

DEWEY WOLF

Interview 029a

1978

Diane Tate, Interviewer

Retyped by Courtney Lawrence

ABSTRACT: In this interview with Diane Tate, Diboll Police Chief Dewey Wolf talks about his job as police chief and his concerns about crime in Diboll. He discusses the size of the force, the particular problems facing a town the size of Diboll, and several of its public safety programs.

Diboll Police Chief, Dewey Wolf. The noises you hear in the background may be telephone calls, or other interruptions.

Diane Tate (hereafter DT): Chief Wolf, how long have you been employed by the City of Diboll? And what other experiences have you had in law enforcement?

Dewey Wolf (hereafter DW): I have been employed by the City of Diboll for almost seven years and in the last two and a half years, in the position of Chief of Police. I've had about eight years experience in the United States Air Force in the military police, stationed in different parts of the United States. And one-year tour of service in Viet Nam.

DT: What are the functions of the Police Chief for the City of Diboll?

DW: The functions of the chief of police job for the City of Diboll is mainly an administrative job. It's to make certain that there is enough officers on duty each hour of the day to answer calls, to work traffic accidents, assist motorists, and all other jobs that may be required of a police officer.

DT: When you have calls come in to the police department, how can you tell whether they're crank calls or if they're really for real?

DW: There is no way by receiving a telephone complaint from a citizen for you to tell over the telephone that it's a real call or crank call unless you, the person identifies himself and you have received crank calls from him before. When this happens you still make the call, because we don't believe the old story that you cry wolf and you may be that one time that he really does need assistance. You go ahead and answer that call as if it was a real call. Then if he's made a false report, such as a fire or an emergency requesting an ambulance, he can be filed on for giving false reports or making false information to a governmental agency.

DT: Do you think Diboll has adequate police protection and if not, how many policemen do you think Diboll should have?

DW: We have at this time five police officers for the City of Diboll, including myself, which does not give these citizens an adequate police protection. Some of the problems are that if you have vacations or sick leave, then, when that officer is off duty, also his two days off during the week. We only work an officer forty hours a week, just like every other industry. When you have these officers off duty, it does leave a gap. I think we would have to have at least nine officers in order to give adequate protection so that you could at all times have at least one to two officers in two patrol cars patrolling the streets to protect the businesses and the residential areas. In order to have these two per shift, you would have to have nine men, on account of the way their days off and sick leave falls.

DT: Do you think we may ever get the nine policemen in Diboll?

DW: I think it will be a good while. Sometime within the next three to five years before we'll realize this increase. Diboll is a relatively new town. So far as years of being incorporated and when they did incorporate in 1966, when they built the new public safety, city hall building here, they only had one police officer. In the seven years that I've been here, we've come from one officer to five officers. So, the citizens, I don't think at this time, are ready for that much of a tax increase. And that's really, basically the only way that you can hire new policemen, is through taxes. I don't believe they're ready for four new men.

DT: What happens when a person does call the police department?

DW: When a person makes a telephone complaint or appears in person, to make a complaint, whether it's a complaint or a request for assistance, we write his name, phone number, and address, and the dispatcher attempts to find out what the problem is before we dispatch an officer. We like for our officers to know what they're going to a residence or business for so that they'll be a little bit more on guard. If it's a dangerous situation, we may want to have a back-up unit already en-route to assist that officer. If it's just a minor call, then the one officer that's on duty can take that call. But if it's going to be a call where that officer's life is in danger then we certainly want to have another officer or more than another officer en-route to help him.

DT: What would happen if Diboll would have a civil disorder?

DW: Not having any more officers on duty at the time than we do should we receive a call for assistance and we're notified ahead of time, that it is a large civil disorder, the only thing that we can do is call the Lufkin Police Department, The Angelina County Sheriff's Department, and the Department of Public Safety for assistance. This has happened and we have received assistance from all of these agencies. We have working agreement with the city of Lufkin, that if we call for their assistance, or if they call for our assistance, we'll send whatever available units that we can without leaving either of our cities unprotected.

