

Western Kentucky University

TopSCHOLAR®

Folklife Archives Oral Histories

Folklife Archives

2-22-1981

Interview with Ben Jones, II, Michael S. Jent, and Harold Pearson (FA 319)

Manuscripts & Folklife Archives
Western Kentucky University, mssfa@wku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_fa_oral_hist



Part of the **Folklore Commons**

Recommended Citation

Folklife Archives, Manuscripts &, "Interview with Ben Jones, II, Michael S. Jent, and Harold Pearson (FA 319)" (1981). *Folklife Archives Oral Histories*. Paper 442.
https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_fa_oral_hist/442

This Transcription is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Folklife Archives Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2

INTERVIEWER: Dennis Angle

INTERVIEWEES: Ben Jones and Mike Jent (joined near the end by Bucky Pearson)

Place of Interview: Bowling Green, Kentucky Fire Department, Central Station

Equipment Used: JVC Stereo Tape Recorder

Tape Used: Maxell UD-90 minute Cassette, Sides 1 and 2

FOLKLIFE ARCHIVES
KENTUCKY BUILDING
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, KY 42101

DATE OF INTERVIEW: February 22, 1981

INDEX	FOOTAGE	DESCRIPTION/SUMMARY
Introduction	001	Introduction of interviewer and Jones
Acceptance	007	Difficulties of gaining acceptance by a rookie
Schedule/responsibilities	013	Description of the work schedule; general job responsibilities; assignment to the "Gold Truck" which always responds to every call; primary experience as nozzle man
Training	050	Brief description of training before exposure to fire situations; training within the unit and thru the fire situation; theme of "brotherhood" of firefighters
Skill reenforcement at fire scene	094	Positive reenforcement of skills thru action at the fire scene; relates story of near mishap with Jent regarding burned away steps
Attitudes	114	Discussion of the differences between attitudes of rookies and veterans; linked to changes in department; discussion of personal attitudes
Training	135	Training responsibility rests with Training Officer Rakestraw; discussion of training schedule; related to recent fire at Ramada Inn; discussion of post mortem discussion of fires; second Jones/Jent story about entry tools
Physical/Mental Aspects of the job	181	Physical vs. mental aspects of the job; description as a "para-military" organization; mental adjustment required of rookies; equality of mental-physical aspects
House life	212	Discussion of aspects of house life and the way trust is developed within the house
Relationship with men	243	Dealing with officers from rookie standpoint; maintaing the hierarchy of command while developing the "brotherhood"; overcoming differences in fire situations; discussion of overriding professionalism

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2
INTERVIEWEES: Jones and Jent (with Pearson)

INTERVIEWER: Dennis Angle

FOLKLIFE ARCHIVES
KENTUCKY BUILDING
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, KY 42101

INDEX	FOOTAGE	DESCRIPTION/SUMMARY
Fire Scene	268	Anticipating needs at the fire scene without verbal prompting; learning basic attack theories; contributing to the team
Rookies	292	Discussion of the fallibility of the rookies and of supervision on the line
Qualities of a good firefighter	327	Discussion of the qualities of a good firefighter; the humanitarian aspects of the job and the intangible rewards of personal satisfaction; dream of being a hero; dedication to the job; need for communication mutual respect and ability to relate with leadership as needs of a good officer
Mike Jent	368	Mike Jent joins the interview, introduces himself and provides a little background; discusses the qualities of a good officer - experience and intra personal skills
Officer qualities	387	Jones related story of self-control of officers with Watson as protagonist; setting example for the men; discussion of the officer's desire to be equal with the men when on the line
Story of officer involvement	432	Repeat of the burned out steps story with emphasis on the involvement of Captain Perry; discussion of the value of experience; description of the fire scene, learning to anticipate moves of other men, anticipating needs regarding apparatus, and value of experience
Family life	500	Brief discussion of affects on family life; discussion of adjustment and Jent's history of firefighting within the family
Dangers of the job	529	Discussion of the dangers of the job and how they affect the men
Job or way of life	542	Discussion of whether it is a job or a way of life; adjusting to the job; importance of dedication; reference to history of severe injuries in the Bowling Green department; Jones' "combat zone" analogy

SIDE 2

House life	001	Filling in the spare time and fighting boredom; Jent's references to substation life
Jokes	017	Prominence of practical jokes in the department;

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2
INTERVIEWEES: Jones and Jent (with Pearson)

