frankestown. A big barn up there was burning, and Kennedy, Bob Kennedy decided he'd bring up one of the trucks that had chains on it. And he wasn't even a fireman, but back then if you could drive the damn truck, get it to the scene. Somebody would be able to run it once he got it there.

He got those chains so hot, that they melted right into the tires. Not enough to have them blow up, but we had to put four new tires on the rear of that truck.

Mary Atai: And that was Bob Kennedy, the builder?

Ken Barss: Bob Kennedy, the builder.

Mary Atai: Alright well John, let me ask you about the revolver situation. Somewhere along the line you wanted your officers to have some guns.

John Ballou: Yep.

Mary Atai: And you applied for a grant.

John Ballou: Yes.

Mary Atai: Tell about how that went.

John Ballou: Crime Commission. There was a Crime Commission in New Hampshire. Federal thing where they give out money to buy equipment. I applied for a grant to buy guns for police officers. I think it was six or seven 357s, and one Chief's Snub nose 36, which I still have. But anyway, I applied for the grant and a letter came back. It said, no, we're not funding guns. We're only funding protective equipment.

Well I worked at Saint Anselm College at the time, and the Vice-President of the Crime Commission, or the Assistant Director of the Crime Commission, I forget his exact title now, but he was Vice-President of Saint Anselm College anyway, George Collins. I went out to see George and I took him the letter and I said, George, you help me out? Yeah. I said to him, "Tell me, why does a police officer carry a gun?" He said, Well, to protect the public, and protect himself. Good. Read this letter.

John Ballou: I said, read this letter. Oh, I'll check into that. And we got funded for the side arms. Guns are protective equipment.

Mary Atai: So you got your guns.

John Ballou: And holsters.

Mary Atai: And your holsters. Now did you ever have to use them much?

John Ballou: No, fortunately, no.

Mary Atai: No. What kind of crimes were big from 1970 to 1990 when you were Police Chief? What was really happening crime-wise?

John Ballou: The run of things from domestics to burglaries. I don't remember now ... but the bank over here was robbed one night.

Mary Atai: Oh my goodness. That's pretty major.

John Ballou: Well, it was burglarized.

John Ballou: Once we interrupted a gang of juveniles out on the east side, off of Bedford Road. There used to be a gravel pit out there. I had gone out ... I think Paul was with me at that time and checking. Because we had a number of burglaries up in that area, so we're checking all the wooded areas, back roads and stuff.

And we went out in there and we came across a couple of kids on motorcycles. They came racing towards us, and they saw us and raced in the other direction. Well, we did get one of the bikes, but we never found anything else, until that night.

We got a call from Bedford police saying shots had been fired at the apartment building over on New Boston Road, just before the Bedford town line. So Paul and I went out there. I don't remember if we were out on patrol that night, or whether we met. But anyway, we went out and we headed out there on Bedford Road, almost out

to New Boston Road, when this van came from the other direction, headed back to town.

And I wanted to stop that van, turn around and stop that van, but I just had no idea. We had no information from Bedford as to what was going on, so we had to continue to the apartment house to find out.

Apparently, whoever was doing the shooting had left the area. It turned out afterwards it was that van that passed us going the other direction. And they ended up by John Brown's in Goffstown, trying to steal some gas out of his gas pumps. He ran a construction thing. And he came out and found them, and they shot at him.

They ended up getting to Goffstown, and Goffstown Police were after them. They shot up a couple of Goffstown cruisers out of the back of the van. Turns out it was a bunch of juveniles that had been doing all the burglaries in that area. And they had a campsite near a small ... Do you know the name of that lake is they came up there?

Ken Barss: Whereabouts?

John Ballou: Off of, off of Bedford Road, up near the gravel pit. There's a body of water out there probably in Bedford, Goffstown ...

Ken Barss: I guess I don't remember what's the name anyway.

John Ballou: But they apparently were camping out there and a lot of the loot was recovered from them.

Mary Atai: Did you have any murders between 1970 and 1990?

John Ballou: None that I can prove.

Mary Atai: Okay. Well, that's probably the truth of it. Alright, and so you had a similar experience to Ken when you had to move to the Depot building and had to make it into the police station. So when you started, you were working out of your house right? Basically?

