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Dick Bernitt

January 24, 2003

Fred Honhart,  
interviewer

**Honhart:** It's January 24th, 2003. I'm Fred Honhart and I'm interviewing \*\*\*\*\* Burnett and \*\*\*\*\*. You can see that we are taping this. Do we have your permission to do so?

**Bernitt:** Yes, you do.

**Honhart:** Thank \*\*\*. \*\*\*\*\*, could you start by giving some background as to where you're born and raised?

**Bernitt:** I was born December 16th, 1921 in Monroe, MI. In the House that my mother lived in for 75 years. I think it's interesting in itself that my mother only had three residences during. Are now still existing life. She she was born on a farm in Monroe County. Lived there until she got married. Moved into the house where I was born in 1920. I had to move around in 1995 into a nursing home and she's still there. She'll be 102. February the 5th of this.

**Honhart:** My gosh, that's quite a rendered. So you go to school in.

Bernitt: I'm a graduate of the parochial grade school and Monroe High School.

Honhart: And then did you go on to college or?

Bernitt

I came to Michigan State College in 1939. Degree in. Police administration that it was called in. Uncle Sam gave me a job for four years. I came out, went to work for the city of Monroe for about. 2 1/2 years. And then Michigan State called me and asked me to. Come up here to for. An interview for a job that they were.

Honhart

Go back just a little bit when you graduated from Michigan State, you then went into. The service. That's right. And what was did you do in the service when you?

Bernitt

Were there I initially was assigned to an OCS program, even though I had four years of ROTC. Because we did not have the six week summer camp, which was then a requirement for commissioning. I and. All of my classmates and police and. Were assigned to various. OCS programs and I went to the military police program. At Fort Custer. Upon completion of that. I did two things. I became an officer and a gentleman on a Friday and on. On Sunday, I became a married man and. I was reassigned back to the approval Marshall General School as an instructor. Traffic program of the school. And then ultimately was assigned as a company officer. To the 701st MTI Battalion. And then to. An island in Narragansett Bay to work with German PW's. To teach them become. Police officers back in Germany.

Honhart

Now was this after the war? At that point, yes.

Bernitt

The war had concluded while I was at a port of embarkation to make the assault on Japan. So anyone who talks about the non use of the atomic bomb has an argument with me understandable anyhow. I concluded my. Non illustrious military career. At Fort Myer, Virginia, and was discharged from the Pentagon.

Honhart

And then you went back to. Was that because I went?

Bernitt

Back to Monroe. Used up the 90 days of free money that was. Given to veterans. And which incidentally was. Created by an increase in the cigarette tax and. When I figured that I'd used up my free money from the cigarette tax, I quit smoking cigarettes.

Honhart

That was a good decision.

Bernitt

I worked in the city of Monroe for. About 2 1/2 years when I got a telephone call from. Art brands that are out of a clear blue sky. What were you doing in Monroe? I was. I worked for the city of Monroe as a fireman. And I came to Michigan State. As the first safety officer. Not police officer safety officer. That's the university employed. And my specialty was fire prevention. That continued. In that capacity. When Branstetter, with some assistance from me, established the. Current Department of Public Safety concept, which integrated safety and law enforcement into one organization.

Honhart

What was the campus like at that time?

Bernitt

When I was a student or after that, Oh well, as a student the. Enrollment was around 6500 as I recall. All of the academic buildings except one. Were north of the river. The only One South of the river at that time when I came. Was demonstration hall. Where a military was taught. And while I was there, Jenison Fieldhouse was built, and I witnessed the first basketball game played there between Michigan State and Tennessee. Which Michigan State won?

Honhart

It's a nice way to start, yeah.

Bernitt

The only other. Building South of the river, that was. Quasi non agriculture was the livestock pavilion and I say quasi because that's where we practice baseball in the winter time. I came to Michigan State hoping someday to be a professional baseball player. Uncle Sam gave me. A job in lieu of that. And that.

Honhart

Who is the coach then? John Cobbs. What was he like as a coach?

Bernitt

As a player. He was totally. Different than as a person. After your eligibility was used up. He was rough. Hard to please. As a player. But once you used up your eligibility and came back like I did. He became one of the good old boys, so it was quite a transformation in his personality, but I don't think that was a change in his part. It's just the way he was.

Honhart

What positions you play?

Bernitt

I call it a pitcher, but more accurately, A thrower. A there's a.

Honhart

Difference if there is. There is having played that position as well I.