DT: What type of traffic program does the police department have concerning children?

DW: We have basically two traffic programs. During the summer the police department sponsors a bicycle safety-training course. During this program, we have the children that have bicycles, come to City Hall. We set up a driving course here on the city parking lot. We teach them to safe driving methods. We teach them how to safely ride a bicycle, and making sure that their bicycle is in safe working condition. We teach them about how to ride against the traffic, not to ride in the streets and show off, and how to use proper hand signals. We feel like that a bicycle is a very dangerous way to....means of transportation, but if ridden safely, it can reduce the accidents that we have every year with bicycles and automobiles. We have a program with the elementary and Jr. high school age children in which one officer or myself will go over and make bicycle safety talks each year to them.

DT: When you have a warrant for someone's arrest, what happens?

DW: First, in order to obtain a warrant for someone's arrest, a complaint must be filed in court stating what that offender has done. Once the judge reviews that complaint and it is sworn to, by either an officer or a citizen, and if that person is not under arrest at that time, then the judge issues a warrant for his arrest. We receive this warrant. It will have his name, address, description, and where he may be located. And we take this warrant to wherever we can find that person and place him under arrest. Once he's been arrested he is brought to the booking station here at the Diboll City Hall. He is photographed, given an arrest number and an opportunity to contact his lawyer or immediately take him before a magistrate.

DT: What happens when he is taken before a judge?

DW: When the person that the warrant has been issued for is taken before the judge, the judge informs him of his Miranda warnings. Which are that he has the right to have an attorney present during any questioning, and that he does not have to plead guilty to any crime or any offense that he is charged with, without his attorney present. This is not the entire Miranda warning but it's just a small part of it. The offender can wave his right and he can either plead guilty or not guilty, before the court. If he pleads guilty, and he is found guilty by the court, then he can be assessed a fine. Municipal courts, such as the City of Diboll, cannot give a man jail time, only a fine. If he pleads not guilty, then the judge sets a bond, which a bondsman or an attorney must make before that man is released.

DT: When you put someone in jail how long does he have to stay?

DW: This depends on what he is put in jail for. If he's put in jail waiting a bond, that an attorney or bondsman is going make for him, as soon as that bond is made and turned over to me as the Chief of Police, well, he's released at that time. If he's put in jail for some other department, that a warrant was issued let's say, out of Houston, well he is held in jail until the Houston officers come for him. If he is put in jail on a drunk charge normally we keep him until he sobers up or until three to four hours.

DT: What jurisdiction do you come under?

DW: The Diboll police department has jurisdiction anywhere within city limits of the City of Diboll. Other jurisdiction, we would have the right to arrest any person in the state of Texas, if we have a warrant for his arrest.

DT: How many calls for assistance is made by the police department?

DW: The Diboll police department normally answers roughly a hundred and fifty calls for assistance each month. Which is approximately nineteen hundred a year. Most of these calls are of family disturbance matters. Most of them are handled on the scene. Several are referred on to attorneys, so far as possible, divorce cases. Some are handled then through courts. We have a lot of calls of accidents. Normally in a year, we'll have between ninety and a hundred and ten accidents a year. So far this year our accident rate has dropped by about twenty. Which we're real proud of this, and we hope that this will continue to drop. The less accidents we have, the less injuries, and the less fatalities that we're gonna have. So far this year, we've only had one fatality, and we hope that this holiday season will not result in another fatality.

DT: I have noticed on the backs of the patrol cars you have a slogan: To Protect and Serve. Could you tell me what that means?

DW: This means exactly what the little sign says. And this is the whole job of law enforcement is to protect the lives and property of the citizens, and to serve those citizens in any way that we can.

DT: I've noticed in your office a map, and it has several different colors on it. Could you tell me what those colors stand for?