John Ballou: No. We had an office in the Town Hall. We had one room upstairs in the Town Hall.

Ken Barss: You used to have the first station, right? You were the only one. Everybody else, like St. John used to work out of his house.

John Ballou: Yes.

Ken Barss: Charlie Davis did.

John Ballou: I worked out of my house too. In fact we had the police radio up there for years. Then they gave us a room in Town Hall.

Ken Barss: It's right up above the Town Clerk's office.

John Ballou: Yeah.

Ken Barss: That same side. Where the selectmen used to be and where the town clerk's at now.

Mary Atai: Then the Playground Association, who owned the Depot,-

John Ballou: Yeah we were looking for room, because we needed more room to do things, process people. You'd have someone under arrest and you'd try to take them up the stairs of Town Hall. It was a liability problem with how it was.

Mary Atai: So what did you have to do to get the train Depot, the railroad Depot from 1893 to turn it into a police station? What did you have to do?

John Ballou: We had to get permission from Wayne Daniels essentially. Or the Playground Association. Well you know as well as I do, Daniels controlled all that. They agreed to it until at the Town Meeting night. And they suddenly didn't agree with it anymore.

Mary Atai: They didn't want it to be the police station then?

John Ballou: Well, I don't know what happened with Daniels. He put a squash on it for whatever reason he might've had, I don't know. But I got up and made a fairly long speech that night, and we ended up getting it and converting it into a police station.

Mary Atai: And what did you have to do to make it a police station inside?

John Ballou: We had to do everything. We had to do just about everything inside.

Mary Atai: Because what did it look like before? Was it just one big room?

Ken Barss: Essentially, pretty much, yeah. A couple of restrooms in the back. 'Cause the reason I remember something about it, not so much the police station, but I went to school two years down there. In third grade and fourth grade [1949 and 1950], that was the classroom.

Mary Atai: Because the main school was too full?

Ken Barss: Yep, too full and that's when they first built I think the present elementary school, the first old part.

Mary Atai: The old one was started in 1955. That's when that was built, so you would've been ...

Ken Barss: I graduated in '58, so it was before that. It was my third and fourth grades that I was down there. It was Mrs. Sanderson. I remember her name. Her husband happened to be the principal I think.

John Ballou: Sanderson? Really?

Mary Atai: That's why they wanted to stop using that school. It just couldn't handle the students. That's why they wanted the high school not to be -

Ken Barss: That was a big part of it. They couldn't afford to build a new high school.

She was a good teacher, other than I blame her a little bit on my spelling. My memory works pretty good. If you give me a list of names or numbers, names I guess, or words, I could remember them as long as you didn't take them out of order. If you'd start here and there, I'd ... but I used to ace then because she was one that liked to memorize things, and I can't spell even today. I have a terrible time spelling. And I read a lot these days because I got nothing better to do.

But anyway, we're down there third and fourth grade anyway, and I'd guess you'd have to figure back what years that would've been.

Ken Barss: And that was only one grade ... yeah it was third grade one year and fourth the next, because they hadn't the facility ... didn't have room to do it over here. [the main school]

Ken Barss: Well they built those two what we call the chicken coops that are still down there. Those two little buildings that are down at the end of the ball field? They built them early on.

Ken Barss: Those were classrooms. They built them on purpose for first and second grade or something like that. Each one had a class in it.

Cause I know in high school I used to be a pretty good ball ... Well, I could hit a ball a long way and I used to try to hit those buildings.

John Ballou: Rotten kid.

Ken Barss: Yeah, I was bad. Yeah you could ask people. I had a little bit of a temper and I had that for a lot of years. I've learned these days to control it, especially around him. [pointing to John]

Mary Atai: Alright, so how did you get any jail cells for the jail?

John Ballou: The Youth Development Center in Manchester had cells in the basement of a building up there, and they wanted to get rid of 'em. And they gave us the opportunity to go up and take them out for free. So I got Francestown, and Weare and ourselves and I got to say we did most of the work, as it turned out. But we went up and tore the cells out of the basement, brought 'em down here, and Francestown took one, as I recall. Weare took one or two. And we put in two here in the Depot.