Bernitt

Started out as a shortstop. And broke my leg. In high school and what speed I had, which wasn't of any great consequence. Disappeared and. Then, because I had a strong throwing arm, I. Tried the pitching angle and. Made it. As an eclectic atmosphere and some semi pro after that.

Honhart

And what was the transformation like when you came back after being away for six years well?

Bernitt

I'm going to insert Ralph Turner into this. I had been gone during that period of time from 1943 to 1950. And I thought I knew the campus quite well. In the interim, that six years the campus began to grow. And I had not met Ralph Turner until the day I reported for work, April 1, 1950. And the reason I met Ralph was because Branstetter at that point, who was my boss? Was in Germany working for the federal government and Ralph was interim director of the department. And Ralph gave me one of the nicest. Opportunities to. Get my feet on the ground by saying take a week and just walk around and find out where you're at and it was worth it because the campus growth had been. Already begun? And accelerated beyond my memory of 1943. So it was an interesting week just to get my feet on the ground geographically.

Honhart

Where did you stay when you came?

Bernitt

When the job was offered to me. Sometime in. Say, March. I came up to East Lansing and got an apartment in the barracks and I think the right address was 303 A. Hickory lane. It was the street nearest the railroad tracks, right? At that moment in time. Our only child was on the. Way and he was born on the 5th of May and I came starting the 1st of April. So I had about a 30 day period here where I was alone, living in that barracks apt AT3O3. Hickory lane. That's where I stayed and we stayed there for. If I recall, approximately a year and then bought a house on South Hagadorn Rd.

Honhart

And what were your duties when you first started out after you had your week?

Bernitt

I was the university's first. Safety officer as I. And sort of a Jack of all trades, but fire prevention was the. Reason for my being here.

Honhart

UM.

Bernitt

Michigan State University, at that particular prior to that moment, was relying totally upon the services of East Lansing Fire Department. And the insurance industry, I am told. Told the university. You're not getting your money's worth. You better get somebody in here to take care of your own problems. Being a part time. Fire prevention person from the city of East Lansing. So I came in a full time capacity. To that end. It was a very delightful job because I was my own boss, basically. And I was part of the campus police organization as it existed then, but I was not a sworn police officer.

Honhart

And so how long did you do that?

Bernitt

I came the 1st of April in 1950 and. Sometime in 1956. The Department of Public Safety concept came into being and I was named by Brandstatter to be the assistant director. In charge of the police operation, not the safety operation of the police operation. And then July 1 of 1960. Branstad was relieved of one of his several jobs and I was made the director of the department and I held that position for 27 years until I retired.

Honhart

Now you said you helped art develop the concept of the police force. You elaborate on that so.

Bernitt

Among my tours that I had as a safety officer. Included trips to the Upper Peninsula. Because the university has property there and also in the northern part of the Lower Peninsula. And I think art Branstetter. And I understand why it used. My trips as an opportunity to get away from it all, if you will, and he had joined. He joined. And we batted ideas back and forth from the in the front seat of the car as one or the other of us was driving along. And we both. Were of the opinion. That the two responsibilities were complementary. And there was little or no sense to have separate organizations with separate separate. Put them both into one ballpark. And let the individuals be eyes for each other in their various capacities, because the safety people had to be in and out of buildings. On the campus and could relay what they found to the Police Department and vice versa. And the concept was. I think I say this with. Not total knowledge, but I sincerely believe. That the concept on the Michigan State University campus. Was the first one in the United States. Collegiate wise and it's been copied multiple times in other areas.

Honhart

Who did you have to convince the administration to support this?

Bernitt

We were fortunate. I say we I'm Speaking of the Department of the campus police organization. Art Branstetter was at wore two hats, basically. One of those hats he reported directly to John Hannah. So when you say who did? Who did you? Have to convince it was John Hannah. There was opposition, but those oppositions were swept aside and the organization came into being.

Honhart

Where did the opposition come from?

Bernitt

As I recall, one of the. Opposers was personnel department. Who I I don't think really had a role to play, but they did object to it and. As I say, it was swept aside.

Honhart

How was John Hannah to work with since you spent a fair amount of time when he was? In charge? Well, I worked for all.