INTERVIEWER: Dennis Angle

FOLKLIFE ARCHIVES
KENTUCKY BUILDING
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, KY 42101

INDEX	FOOTAGE	DESCRIPTION/SUMMARY
		importance of avoiding jokes that could affect the efficiency of the man or the unit; Jent's rookie days and the jokes he was the butt of; discussion of the possibility of how recent changes in the command may have deemphasized joke-playing
Women firefighters	058	Discussion of the role of women in the fire service; physical capabilities of women to handle the job; need for total confidence in co-workers as it relates to women; discussion of the physical agility tests and aversion to lowering standards for anyone
Attitudes	122	Rookie vs. veteran attitudes about the job
Rewards	135	Rewards of doing the job; self-satisfaction, service to community, and feeling of being useful
Reenforcing training	152	Discussion of how training is reenforced thru classroom time and storytelling and how that affects confidence
Mental/Physical aspects of the job	168	Discussion of the mental vs. physical aspects of the job, mental preparation
Civilian image of Firemen	179	Discussion of the civilian image of the firefighter; discussion of daily activities and professionalism; expression of need to educate the public in the essentials of house life and publicizing the reality of house life
The Fire	224	"Going into a burning building is like ... walking into an oven blindfolded"; story about trying to enter building
Reasons for joining	235	Brief discussion of reasons for joining the department and how the work "gets into your system"
Jones' family background	248	Explanation of family's orientation to community service; Jones' involvement in fire technology courses; department work vs. factory work
Self satisfaction	274	Discussion of the insufficiency of the self-satisfaction; talk about the monetary aspects of the job as related to public image
Civilian ignaorance	289	Discussion of the public's lack of understanding of the job and the fire situation

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2

INTERVIEWER: Dennis Angle

INTERVIEWEES: Jones and Jent (with Pearson)

INDEX	FOOTAGE	DESCRIPTION/SUMMARY
Aspects of the job	308	Shortage of sufficient pay; job as a way of life; personal satisfaction gained from job; need to educate public to reality of firehouse life/work; view of job as a professional occupation and need for public to recognize this expertise; pay compared to other community employees (garbage men); differences in responsibilities for equal pay; hazardous duty outweighs pay; discussion of public disrespect of fire vehicles
	336	
Pearson	395	Pearson speaks up regarding tenseness of the fire situation - "Be prepared"
Reenforcement of skills	418	Reenforcing skills outside of the classroom; idea of placing the rookie under the veterans arm
Folklorist's responsibility	440	Angle is questioned on the responsibility of the folklorist to the project and the informants; references to the work of Ed McCurley and Dennis Smith
Public education	498	Importance to firefighters to see the public educated
Reaction to calls	515	discussion of the aspect of going from dead sleep to action; getting to the fires and keeping up with changes in the traffic patterns; route trianing and drills
Pearson	554	Bucky Pearson's background and reaction to public image of the firefighter; relates story of recent fire on College Street and discusses fear as sometimes being a blind realization that sweeps over man and how danger is more evident to older man
History	610	Discussion of Bowling Green's safety record
Fire tale	621	Discussion of fire scene on College Street and statement that with all its disadvantages none would trade their jobs.
Fire technology	640	Beginning of discussion of how firefighting technology has changed over the years - tape runs out, end of interview

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2

INTERVIEWER: Dennis Angle

Interviewee: Ben W. Jones and Mike Jent are primary interviewees; however, they were joined at the end of the interview by Bucky Pearson.

Place of Interview: Bowling Green (Ky) Fire Department, Central Station

Equipment Used: JVC Stereo Cassette Recorder

Tape Used: Maxell UD 90 minute Cassette, Sides 1 and 2

Date of Interview: February 22, 1981

Angle: I'll just start by saying that this is interview #2, 3:30, 22 February, and my name is Dennis Angle. And I'd like to start just by asking you your name, and your rank and how long you've been with the department.

Jones: Well, I'm a Class C Firefighter, my name is W. Ben Jones, II, and I've been employed at the Bowling Green Fire Department about eight months.

Angle: I'm going to jump right on that rookie status thing. As a rookie, have you found that it's hard to get to the poin where you're, where you feel that you're part of the unit? Did it take you long or was it, did it happen pretty fast?

Jones: Well, it takes longer...some longer than others. That depends a lot on the personality, but everybody I work with are real just friendly outgoing people her, you know. I don't think that there's any problem breaking in at all.

Angle: I wnat to ask you if you were ever in the service.