Mary Atai: What did you use to tear the cells out? I mean some kind of machinery?

John Ballou: Sledge hammers. Sledge hammers, chisels, hammers, saws.

Mary Atai: You'd make a bad prisoner. You'd escape! If you got those tools, you'd escape.

John Ballou: But we did. Dave Rice ... was I think, the one that put us on to that because he was Sergeant of the state prison and worked for us on the police department. He was a big man. In fact one of the state troopers called him Three Men in a Gorilla Suit. He was pretty good size.

Big guy. Anyway, we took 'em out of there and put 'em in. Installed them ourselves in the building down here. A lot of the other finish work was done by ... I can't remember who now, but Jim Dane was involved on getting a lot of the stuff through Milford Lumber, because he worked for them.

Mary Atai: Yeah. So he could get it at a discount?

John Ballou: I don't know but he worked for them for years.

Ken Barss: Yeah, he helped us a lot remodeling the inside into a police station.

Mary Atai: And you haven't been in that for years. Is that right? You haven't back in there for many years? So you don't know if the cells are gone?

John Ballou: I have no idea. They should have been removed and used in the new police station.

(John had to leave. Continued on with Ken.)

Mary Atai: So how were the prisoner's issues resolved?

Ken Barss: We had to take them to court ourselves. We didn't have a prosecutor, if that's the word they use these days? We had to do our own. Not even a Chief. He only did what he did. If we had a summons, we'd have to go. I learned a lot about the law. A lot of things were solved ... How am I going to put it? I can't think of the word right now. A lot of the things were solved in the hall before we even got to the courtroom.

Mary Atai: Oh, I see.

Ken Barss: You know what I mean? It wasn't like we took anybody and got them bailed or anything. There was summons for various reasons.

Mary Atai: When you were doing your police work, and there would be a DUI, how did you handle that?

Mary Atai: Did they have a breathalyzer test?

Ken Barss: No, we'd make them try to walk the line and touch their noses. Not breathalyzers.

Mary Atai: Did they draw blood?

Ken Barss: Nope. Now, I don't think so. Yes, but I do recall now that you say that -

Mary Atai: I read sometimes they had to take the sample to Concord. They had to drive up to Concord with a blood sample.

Ken Barss: Seems to me Goffstown got so they could draw blood. And seems to me I ended up going in and having the Manchester Police Department do that for me one night. I don't remember the exact situation.

Mary Atai: Probably different years entailed different systems.

Ken Barss: But if you got the bigger departments they could forward the blood sample to Concord, 'cause that's where the lab was to analyze the thing

Mary Atai: You could tell if they were drunk?

Ken Barss: Yeah, you could tell from their behavior, walking the line and turning around, etc. You could smell it, of course. Yeah, you'd run into that. A lot of accidents. I'd get called, especially accidents over this way on Route 13. And you'd get called for accidents, two, three, four o'clock in the morning. Didn't make any difference, 'cause we technically ... That's one thing with a small department like we had back then, not today. Back then we were on duty basically whenever we were available. Yeah, I've seen some awful messes over on my road over there.

South Hill corner I saw ... I came down one night and there's an engine sitting right on the yellow line. They hit that hard. And I forget now, but I don't think anybody got killed in that deal either. We had to have the rescue come over and pry them out, but they hit hard enough to tear the engine right out of the car. It was sitting on the yellow line steaming.

Another night I remember going down. I was on a bowling league, and this fellow worked for me. I didn't know it was him at the time, but when I got there I knew it as soon as I saw the back of his car. And I know we'd been having a few beers and I'd gotten home somehow. I was sober then, but I went down there and boy he was in some tough shape. He busted his leg and he was a mess. But that was funny, when I came around the corner, "Jesus, Spike, what the hell did you do?" He went right off ... He fell asleep I think. He went right off the road.

But I was also gonna mention on a police fire type thing. Dick Moody's house. I don't know if you've ever been to Dick Moody's house.

Mary Atai: I know where he lives on Baker Lane.