Bernitt

Of the presidents. From Hannah and I'm speaking, they were my direct bosses from Hannahs to. I'm trying to recall I think Debiasio was the last. In line that I'm thinking about. And all of them were. In their individual ways had pluses and there were. Certain things that. I would say a minus, but that's a personal. Wait, how was John Hammett work for him? He was a very easy person to work for because he gave me one set of instructions. Keep me informed. And I had no bother calling him at 2:00 o'clock in the morning at 3:00, o'clock in the morning and saying this is what's going on. This is what's happened because he did not want to read. It in the newspaper. He never interfered with my decisions on who to hire, who to fire, or who to promote. And that gave me a latitude that a lot of people in the position that I occupied don't have either in municipal government, county government or on college campuses. And not only that, I didn't have to report to the President through a string of sub governmental governmental heads and. While I was a director, I had an occasion innumerable times to. Share my ignorance with other universities who employed me as a consultant. To look at their operation and give them advice and counsel. And of course, if you don't pay for that advice and counsel that isn't worth much. But that's neither here nor there. Anyhow, I I saw some of the most ridiculous chains of command that you can imagine.

Honhart

Been there.

Bernitt

And it was to me it was an easy way. To say to them. Get your seat. Out of your back end, let's get going here. So in the process a number of fellows that had worked for us. Actually got jobs. Doing what I was doing at at another institution.

Honhart

Well, that must have made a. Good feeling well.

Bernitt

In the 27 years and I have never actually counted. To be specific, but in the 27 years. Employees that I hired. About four days and became chief of police. And I don't know of any organization as small as the one on MSU campus that had that kind of of impact. Across the country, a pretty big impact. I'm talking about chiefs of police, directors of public safety, heads of law enforcement agency. So we did real well, yes, but. I guess. A philosophy that I had with regard to employing people was that. Hire people smarter than yourself because they'll make your job easier. Unfortunately, they come and go.

Honhart

Yeah, they did.

Bernitt

So I've always said the good ones left and I stayed.

Honhart

What are the the really difficult times was during the Vietnam War and and the campus unrest? And would you talk a little bit about that and? From your perspective.

Bernitt

Well, we've, we've already spoken of the fact that. I was a soldier in World War Two. And I often said during the days of rage, as I called them. It was easier for me as a soldier than it was to being the Director of Public safety, because you you knew who. Your enemy was, yeah. I think the dichotomy of the student body. In what one could observe if you were neutral and looked around the campus? Actually said wonders about. The college student body. You'd have 100 people raising hob. Over in point A. And at point B there be 1500 people playing softball. The two groups had nothing to do with each other. Often, the small group that was raising the Dickens. Had outside people as their spokesmen and their leaders, we had heirs here. The guy who. Start at SDS. Any number of. Those legendary characters pass through here trying to excite their followers. It was. I have a pretty good. Head of Gray. Hair right now and I think some of it came from that. But there were days that. You didn't get much sleep in the other days. It was perfectly normal and as I. Say if you. Were objective and looked across the. And saw what was going on. Those who were causing problems, as far as we were concerned were so. Few in number. And yet so. Nasty to deal with. That they they overwhelmed the you. Know the kids who could careless. I think well, one of the things that happened, we had a financial recession about 7172. And the days of rage stopped. And my philosophy was, or my answer to that was all of a sudden, Mama and Daddy's checks weren't coming anymore. And those who were here who wanted to go to school had to start doing something other than just playing on the streets. And it was like, you draw a curtain. It it went from activity to nothing. And at times it was timed to that recession. I had an interesting telephone call one time from an individual. And you may remember on university campuses is the so-called Patty Raid era. Well, anyhow, I came under the scene at Michigan State College in 1950, when Patty raids were the rage. And. During the days of rage sick Late 60s, early 70s. Telephone rang one day and it was a. Counterpart of mine at some school that I don't remember asking. What do you do with \*\*\*\*\* raids? And here we here we were dealing with with rock. Throwers and all kinds of disturbances. Over a situation that we could do nothing about. You know the university wasn't involved in a Vietnam, Vietnam War, decisions that was done by our politicians. The racial. Wasn't created at Michigan State College. It was. It was created over the United States as a whole. So here we were a battleground at times over issues that couldn't be. Solved on the campus. It sort of let you feeling hopeless or helpless or something.

Honhart

Any of the. Students during that time period that you remember that come particularly to mind frolic.

Bernitt

Yeah, a couple. A couple of them, who will be nameless.

Speaker

OK.

Honhart

What about the?

Bernitt

It was obviously one of, you know, we'll.

Honhart

Talk about that a little later. What about? The difference is between when at the end when President Hannah was having a difficult time with this and then he left and Walter Adams took over. How how did you? How did that transition affect you?