Jones: Never.

Angle: I got from Melvin (Watson; See interview #1) and the others that there's a lot of similarity between the service and the department and I wnated to find that out. What kind of schedule do you work?

Jones: Well, I work, you know, 24 hours on and 48 hours off, seven in the morning till seven the next day.

Angle: Do you enjoy those kind of hours?

Jones: Very much so, very much so.

Angle: Are you single?

Jones: Yeah, I am.

Angle: Probably makes a big difference, I was going to ask you how your family felt about it but...

Jones: Well, I'm single. A girl lives with me but I'm single.

FOLKLIFE ARCHIVES
KENTUCKY BUILDING
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, KY

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE

INTERVIEWEES: JONES AND JENT (WITH PEARSON)

Angle: Well, I was thinking that I'd love to have hours like that myself (laughs) in the job that I've got. What kind of job responsibilities do you have?

Jones: Well, usually, you know, when you're a rookie and you're the new man, they put you on to the, what they call the Gold Truck. It's the pumper Number 4, the pumper that always goes out, always responds to any kind of fire. It will always respond so that gives us a chance to get a lot of experience where if we was in a substation or riding a back-up pumper like Pumper 6, we wouldn't get, you know, the same kind of experience, you know the same capacity of experience and well, really all we are is nozzle men and we just take... As a rookie, you know, we make minor decisions but we really, you know, sometimes we don't know what to do and we just take it from our Majors and our Captains and they instruct us mainly in what to do.

Angle: Do you ever feel like... Do you feel that in a fire situation that you could or even in a "post mortem" discussion of a fire, do you feel that you're able to offer constructive criticism on the way things were done, or if you saw something that nobody else saw what was going on, do you feel that even as a rookie you've got the chance to speak up and say, "Well, we could have done this, or we could have done that," and make it go easier?

Jones: I feel I do because I think that everybody sees thing on a different, you know, perspective, different angles. I might have seen something that Chief Watson, Captain, you know, Perry, just wasn't on the scene to see it at the right time and I saw something that maybe, you know, might be critical, might just be something small that I might see that I might see something that they not really overlook... You know, the more people that look at something, the more people see it. Everybody percieves it different. I think everybody, regardless of how long they've been here, like everybody here is going to know more about the firefighting service than I do but, you know, that's not to say that the new man can't have an idea. I don't believe like that. I don't believe anybody down here believes like that and that's the, you know, impression that I've got.

Angle: How long had you been with the department before you made your first run?

Jones: Well, I guess the first working fire, I'd been here about a month before, you know, I fought my first working fire.

Angle: How much training do you go through before you actually started to come down every day?

Jones: Well, we went through three weeks of training from 8 to 4 and it was training, you know, just basic type of training, but it was pretty thorough training. I mean it was just, you know, ladder training just to get you familiar with all the apparatus, what things do, how to identify them, what piece of equipment you might need in certain situations, and that's about it.

Angle: After you get out there on the line and start fighting those fires, how easy is it for you to pick up stuff from the other guys, some fo the techniques that probably aren't in the book?

Jones: Extremely easy. I say extremely easy because it's a practical thing that you're doing, so you know, I've always thought that if you do something, you retain it a

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2
 INTERVIEWEES: JONES AND JENT (WITH PEARSON)

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE
 FOLKLIFE ARCHIVES
 KENTUCKY BUILDING
 WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
 BOWLING GREEN, KY 42101

a lot better so I just think that, you know, if I see something out there, it just sticks with me, because I have the desire to, you know, be good and everybody, everybody here will bend over backwards to help you. You know, it's kind of a, you might say, loosely, a brotherhood, you know, because everybody here, you spend a third of your life with them. Everybody they want you to be good because what you do sometimes might save them from an injury or save one of their fellow workers from an injury, so everybody's really helpful, you know.

Angle: Talking about the way that the guys help you out, has there ever been a time when you felt like you were being, sort of initiated into the "brotherhood" as you called it, where it was maybe a joke that they played on you or it was some point in time when you said to yourself, "Wow, I really feel like I'm part of it now"; when you came in, you might have felt a little detached, was there ever a moment where you said, "This is it. I'm a fireman now, I've been accepted?"