Ken Barss: Baker Lane; that was Charlie Baker. I got a call one night that there'd been a shooting. So I got over there, and it's old Charlie Baker. Now, I knew of him, cause he's the one that had his voice box removed, and he couldn't talk. Couldn't speak. He had loved to talk.

So anyway, he was sitting on the running board of this old Model A Ford truck, 30-30 rifle in his mouth and touched it off. And I'll never forget to this day what the front of that house looked like. It was covered with blood.

Ken Barss: Spotted with blood. Never forget that. I was first on the scene and I stayed until we got it cleaned up. That was kind of a police department rescue deal at the time.

Mary Atai: So he committed suicide because of his health and because he no longer had control of his speech. So sad.

Ken Barss: Yeah, he was that way for a long time. He went and lived with his sisters. Somebody in Goffstown he had lived with and he'd come out to the old farm, 'cause it was still his. Evidently he couldn't take it anymore and decided he might as well end it.

He blew one side of his head gone. The old coroner was a doctor in Milford.

Ken Barss: I had to wait for him to come out. Good God, he was an old fellow. He had a Buick car, drove fast when you'd call him to come to a scene, but he'd be there. And not too long he was looking him over, and he had to sign the death certificate as suicide and so forth, but there was brain matter laid there on the ground, and he picked it up, going through it, put it back in the cavity and says, he ain't gonna know. Pick it up, he says. I don't recall whether I really did or not, or whether he did it, but I'll never forget that. Gordon Burns I think was his name. Yeah, he was a medical examiner. He was a doctor also. He had an office and so forth.

You bring back all these things. I do think of that every time I go by. That's something that's gotten planted in my head. I don't think about it unless I go and think about Dick's house, but I've mentioned it to him every time I go by. And you can't really see Dick's house out on Bedford Road.

Mary Atai: Not well, no.

Ken Barss: You gotta go up his roadway, his driveway or whatever. But right there in front of the house there was some big Maple trees, and he pulled along in front, and sat there on the running board.

Mary Atai: Do you remember any other really memorable instances when you were working as a policeman?

Ken Barss: Well, you get me started, there was a time on Lyndeboro Road, and there was a state trooper involved and I was involved. We had a guy over there, Charlie Hoyt was his name and I was there with my vehicle. At the time speed didn't bother me at all, and this car came humming from going out to 13. And I stepped out to the side of the road and slowed down. Zoom, he went by like a bat out of you know what. I jumped in my vehicle and I caught that son of a gun before he got to 13, and it isn't that far actually. It's a bridge out there and the road's kind of crooked.

Mary Atai: Yeah, I know where.

Ken Barss: I caught up with him before he got out to 13. Well, I summonsed him for disobeying a police officer, I think. I hadn't gotten home too long, and he knew ... He came from Goffstown, and he knew the Chief, but the biggest thing he was, he had just gotten nominated for some safety committee for the police department. And they wanted me to drop it.

Mary Atai: The irony.

Ken Barss: And I was just stubborn enough, no, I'm not dropping that. So I don't know who else I got a call for, but this was a police chief in Goffstown. Before I got done, and this is kind of what I was talking about before. All this stuff was already taken away from me, or solved or whatever the proper terminology is before I even ... Never did get to the courtroom. It was all taken care of without really my knowledge. They had the judge. The judge was even involved; he knew all about it. So that's a bunch of baloney. I said "He disobeyed". Well, Ken you know you got to moderate a little bit. He was just nominated for some police safety commission, or some god damn thing. That was a thing that I remember.

Mary Atai: So how about as a fireman? Do you have any specific incidents jogging your memory?

Ken Barss: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ken Barss: When you mentioned Horton Foote's. I remember that 'cause back then I was a crazy character, and I remember that house fire because I was trying to go in and go up the stairs, and I ended up in the cellar. Because back then I ... You know chimney fires? I didn't stand back and direct people. I had to be right there, Johnny on the spot. Probably that's why I am the way I am today.

Mary Atai: And so the stairs just burned through?

Ken Barss: Well, they evidently were burning underneath. I didn't realize it, and the first thing I know, boy, I went down through. It ain't nothing. Tougher than a board fence then, but I lucked out. Horton Foote's fire was back in '65.