Bernitt

Well, Hannah did not was not a hands-on. Person with regard to these situations, Adams Watts. He was basically in the center of all these activities. And one of the fun things that I remember with regard to Walter Adams, as you know, he was a cigar smoker and we were on the steps of the Student services building, listening to a harangue from a very foul mouthed young lady. And she was doing a great job, and she stopped to catch her breath, and Adams flicked his cigar, flipped the axes off and said miss so and so. And he knew her by name. You're in good voice today, and as a result of that, that entire group that was back or just started laughing. She was no longer the spokesman, she was the \*\*\*\*. Of the joke. And that that, that's the way Adams. That was a. A moment in his tenure as the. I think he became so involved in that sort of thing that it's a good thing. That had only lasted his tenure only lasted about 6 to 9 months. I think he'd killed himself if it had been as long. As Hannah had to do it. Because he was extending himself physically. You know, I had the ability to have X number of people that could take over when I went home and got six hours sleep or 4 hours sleep, whatever it was, he was there almost constantly.

Honhart

And then. Clifton Wharton replaced him.

Bernitt

And locked him in the night when everything broke loose on Grand River.

Honhart

What a greeting. How was he to work with?

Bernitt

One of the nicest human beings. I've ever, ever known. This is work in the same way. You couldn't ask for a nicer person. To work for them, Clifton Horton. And I felt sorry for him often. Because of. Because some of. His fellow blacks. We're very nasty toward him. Like calling him an Oreos and things like that. And I can remember one night at a basketball game when the when the basketball team revolted. Led by Terry furlough at all. Yeah, and. Wharton and Mr. Wharton were. I was next to them and this. Anti Warton cry erupted from the crowd. And Mrs. Wharton very calmly said. Leave him alone. Don't pay anything. She was a very strong lady. Yes, very strongly. She knew what she wanted and she knew how to do it. And I give her great credit. I had the pleasure of, you know, being in their homes and knowing their families. So it was an outstanding opportunity to. Just know them as people. And I was fortunate for. It wasn't like. The big boss is over there and I'm here and I'll I'll write him a letter.

Honhart

That's quite a.

Bernitt

Level of access that you got. Well, I worked directly for the President. I didn't have to work through. Two vice presidents and three associate Deans, that sort of thing to get my message.

And when I worked for Hannah. I knew it is schedule was. Hannah was at early morning person. I am an early morning person. Darn poor finisher. But a good starter and. I would often meet him. On the steps of the ad building as he was going to work when I had something to say to him. I also took the opportunity because of my position. That when he. He will ask for transportation from point A to point B off into the airport. I was the driver and I had my boss locked in the front seat of the. Car and I had. His ear, you know. This sort of thing.

Honhart

Couldn't get away.

Bernitt

He couldn't get away and. That was that was the type of relationship that we had. He said things to me in private. And I said to him, sing to him in private, and as far as I know, I I know I never devoted his private, and I don't think he did mine either. Where have I used to go on a Saturday mornings for example, I would meet him out of his chicken farm and and he was in his overalls and doing his chores and I would drive up and have a few words with. Him and take off again. Flying human being.

Honhart

What about the other presence you work for, or what sort of memories do you have of them?

You work with hard and of course, and following for and and then.

Bernitt

Let's say this I have great. Respect for. All but one. And you'll you'll be nameless. The reasons for that negative is that. I didn't trust.

Honhart

And that's something you need in the. Position you're in. That's right.

Bernitt

Do you ever feel you're being used?

Honhart

Oh yeah. OK.

Bernitt

Now we will not get. We will not get personal with regard to this at all. I worked closely with both of them. Got along fine.

Honhart

We'll leave it at that, OK. Well, at a point where we can change the tape, so just hold on a second.

Bernitt

You might get that we. Got that full of stuff.

Honhart

Already. Oh yeah, we're doing. Just fine. OK.

Bernitt

I didn't know this was a.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

Honhart



One each in history in addition.

Bernitt

Yes, we want ancient history edition. We're now on site 2 deck. So my next question would be with regard to your. Your job was, what did you see from the time you started and and were ahead of the? Safety division and then the police force. To when you retire is what sort of changes have taken place, both internal and external.