Jones: Well, at first, you know, you feel kind of alienated because everybody, all these guys, most of these people have been working together 10, 16 years, and you're a new fellow. There's some, you know, generation gap between the people but I feel now that any of them would depend on me in a life-or-death situation. I believe, you know, that they could depend on me and I believe that I can count on them. At first, yeah, you know, I made more of an effort maybe than most people just because, you know, I really had a desire to fit in. And somehow maybe that was a mistake, you know trying to get to know people too quick and, you know, you kind of crowd people. These people have been here, you know, you've got to respect their positions, and you just... like a lot of time, some things that we'll do that I really don't understand them, but I know that 90 percent of the time the probability is that they're right and I'm wrong and that's about all I can really get into that.

Angle: I know that along with the training and the on-the-job training as far as fighting fire and stuff, do you ever feel like you learn stuff from the guys through like, you know, the stories they tell about old fires or accidents they've seen?

Jones: Oh, sure, sure. Like just for an example, we went to a fire a couple of weeks ago and it was a fire me and Mike Jent went into it and when they instructed us, I didn't see the, I saw the point in it but you when you get into a fire you want to hurry up and get into where the fire is at. The way they train you, you're supposed to crawl and feel in front of you, feel for open spots where it might be burnt through. Well, I was feeling, you know, for open spots but not real thoroughly and when we got the fire knocked down in this one room, and we went out and put our airpicks on and ventilated, cleared out the smoke and then when we came back in, me and this boy was about six inches from where the basement steps had burned out, and we was about six inches from it and it this other guy that was with me that has been on the department I think three years, he kind of caught that. I think that rookies should work at least, you know, three to six months with an experienced firefighter on the front line so he can get tips, you know, and learn to work with somebody.

Angle: Captain Perry mentioned that story. I wondered who was the lucky guy that went back to get his airpick and came back and found that hole there. (Laughter) I know that, I sense that you've had enough time on the job now that you've

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE

INTERVIEWEES: JONES AND JENT (WITH PEARSON)

on the job now that you've developed some attitudes about the job. Do you feel like some of the attitudes that you have are different from the ones that the hardcore veterans have, say a guy with ten years of fifteen years experience?

Jones: Yeah, I feel that there's, you know, nothing that's real critical, but, you know, there's definitely a difference just because of, like I said, the age difference, the environment. You know, ever since I've been in the department and right now, it's been going through changes. We had a new Chief. When I hired in the new Captain had just made Captain, Chief Watson had shortly been, you know, Shift Commander, Perry had just made Captain and Bucky Pearson had just made Captain, so . . . Kind of got sidetracked, really forgot the question.

Angle: It was whether or not you think that attitudes, your attitudes are different from the...

Jones: Oh, I think that, sure, I think my attitudes in ways, you know vary. That's like I said because of my background. I think it's nothing critical. That's just, you know, that's just a run-of-the-mill thing in life. Although anybody that's 23 or 24 is going to have a different philosophy of life to a certain extent than a fellow that's 35 because he's seen more and knows maybe a little more. And, you know, times change, people change.

(Continued on next page)

FOLKLIFE ARCHIVES
KENTUCKY BUILDING
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, KY 42101

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2
JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER: ANGLE

FOLKLIFE ARCHIVES
KENTUCKY BUILDING
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, KY 42101

132

Angle: When you are in your training, before you started serving on the line, who was responsible for your training?

Jones: Training Officer Rakestraw.

Angle: Is he a member of the Bowling Green Department or is he...

Jones: Yes he is a member of the Bowling Green Department.

Angle: Sorts of serves like an Education Officer?

Jones: Yeah, he's the training officer. He's real good too. He's new to the Department, too; relatively new. I'm not sure but a year or two, I'd say, I'm really not sure, but he's relatively new to the department and he's real - he's real self conscious about bettering the department, bettering the training and furthering education and training. I think, you know, that's needed, you know, in the department right now because a lot of the hazardous materials and a lot of things that we'll be exposed to that firefighters twenty years ago wasn't exposed to. Because there are all of these poly-vinyl chloride and all these things. When they went into a house twenty years ago, they didn't use airpicks, there wasn't all these, you know, all these different hazardous materials. I feel that a training officer plays a very very important role in preparing a person to fight fires and be a firefighter.

Angle: Do you feel that what you've learned gets reinforced on a regular basis outside of the classroom?