Mary Atai: So you had just become Chief.

Ken Barss: Well, yes. But see, it's one of those things. As Fire Chief, I had to be in the middle of it. Training meetings, I guess I'd mentioned that before, once we had facilities big enough to do training, I was one who would take guys out to learn how to run that '64 Howe pump that we got. It was kind of a unique thing. It was what they called positive displacement. In other words, you didn't have to prime the pump, you could just stick it in. And with those pistons like the old hand pump they used to use in the houses? It would suck the water right out. So it was a great pump for a novice that didn't run a pump every day and things like that.

Back, I don't remember in the old station even doing much training. In fact, I don't recall hardly any training. But ... I ended up having to take the trucks out. I took it upon myself. I took the trucks out and exercised them just to drive around town. Everybody

would say, why are you burning up gas for? But to make a vehicle reliable you need to run it once in a while, at least on a weekly basis. Had three trucks; I'd go down and take one out today, tonight, whenever I had time. Another day I'd go down, so I was down at the station frequently just exercising and taking vehicles around town.

Then at training meetings once we got over, so we could train, I used to go to those and teach how the pump was to work, and so forth.

Mary Atai: So you were quite busy.

Ken Barss: My knowledge was knowledge that I learned from the fire schools or whatever. Once in a while we'd get somebody maybe from the state, or possibly from another department that was bigger and had training officers. Rodney Towne ended up being a training officer. Before him was John Bunting. I love John Bunting, a nice guy. He did a lot for the town, but I do not fully understand in my little brain why they had to put his name on the front of the station, 'cause he had really nothing to do with getting that station. But when he passed away from cancer, I guess they felt they had to do something to honor him because he did do lots of training and lots of stuff for the department, so maybe I'm all wet when it comes to that.

Mary Atai: Did you early on ever work with Reo 1924 engine that they bought, or was it already gone?

Ken Barss: Gone.

Mary Atai: Yeah, because it -

Ken Barss: I never really recall running the '38, the 1938. The one that didn't have a cab?

Mary Atai: Okay

Ken Barss: I've got pictures of it.

Mary Atai: And so that was probably gone too?

Ken Barss: No, it wasn't there, it was still there because I was either Chief or was gonna be Chief when that showed up. I don't recall being involved with basically ordering it, setting it up. Where I was involved with was the American Le France.

Mary Atai: Which is this one? [shows picture]

Ken Barss: That's the Howe. That's the '64.

Mary Atai: So when you got this one in '64, it was still in use when you moved to the new fire station in '73 -

Ken Barss: Oh sure.

Mary Atai: Because the trucks are used as long as possible.

Ken Barss: Yes.

Mary Atai: What year was this?

Ken Barss: '81.

Mary Atai: America Le France M2. Now how long did that one get used?

Ken Barss: Well that was still in use ... See, I left the fire department in '81 or '82.

Mary Atai: Yeah, but it's not in use now, so -

Ken Barss: I don't know. I don't know. If it is, I don't know where it is. But they probably got rid of it. But we also have a station now, over at what used to be the tracking station fire department. I don't know what they have up there for equipment. Seem to me we bought a used fire truck from someplace, Bedford or whatever, and that's up there. I don't know what happened to this.

Mary Atai: What was the main reason for putting on that hilltop station, in your mind?

Ken Barss: Just a quicker response to that area.

Mary Atai: Because this is too far away -

Ken Barss: It was a fire station anyway there. They had two or three government trucks. And they had sleeping quarters and a kitchen. They had a live-in facility because they were like what, 24 hours on and 24 off. And they had a regular fire station. And it's exactly five miles from here over there. I remember that because I used to measure.

Mary Atai: Five miles.

Ken Barss: And to get out Dick Moody's way and that area that's building up more and more off New Boston Road. It probably seemed like a smart thing. Nothing I had anything to do with, 'cause when I was still Chief, I think the government still had control of it because of the tracking station that was a federal government kind of thing. Still is, as far as I know. But that's the reason I think ... And also it probably was because Dick Moody's over that way.