Honhart

Well, first of all. The dimension of the campus physically. Change it to dramatic. There was a saying in the newspapers at least, that the concrete never dried on the campus of Michigan State. And I think there's reason to believe that. And it hasn't changed. It's still growing by leaps and bounds. So that's change #1. Change #2 from an employers standpoint, and I employed people to work in the operation that we had. We went from a group of potential employees who had military backgrounds. To those who had none. And there's a difference in people that had some exposure to the military. And then come. Into a quasi military police operation like we had. Or, I think law enforcement agencies are like. So there's completely different. Ball game with regard to the type of people that you're working with and as an employer, you had to learn how to deal. With one versus the other. Those are two changes that took place. I'll call it the rapidity or the continuing. Change of leaders that I reported to. Was a a major. Situation that I confronted with I didn't work for the same person. No, I worked for a variety of people, but fortunately never worked for a commit. I worked for benevolent dictators and I don't care at what level you're talking about, but that's the way it was. Those were two changes that are things that I saw the student body, of course. From six 500 as an undergraduate. To 16,000 and they came to work in 1950. The vast majority of whom were World War Two vets, just like I was. With their wives and their children. To a. And I don't know. What the? Ratio is now, but I'm sure. There are far. Fewer married students today at Michigan State University. Proportion wise. Then there were when I, when I came here to work. I think I think those that were here when I came to work. Were strongly motivated. And of course, if you've. Got a wife and one or two dependents. You better be motivated and I think there's a story associated with that with one of my classmates. I'll be very specific. The fellow his name is Mark O'Donnell. Mark and I were freshmen together, living in the. Same private home. On Lewis Ave. in East Lansing back in 1939. And he was from Norway, MI. And Mark came here as a football player. And he was motivated by football. Mark enjoyed life and Uncle Sam grabbed him and about 1940. One in the first draft. And that's the last I saw mark, until I came back to work here in 1950. And one day I was walking through the Union building early on. And at that time they had a. Display in the corridor. Called the Deans list. I'm looking at the Dean's list, and there's Mark O'donnell's name. And I said to myself, wow. And subsequently sometime later I ran into Mark and I said what in the devil mark, what changed you? He said a wife and two kids. Well, Mark Monda become the athletic director of Ovid, Elsie School program, and he was a football coach over there for a while, but then became the athletic director. So I began to understand what a wife and two can do to an individual at least. But that's the sort of thing that I think I saw early on. You you don't see that today because the students are do not have that. Motivation of family to be here in school.

Bernitt

What sort of changes have you seen in the student?

Honhart

Well, that's one of them. I'll say this. They all look younger.

Speaker 3

A lot younger.

Bernitt

I know it got to me when I started realizing that we were employing students that are younger than my own kids is when I started realizing that.

Speaker 3

Right.

Bernitt

It's changing.

Honhart

Well, that's one of the things that I experienced when I was working on. We have one son. And who graduated from high school, 1968, during the days of rage and. If he ever came to me for advice and I don't know that he did, but anyhow. I encourage him to go to way to go away to school. I didn't want him to go to Michigan State College where I had the role that I had because Tom had the capability of being a mischievous. Individual and I didn't need that. Well, he went away for a year and just liked it intensely where he was. And decided he wanted to go to Ohio State and I said fine. The difference is that you're going to pay the out of state fees and I'll continue to pay the the Michigan State rate and. With that, he said, well, I think I'll go to Michigan State. So I had a. A boy in school during the period of 1968-69 till 72 when he graduated. And I have one eye open for where he was, and his mother had one ear open on the radio, wondering where he was. And where I was. And she said she could always picture him on one side of the street and me on the other. As far as I know, he was totally. Outside the activities so. Now he may be able to tell you things that. I don't know which is. Which is just as well, probably just as well.

Bernitt

They stay that way too.

Honhart

I don't know if I've answered your question, but. Yeah, I think these. I think the. One of the things one of the things that I enjoyed with regard to college students was that. Individually, they're very unpredictable. Yet if you. Try to judge them by their hairdo or their dress. If you're old enough, or as you age. You can remember it's a cycle. And sooner or later it will change. It's like the pendulum on a clock. It goes from right to left. But fortunately it goes back through center twice each.

Bernitt

Give a little balance.

Honhart

That's right. I can remember the so-called long hair days and my total opposition was regarded to. What I thought it looked like and I happened to think one day, you know, the first day I came home with a Butch haircut. My mother cried so that that's the way things changed, yeah.

Bernitt

Well, let's talk a little about Ralph. You mentioned when you first met him that he told you that since he was in charge at the time to go take a walk. Yeah, what else do you remember from your early days with Ralph well?