Jones: Most definitely, just like they'll tell you something and then it won't be any time. Like we'll go in there and have a training session, like, usually we'll train one or two hours a day and then it's just surprising how fast that you'll be subjected to something like - well, just for an example, we had a fire where the steps were. Well, that day we did a post mortem on the Ramada Inn fire, out (points in general direction from firehouse).... okay, nobody took an entry tool to the scene, up to the scene. Well, I had an entry tool and when I had to go up the ladder, you know, I just dropped it and I ran up the ladder. So we had a post mortem, they evaluated the whole thing, and then that night there was the fire I told you about with the steps. I went up to the door and, you know, when you pull up on a fire, you can tell that you've got a working fire. I mean, it's most definite that some are worse than others. We could see that this one was going, you know, pretty good and being a rookie you know, you get just a little anxious. Me and Mike Jent, we ran up to the door and I had a spanner wrench, which is a little light entry tool, like maybe for an in-door or something like, something you can just carry in your pocket. You know, we had just discussed that that day and that night I went up to the door and I had a light entry tool and it wouldn't open the door so I kicked the door down. I kicked my foot all the way through the door and pulled my foot back out and the other guy's facemask was all fogged up and he couldn't see and he was trying to climb through a hole about this big (gestures with hands - about 12-14 inches big) in the door, so right then that was a period of twelve hours after my training session and I learned how critical forceable entry tools are (needed).

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2
JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE

FOLKLIFE ARCHIVES
KENTUCKY BUILDING
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, KY 42101

Jones (continuing): And that's just one example of it.

Angle: A pretty good example of it, too. I know the job is pretty physical; how would you rate the physical aspects of it as opposed to the mental aspects of it? Do you feel it's a more physical job, or a more mental job?

Jones: Personally, now you mean at the job in general, not just the fire scene, right?

Angle: Uh- humn. (Yes)

Jones: Well, personally, I feel that since it's like it is, a para-military or a quasi-military operation, and I never served in the service and I never really was that gung-ho about going to the service, I never really, you know, felt inclined to that type of life. Most of the people here are, you know, service-oriented, you know, and I think that - I'm still getting kind of side-tracked from the question - what was the question?

Angle: It was whether the physical aspects outweigh the mental aspects of the job.

Jones: I think that I have to try harder mentally because I've never been exposed to living, except for maybe sports, never been exposed to living with 13 other men for one third of my life, twenty-four hours a day. I'm new to Bowling Green, I know absolutely no one, and I think that for me it doesn't outweigh it but I'd say it's about equal because you do have to be in good physical shape to do it. I mean, I think that most firefighters like to stay in shape and they exercise and stay in shape just because of, they realize that we might go to ten fires and there might now be a serious situation. But then there might be one where, maybe, that extra twenty pounds you can pull might save, you know, your partner's life. I think they're both very important, you've got to be able to keep a cool head and you've got to be able to stay physically fit for the job. (Phone ringing in background)

Angle: Talking about the , being in the house with the guys, do you find that ...let me see if I can phrase this right... I want to make this question clear, I know that the type of life you live down here at this house affects your relationships: do you feel like being in such close quarters with these guys as much time as you are, not only increases your confidence in their abilities but also makes it that much easier for you to work with them? What I mean is, is that constant contact - that knowing, eating, sleeping, together all the time, you know, being together all the time - does that aid in your trust factor?

Jones: There's no doubt about it. I've grown closer to these people; there's not a single person that I work with that I even dislike in the least. I think that that's just a requirement for the job because sometimes you might have to put your life on the line to save somebody and vice versa; and I feel confident that everybody down here would do just the same for me and the same for everybody else. I feel that living in close contact, in close quarters, it sometimes is trying because not everybody is in a good mood all the time. If everybody's

INTERVIEW AND TAPE # 2
INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE

IN A GOOD MOOD ALL THE TIME, it'd be perfect. But, you know, sometimes some guy will just come in the morning and he's had a flat tire; he's not in a good mood. And a couple of guys won't be a good mood. You know, you might say something to him and sometimes you might hit it off wrong, but I think all that aids you, you know, it does aid, you learn a lot from it like that.

Angle: Do you think that there's ever any difficulty in dealing with an officer? I mean, when you get close to an officer, does that ever interfere with your ability to recognize him as an officer and his position?

Jones: I think that a lot of that, personally, No. I can't answer for anybody else. Me and Chief Watson, when I first started, I'd been with the department maybe three months, we went deer hunting together and we did a few things, you know like deer hunted. Me and Captain Bryson, you know, did some work together outside the fire department. I think, you know, personally I respect every Captain, Sergeant, everybody, because they've worked to get where they are at. They're due that respect and I think, you know, like down here, it's a relaxed atmosphere but these people are - like you might come in here and they'll be in there playing cards and joking around but when that tone goes off, you can't describe it. I mean, I hate to sound, you know, to be building them up, I hate to really be building the fire department up, but the professionalism would really astound you. I mean, it is just, if two guys are not you know, just really getting along, boy when the bell goes off, they'll be on the front line pumper, they'll be working together and, I mean, there's just never no problem with that at all.