Several of the guys live in that section, so why wouldn't it be wise if there was a problem over there, they'd probably get alerted if there is a problem. Why wouldn't it be wise to go there? It'd be much quicker to pick up equipment and get on the scene. They'd send trucks from here also, but it probably would save ... ten minutes? Five minutes? I mean saving any time is good. Boy fire moves quick, depending on the situation.

So that was the LaFrance. Now I had a lot to do with developing this, and as it turned out, the fellow that was the rep, whose name ... he was from Manchester. What the hell was his name? Anyway, he was the American LaFrance representative when he came back to take over his father's business in Manchester. Why can't I think of his name? ... But anyway, I'll probably think of it while I'm talking.

Mary Atai: When you say you had a lot to do with developing it, do you mean you would work with the rep to have certain things that you needed be built on it?

Ken Barss: Yep and this fellow that was the rep for American LaFrance, he'd helped us out with a reel truck. That was something that we had put into service here. I just saw it. And the reel truck had a large diameter hose, so around town we had no hydrant systems. And that reminds me I made notes about dry hydrants.

Those were okay. The reason for a dry hydrant ... you understand what a dry hydrant is? It's this pipe that sticks up with a cap on it, but it goes down, and it goes deep enough so in the wintertime you can hook up and get water.

Mary Atai: Oh, no I didn't know that.

Ken Barss: Where you don't have to chop a hole in the ice or whatever.

Mary Atai: Kind of like a well?

Ken Barss: Kind of like a well. We tried one out at the bridge out here. We had one down almost where you come to the school. They keep digging out a deep hole there. They keep one there so if they have an emergency at the school. Plus now I guess they got a big tank up on the hill too, up by John's house, actually.

And we had these dry hydrants around in several different ponds here and there. Because in the wintertime it goes back to when we were at the old station. We had a tanker and this tanker was an old Reo. This Reo I talk about is a military surplus truck that Charlie Davis got, 'cause I think that Charlie Davis might have even been ... Was he Civil Defense Director before John?

Mary Atai: He was for some years.

Ken Barss: Okay well he got this 10 wheel truck that had a flatbed on it, and then it was turned over when I got to be the chief there. It had three oblong fuel tanks. They were like they put into these refueling planes or whatever.

And they were about 750 gallons each. We started out with two, and we got another one, so we had three of them piled on the back of this truck. Like logs, like pieces of lumber. And in the summertime, in good weather, that was wonderful. We had water we could take with us. But when the wintertime came we had no place to store it, so rather than an ice cube, we'd just drain it and pack the thing. In fact, I kept it over at my mother's place, who had a store for years... You got my memory working all over the place.

Any way there was Barss store over there. Yes, that was my mother and dad's little place. And that's right across ... Almost across from where my daughter and my son-in-law have the tractor business [Route 13].

Mary Atai: Right there on 13? Is that where that was?

Ken Barss: In fact the property that my daughter and son-in-law built, I gave them initially and they paid me back for it. We settled my mother's estate. I ended up with that piece of property there. It was 14 acres, and I ended up giving it to my daughter and son-in-law. He's one of those stubborn people, so he felt he had to pay me back.

Mary Atai: He's a Matheson, isn't he?

Ken Barss: Yes. That's why they ended up with that property, and that's where they built their house up on the bank. Now he's trying to clean it out. I told him years ago, and I never saw it, my dad used to tell me that when he first came to town, when he went up what is now 13, off that way on that side of the road used to be clear, clear up to Joe English Road. You could see right up across there. There used to be a stage coach road right by my mother's store, right between the store and gasoline pump. It was a stage coach road that went right up in between there. On the other side, it went the other way, Dunbar, Dunbar Road.

It's still there. The one that went up by the store. The selectman finally agreed to let the property owners on both sides go to the center of that whole road, so that their lines joined.

Mary Atai: So there's no road there anymore?

Ken Barss: There's no road technically anymore. It's all washed out anyways. Snowmobiles might try to bounce down through it sometimes because you can still see where it was. Stone walls on both sides. Where the heck were we?

Mary Atai: We're talking about the fire engines.

Ken Barss: Okay.