Honhart

I got to. I got to know Ralph. Fortunately, because of the intimacy between. Where I was housed and where he was housed. First of all, in the steel classroom buildings across from the livestock pavilion. The the Faculty group of Police Administration in 1950 consisted of three people, Branstetter Turner and Bob Scott. And Bob, Scott and I were in the army together, so we knew he and I knew each other. I began to know Branstetter because he's my boss, and I began to know Turner because he he was part of the. Same building occupancy and. A very formal relationship, but a good social relationship, if you will. The Branstad Ers, the Turners and the Burnetts. Played cards together and we were socially integrated because we had kids, you know, about all the same age. And we babysat for the brands daughters and they babysat for us.

Bernitt

Yeah, we can just stop. Just make sure. You're clip all right. Sorry, the operation no, no problem.

Speaker

OK.

Bernitt

So you're talking about?

Honhart

So we were we. Got to know each other the. Turner family, the Burnett family. Grew up together, if you will in. This early married small child atmosphere. That we both had. It was a. Of long term friendships.

Bernitt

When when you came here with Ralph still working on his alcohol experiments?

Honhart

Not only was he working on it, I. Helped him.

Bernitt

Perhaps you'd like to detail that.

Honhart

Well, Ralph was in the process of getting his masters.

Bernitt

Degree, if I recall.

Honhart

Directly from a California institution.

Bernitt

Right.

Honhart

I don't know what the topic of it was, but as far as I'm concerned was it was. Free booze and well. Ralph would have a group of people come to the quantites. And agree to. Alcoholic beverages in. Measured amounts. To determine I don't know what. But he knew what he was doing. And for this he was subsidized, I think by some of the distilleries. And so there were a variety of flavors you could utilize. And anyhow. He came to a group of us in the campus Police Department at that time and asked. Us if we participate and I was one of the first. So ours had to do with the driving experiment and it was done. In the area which would now be directly east of the secret practice football field, it was wide open area there. There was a railroad train engine

sitting on the tracks and. They had cones out and. We drank, measured. Fixed amounts of alcohol and then continued to drive, you know, a series of. Time incidents never about six of us who I recall. And subsequently, that particular experiment was detailed in the magazine section of the Detroit newspaper. With pictures and I got a copy of it downstairs in the footlocker of that that issue anyhow. Yes, I I became involved in that particular experiment. I know that one of the my colleagues who was also a member of the department. Registered dead. On the meter that Ralph had and on the way home, he was driven home. We were all taken home by people who hadn't driven art grant. On the way home, he insisted to stop at Montys and have another drink. I didn't go that route.

Bernitt

He did. He must have had a pretty. Good liver anyhow.

Honhart

Yes, that was probably my first official relationship with Ralph was in that capacity. But one of the things I remember about him which. I had never seen this sign before, but in his laboratory in the quantites. He had this sign. Mother isn't here. You put it away. And I've seen it subsequently many times, but that was the first time I. Saw it? I thought that was very. I don't know if you. Remember it? He went to. The Orient on on some program took his family with him, and in his absence Joe Nickel. Was brought here to teach his program. And when Ralph came back by, I concocted a little game to play against Joe Nickel. And Ralph? Acquiesced to becoming a part of it. So I wrote a letter. To Joe Nickel, who now was the forensic scientist for the state of Illinois, he left here to do stepped up in that program. In essence, the letter said. When you left, we had to clean up the laboratory and we found an armed hand grenade. Among the debris and the room and. We were so taken by this, we had to call in the bomb squad from the state police to disarm it. We think this is highly irregular for a person of your stature to do this sort of thing. And on the bottom, carbon copy, governor of the state of Illinois. I don't think it was \$48. The Tone phone was ringing. It was Joe Nickel. He was screaming. Of course, there was no hand grenade. But here's Turner and \*\*\*\* Burnett. Back in East Lansing. Laughing like hell, they know about the misery that Joe Nickel was going through. So that's. He probably ever forgot that Michael didn't.

Speaker 3

No, he didn't.

Bernitt

Did he ever speak to you again?

Honhart

No, no. But his daughter did, because she was a veterinarian here in the East Lansing area. So I think he survived. Maybe we, but. I guess he wasn't so concerned about the letter. To him, it was a carbon copy.

Bernitt

Was Ralph still working on the House when you when you first got to know him or had he finished the first phase of the home mountain opener?