DW: We have two maps here in the office. One is strictly motor vehicle accidents. The little pins that have the different colors on them indicate the type of accident and where it happened. This lets us know the danger areas, lets the officers know while they're patrolling which areas that they should be on the most look out for. The areas that you have the most pins on are where accidents have happened, these are where most of the violations that are committed, do happen. They other map has the same type pins. They're different colored. They are for where we have had burglaries and thefts and family disturbance calls. As you can see, the burglaries and thefts are real scattered out. They happen all over town. So there is no one particular area which has more burglaries and thefts, than any other area. Which this makes our job a little bit harder, in that we can't just concentrate on one particular area. We still have to patrol the entire city limits.

DT: I've noticed on the wall here in the office, there are many certificates for law enforcement. What are they for?

DW: These certificates are accomplishments by each officer of different law enforcement schools, specialized schools that he has attended. We have several on supervision, jail

operation, narcotics and dangerous drugs, the Texas penal code, fingerprint techniques, and several others. Each officer in the state of Texas is required to go to a two hundred and forty hour basic certification school. This school is set up so to give that officer a basic knowledge of all laws. Whether they be the criminal laws or traffic laws. Each officer must go to this basic school within one year after he is appointed a peace officer by any city or county. So each officer that is on the streets is thoroughly educated in traffic safety, traffic laws, and criminal laws. We send these officers to these specialized schools to attempt to make them a specialist in one particular field. However, a department such as ours, being small, each officer is required to not only be a specialist in one field, but to be a specialist in every field. We don't have a department large enough that we have a man just to take fingerprints, or photographs, or handle narcotics, or to do burglary investigations. Each office has to be capable of doing that job. Of course, each office that is not on duty is on call twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. If that officer needs assistance, then we don't hesitate to call them out.

DT: Do you think that crime is decreasing or increasing in the cities now?

DW: Crimes of burglary, and theft, and all violent crimes against a person, are very definitely on an increase. This is mainly the reason why we feel that we need more officers, more courts. In order to deal with these people, we have got to have more personnel to attempt to arrest them, get them tried, convicted, and taken out of society or rehabilitated. Some of the criminals you can rehabilitate, others you cannot. These that you cannot need to be taken out of our society, so that they will not be doing these things again. By leaving criminals on the streets, we have taken the rights away from the victim, and given the rights to the person that are committing our crimes. The victim is the one that normally ends up with the greatest loss. His property is stolen, probably never recovered. Or he is the one that has had his home tore up through vandalism. While the person that actually does the offense, breaking in his house, tearing his clothes up, his room, the furniture, they seldom are caught, and when they are caught, the punishment doesn't fit the crime. He is not made to repay the victim, only he may receive a jail term of two to twenty years, but then the person that had their property damaged, if they don't have insurance, is usually actually the one that receives the greatest loss.

DT: How as a citizen can we deter crime in Diboll?

DW: There's really only a couple of ways that crime can be reduced. One is through having silent burglar alarms, which are very expensive. Mostly the larger businesses have these. By silent alarm, we mean that the alarm does not go off at the business that's broken into. But rather it goes off in the police station and the criminal doesn't know that we know that he's in the building. A citizen in his home, when he goes on vacation, can make sure that all the windows and doors are locked, that the mail is temporarily stopped, that they don't throw a newspaper, they that they don't leave any lights on that they normally don't burn. That they notify each of their neighbors to kind of keep a watch over their house while they are gone. We have a program here, that if a person is on vacation will call us and tell us when they're gonna leave and when they're gonna return, then we come by about once every two to three hours and visually check their home. This

is a program that we hope that will help deter crime by a great percentage. For a burglary happens in a home, most of the time, when there is no one at home. So if you will secure your buildings, or your home, notify the police when you're gonna be away, then we hope through watching your home and having your neighbors watch your home, that when you return from your vacation, you won't find it all broken into and a lot of your items stolen.

DT: This completes my interview of Police Chief, Dewey Wolf, here in the City of Diboll, in his office. Thank you very much Mr. Baldwin.

END OF INTERVIEW