Mary Atai: This was the last one that you helped with? This -

Ken Barss: Yes, and what I was trying ... the name came to me... Gilbert Welding out of Manchester. I don't remember what his first name was. He ended up helping us out a lot with other things. He helped with the pump on that Reo truck that I spoke about that has the large hose on it. He helped set up the pump on that. Then a fellow by the name of Roger Follansbee built the actual reel and we went all over the country side. We actually started with a large diameter hose that came from Jaffrey. People over there made this type of hose, and you don't have to dry that either. It's made of material that dries easily, but the reason we went that route rather than tankers, we also needed tankers.

When we started with that, the dry hydrants weren't necessary, especially with the new station. We built a new tanker truck, new to us. We bought a chassis from, I guess he was a road agent way out, but it was a surplus, state surplus truck that he'd gotten. We had to put a motor in it. We had a local put a motor in it for us. A fellow by the name of Bob Foote. We gave him a tank that we got through surplus, a big old square box. He took off one side because it wouldn't fit in the bed of the truck, so he had to take off a foot or so. One he did, he put in some baffles, 'cause you get 2,000 or 2,500 gallons of liquid in a tank and you start going down the road and it gets to sloshing.

It won't be long before you have that thing bottom side up someplace.

So, he put some baffles in, and we fixed that all up and put it into service. I don't remember, but that was still in service when I left. Since then they've had at least one tanker truck, and they put a pump on it. We didn't have a pump on it. We had a great big ball valve on the back. We also went to work and we invested in what I call a bulk tank. It was a 2000, 2500, maybe even a 3000 gallon tank. It had a metal frame that folded up. It was like a canvas bag kind of thing. When you take that off of the top and when you pull it out, it formed a little swimming pool.

Mary Atai: And you filled it with water.

Ken Barss: And then we'd back up to that, fill it up with water. Then we could go off with the tanker and we'd have a pump set up someplace to fill that tanker back up, because it didn't have its own pump. What I think now, they can probably fill themselves. You've got to go and you've got to hook up hoses. If you already got a truck out there that's ready to fill you up, all they got to do is put the hose in the top, and then suction all the way probably in the water, and away you go. So that's why that the dry hydrants are around to pump water if anything happens to the school or down on that road. That's why that occurred.

We felt that the large diameter hose would also be to some degree, more efficient. The tankers are great when you first get to a fire scene because you've got instant water. We only carry, I think, I guess we have thousand gallon tanks now in each truck and so forth when they go, so you've got that. You get any kind of a fire, it don't take long to boil through a thousand or use up a thousand gallons of water. The tanker must have 2000, 3000 gallons in it.

But by that time, you can lay out this hose 3000 feet and there's a lot of places in town where you can get to a fire scene with 3000 foot of large diameter hose. Now you can set a truck up, fill that hose, and you can feed other equipment at the scene with this portable hydrant system. You see what I'm getting at?

Mary Atai: Yeah.

Ken Barss: That's what we worked towards, and I was involved in getting this thing going too. It's amazing. We started thinking about, I'd forgotten most of this stuff.

Mary Atai: It's nice to remember.

Ken Barss: Right.

Mary Atai: How about some of the people you worked with? How about Don Chapman? He was treasurer for a long time. Was he under you or was that a little later?

Ken Barss: No, no. He was around during my reign of terror.

Ken Barss: He was the treasurer for some period. John Ballou was secretary forever, that's how I remember that.

Mary Atai: Did Don fight the fires too?

Ken Barss: Yes, yes, he was a fireman. I don't remember exactly how much he did or anything like that, but yes he was. Yup. I don't know what else he did. He did a lot of stuff for us. But he was the treasurer for a long time.

You know how things change.

Mary Atai: Are there any other particular names that you can think of that were really hardworking, and were there all the time? Besides I know Don for a long time, Dick Moody for a long time, Charlie Davis for 36 years.

Ken Barss: I only chuckled because 36 years, I could still stay on the fire department even today, and I thought about that. But what good would I be? Some people, like Dick Moody, stay in great shape and they can continue for many years.

Mary Atai: Yeah, Dick has been there since 1970, so 48 years.

Ken Barss: He's still physically in good enough shape that he can do stuff.

Mary Atai: Yeah, he's very lithe.