Honhart

I'll have to confess ignorance. In that, because I think that. I don't think there was any ever finishing. It's still going on. That's true.

Bernitt

So it was being worked out and all the. Time I knew it so.

Honhart

No, that was that was an ongoing project. I think when we first knew them, they lived in the in the faculty bricks.

Bernitt

OK. And yeah, I think it's 1950 actually when they were 50. One when they.

Honhart

Moved out. Well then. The house had been started then, yes. And as I say, it's never been finished.

Bernitt

Did you have any contact with Ralph in any type of professional capacity as police chief and him? Has any type of consultant for anything?

Honhart

You don't probably don't know this, but. In 1950 and up until 1956, when the Department of Public Safety came by. Ralph was a deputized member of the campus police. Now, if he ever performed any function for the campus police, I'm not aware. Of it. But he was a deputized member that because we were deputized by the County Sheriff it. And he was part of that group. And we were only about 10 or 12. In that. Group at that time there was a very small organization. But I don't know what Branstad. Or was going to use. Him for as a debt. Some crime scene investigator measure, but the problem? And then later on, when in Ralph's later years and maybe even no, it was still working, he became a expert witness. For high praised lawyers. Oh, yeah, as a forensics, particularly Ballistics. Right, and. I was a gunman, OK? I didn't know this, but I learned from Ralph that the carcass of a pig is very much like the carcass of a human being. So if a bullet is fired at the carcass of a pig, it. Does much the same thing that it does. To human being. And I was the gunman. I pulled the trigger. In these, using a gun comparable to one in the crime that Ralph was involved in. Theoretically, exactly the same, I didn't make those decisions. I was merely handed the gun and say, do this. So I shot a number of dead pigs for right.

Bernitt

He used to talk about that. At the table for lunch, whatever he'd be doing something, yes.

Honhart

Well, while you were eating. Oh, yes, yes. Because I think he he inherited some of the pork. The the attorneys that he worked for paid for that pig, but Ralph got to. Eat some of them.

Bernitt

That's exactly correct.

Honhart

Pig died twice, once once by a butcher's hands and once by mine. Yeah.

Bernitt

Any other sort of things that come to mind as far as Ralph well?

Honhart

Ralph, as you may or may not know, is a very adventuresome type individual in a very. Odd way or peculiar way? Ralph Branstetter and a number of. Colleagues in the campus. Used to go up to Brandstatter's father in laws. Hunting camp. And party for a long weekend. And Ralph was very good at that and. Ralph always had some of his. Favorite beverages along and. I learned early on with some. Of the people that. We're part of that. That I was not in the same category as able to

consume like they did. I tried it once and that. Was just fake. I was not in the same league, but I learned that in the. Period of time. That there were three people that I considered the best alcoholic consumers that I ever ran into and. Don't try to keep up with them. But Ralph was not. One of them, Ralph Ralph, was not. I never saw Ralph intoxicated. I learned to party with Ralph there. I learned that Ralph was an exotic eater, including such delicacies as. Raw hamburger, yes, yes and. And then he was a. Regular attendant at my muskrat dinner is cooked here in this house. And I also watched Ralph. Quench his thirst with what was left in the pickle jar, the juice and. The hot pepper jar and. His gastric ability was outstanding, but. We had some, we had some great philosophical discussions around that table here as the Muskrat eaters got together once a year and. When I came back from Monroe with.

Bernitt

My muskrats. He always used to tell us when he was going to the. Muskrat dinner. Do you remember when he was away in Vietnam with his family for about two years? You remember him in particular when he came back after.

Honhart

That well, I told you about.

Bernitt

Joe. Yeah. Well.

Honhart

That's that's one thing I'll never forget, but. You know, we just we didn't have contact with him at that time. Or with darnella. I think one of the things that I noticed was that his children became more worldly wise, if you will. I think. Comparing those three kids against ours. They had a. A greater opportunity to see the world and Tom did, who was confined to the Lansing area, but Tom caught up with him because he joined the Navy in some of the world. Yeah, that'll do it. They I think that's the thing that I noticed probably more than anything else was the. The change in his children. Were no longer East Lansing Heights if.

Bernitt

You will they.

Honhart

Were citizens of the world. And I think Ralph and arnela. Intentionally do that to broaden their scope of outlook on life.

Bernitt

Ralph had a lot of contact with students and may continue those contacts. Did you ever get? Involved in any of that.

Honhart

No, I did not. There may be an individual or two if they were named, I could say yes, I know that individual, but not the relationship that they had with. Ralph at all.

Bernitt

He ever talked to you about his involvement with the Baker St.

Honhart

Very casually. Is Sherlock Holmes? Stamp, if you will, was. A topic of conversation, but never in depth as to I knew what was going on. I do know that he was involved with Pearl Stanley Gardner, right? And Lamont Lemoine Snyder in that group.

Bernitt

Quarter of last resort.

Honhart

He was very much involved with them. A group of. People that I admire. Hold sort of in high esteem. And Ralph among them tells you what I think about Ralph, right?

Bernitt

Anything else you can think of you want to? Add at this point.

Honhart

No, I just. I think one of the things about Ralph that will always remain with me. Is the story that I've been told about his prediction of how? He wanted to die? Yes and. That's not my story. It's hearsay. But I thought. It was. You probably have heard. It already from.

Bernitt

Yes, I have about. He was talking to his neighbor. And they said something he said well. Guess if I had my choice. Wanted to die while riding my tractor and he did, and he sure did. And I know. From conversations with Arnela that the last thing he wanted was to ever have to be like in a hospital and have to, and he didn't want our dealer. To see him when he died. Well, and he got he chiefed all his ends.

Honhart

He got out there in the back, floating and did it.

Bernitt

He sure did. Sure, one sad day for me when I I've been at a wedding, of all things, some friends. And it was a really happy thing and I. I was outside and I got this call and. My wife said there's a phone call for you and it was Jay Siegel to let me know. That Ralph had died.

Honhart

You know, you may not know this, but I had a heart attack. In 1978 and. Shortly after that, as I recall. Ralph had a physical examination and ended up having. Open heart surgery and his son was so taken. Richard was so taken by the fact that his dad had this surgery that he went and had a physical examination and ended up having open heart surgery too. That's right. Because he felt. That there was some inherited problems there.

Bernitt

Yeah, actually, the family, particularly on the father side, his father was. Early 50s when he died, and Ralph blamed me, by the way, for his heart attack. He did. He blamed me.

Honhart

Well, I'm glad they're to you than me. Yeah, because there's some things I.

Bernitt

Did it was just after Christmas? It's still the Christmas season. And we had had a Christmas party and we had Ralph and our Bella over and it was the first time they've ever been to our house. And Ralph went home and proceeded to have his heart attack. And he always said that it was my our fault that he had the heart attack. And I actually was years before he.

Speaker 3

Came in our house again.

Bernitt

But when I told the story to her now I got a very. Different reaction, she said. If there was anything that caused him to have the heart attack, it was the whole family was home for too long and it was under too much stress.

Speaker 3

OK.

Honhart

I was going to make a comment here and I forgot what my kind of thought.

Bernitt

Sorry, that's OK.

Honhart

Ralph, all was was never the center of activity, but he was always part of the activity and all those parties we we had, whether they were here or up north in Miles Walsh's camp. He was involved in some way, shape or form up. Forget not forget.

Bernitt

Bob Scott was spoke of. Knew him well.

Honhart

Well, Bob would go on these trips. And he would be painting. He was doing watercolors and the guy over here would be drinking his fifth drink. This guy over here would be. Drinking his. The rest of us might be going out to chase some deer illegally, and all this sort of thing, but Bob was sitting. There painting it was. It was a strange collection of people. Charlie Becker, I don't know if that name means it. Well, Charlie Becker was somebody that I fortunately never had to.

Supervise Charlie was a member of the campus Police Department. When I got here. He was detective Lieutenant. And he and Branstad had been in the army together. And as I understand it, Charlie had been a shoe salesman in Flint before the war. Charlie was one of. The best con men that I ever ran into. And that's putting it politely. Charlie went to prison ultimately, and I visited him in the Iowa State Penitentiary out at Iowa one time, anyhow. Charlie went on one of these excursions. And Charlie was not an outdoorsman. And we got out taking a walk. In the woods, there was deep snow. And Charlie got lost. He didn't know enough to come back all his own tracks.

Speaker 3

Back. Well, that's.

Honhart

And Ralph, Ralph was a part of that group. But I looked upon I look upon my relationship with the Turner family as being a very positive aspect to my life. Ralph, certainly because. All the numerous times we rubbed elbows together. For what I respect them. A lady who speaks her mind. You don't have to guess what? She's talking about.

Bernitt

Not in the least.

Honhart

And I always admire that in any person beating around the.

[Tape ends and there is no further tapes.]