Ken Barss: I wish to hell I could move around like he does. The reason I figure I backed away, 'cause I could see things coming that I just didn't have knowledge about and I didn't know that I wanted to be bothered with.

Mary Atai: Yeah. I understand that.

Ken Barss: Not that I was an antique, but I had it in my mind, I was gonna serve my 20 years. I'm not gonna be one of them old guys that just stands around and watches, and maybe somebody would ask you a question here and there. I had to be in the middle of it.

Mary Atai: Yeah. And besides, you were working at Hitchiner and -

Ken Barss: Oh god yeah, they'd let me know and I'd come running clear from Hitchiner. I had the job okay, I ran. I was a foreman. I had a foreman but I had people working under me. If I had to run away, I was on salary, so it didn't hurt me that way. I'd charge clear home. That Woodbury fire that I saw here somewhere, I'll never forget. I'd run clear home for

that. I got up there and god the man had a lot of ammunition and stuff, and bang, bang, bang. They didn't dare get too close for a while, that's why the damn place burned down.

Ken Barss: Still Gardner and Paula, you know Paula, do you? They rebuilt it all. I don't know as they did, maybe it was the Woodbury's; somebody rebuilt it. Gardner and Paula ended up there. Gardner happened to be related to the Woodbury's too. I think his mother may have even been Mrs. Woodbury.

Mary Atai: Oh.

Ken Barss: I think that's how it worked. You'd be surprised how many people in this town are related.

Mary Atai: Yes, I have learned that.

Ken Barss: When the American LaFrance vehicle was being built, it was very interesting. I forgot now where the hell it was. New York, where American LaFrance was. I was overwhelmed with how big that place was. They had more than one building. I actually got to see the truck before it was finished being built.

Ken Barss: I've never traveled much. Years ago, when I was in the school system over here, I was in the Future Farmers of America, the FFA. We got to go out to Kansas City, Missouri because they have an annual get together out there. You know how we got there? On a train. Ever been on a damn train?

And what a challenge it is to walk on the old trains. I don't about the new ones.

Mary Atai: It must have taken days to get there.

Ken Barss: We drove, the supervisor that took us out there, we went to Albany, New York. We had to drive a long way to get on the train that took us out there. But it was a day or two on the train. We thought that was cool. We had never been on a train.

Mary Atai: It is cool.

Ken Barss: With myself, and Willard Dodge, and then maybe my cousin, Billy Barss. He's passed away several years ago. That would have been Paul Barss' son. Now the farm isn't in Barss' name, but that would be my Aunt Evelyn, that would be Paul Barss' wife's grandson that's got the farm now.

Ken Barss: You know back then we changed chassis I don't know how many times. We changed various chassis from one thing to another to another. You know, a lot of it was home built.

You take that first tanker, technically, it was all home built. We bought a truck and we had to put a motor in it; local guy did that. Had the tank built. I don't remember who painted it now or anything like that. We did a lot of our own building. That Howe, that

'38, they bought. That was a purchased truck. The '64 was purchased, the France was purchased, all the other stuff we had was rebuilt or came up with. The Reel truck, we bought that, that was an army surplus thing.

Also one time, there was a fellow in our department. I can't remember his name, but he found diesel powered generators, big as this table, tall. We rented a truck and him and I drove clear to somewhere near Washington. We drove around by the capital, because I was close enough, I wanted to see the Capital building.

We got hell for getting in there, but we rented this truck, we brought home two of the huge generators. I have no idea how heavy they were. This truck struggled some to bring it. Plus we had other various surplus equipment, jacks, and all of this stuff, just for going to get it. You know I don't know if they ever did really use those generators. I don't ever recall ever using one. We had the chance to get them, and so we decided it would be ... and they hardly were used. We never hooked them up that I know. They had one in the back of the station for a while. I don't know if Dan ever got it hooked up. I think they do have a generator now, but it's not one of those old surplus things.

Mary Atai:

Well, all these stories are very interesting. Thank you, and also thanks to John, for helping us to document these stories of the events and changes that have occurred over the years. Thank you for sharing your memories. And thank you both for all the service you have given for so many years to help make New Boston such a lovely town.