Angle: Do you ever feel like, at this point in time, like you, it's easy for you to anticipate some of the needs of the guys you're on the line with?

Jones: Could you make yourself a little more specific?

Angle: What I mean is, do you feel like when you're in that fire situation and you're in the attack team or whatever, and something is needed, is there ever a point in time where you feel like instead of somebody turning around and saying this is what we need, does it just sort of pass between you, is it just sort of a mental thing like ESP, do you just sense what's needed.

Jones: Oh, more and more that comes with time but After you've learned just the theory of fire. Just for example, you know, I haven't really met many serious, you know, working fires but I'll advise, you know, like me and Jent advised the other day to ventilate this house because we needed to relieve some pressure out of the house and I said that to Jent and then he told Perry. I think everybody has something to contribute. Like James Manning, he's been on just a little time, and everybody does pick up stuff like that.

Angle: Do you ever feel like because you are a rookie, you may have overlooked something that was vital to the efforts; I mean do you ever come back and think to yourself when you go back over the fire, I know that's part of it Do you ever come back to the house and sit there and just go over it in your mind and you think to yourself "Damn, If I'd have done this instead of what I did, I might have helped somebody else out of a situation that might have been potentially hazardous - do you ever see those things in retrospective?

INTERVIEW AND TAPE # 2
INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS W. ANGLE

Jones: I'm really sorry, I got kind of sidetracked.

Angle: When you look back over a fire, and you're by yourself, not when your'e discussing it with the guys, do you ever see things that you should have done is probably, basically what I'm trying to ask you.

Jones: Like I said, I hadn't been on that many fires and I've been pretty fortunate cause every time we've went into a fire we've knocked it down and had zero injuries. We've been awfull lucky. Now in time I'm sure that being a rookie I'll do something wrong but as of this point right now, not nothing that's really critical because our supervision is so efficient that it's just - they're there to help, you know, they're there on the scene because when we go into a house with out attack team, our captain is there. We're fighting the fire and he's our superior, he's advising us, so really all the time, the position I've been in it hadn't been a lot of decision making, you know. Fortunately, not yet, I haven't made a really crucial mistake in a fire scene and I think that's not because of my knowledge or my experience, you know, expertise, it just because of good supervision.

Angle: While wer'e talking about that, I wanted to ask, I've got two quesitons that go toghether: the first one is what do you think makes a good firefighter and the second one is what is it that makes a good officer?

Jones: Well, to answer your quesiton about the firefighter, I think several things Personally, I think it takes somebody that gives a shit about other people. I think you've got to have, you've got to be a, you know, a humanitarian. You've got to want to help people because the job is - you know, it's a secure job, you've got job security but there are, you know, more glamorous jobs, other jobs that pay better, but a firefighter, it's just really hard to descirbe; like you go save a house or something, it just seems like that you get a personal satisfaction. In the back of my head, its just like, in the back of my head, I just want to go to a fire and maybe just save somebody. To me, personally, man, that would be the ultimate, you know - I'd love that! It just takes a lot of dedication because this is a job where peopTe need to be on the job, need to be in good physical condition, and it takes a lot of dedicatíon. And then as far as being, you know, an officer I feel that leadership capabilities are a must. Communication with the privates and the sergeants are a must. And I think everybody here does that. If there's something to be done, they'll come up and ask you to do it nicely. I'm sure, that if you neglected it a few times, it wouldn't be so, the third time they asked you it wouldn't be so nice. I think they gotta have, since you are here with everybody so much, you gotta have a mutual agreement, so I think leadership and being able to communicate with and relate with your fellow workers, even though they are below you, is a must. I don't know if you've interveiwed other shifts but I've not really been exposed to , just talked about other shifts, there's not even one that's as close to the professionalism on this shift. Jent enters) You can ask this boy right here, he knows a lot more about it than I do.

Jent: What are you all doing?

Angle: Having an interview about the firefighting business. Would you like to join in?

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2
INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER:

Dennis Angle

Jent: Yeah.

Angle: We're catching in all on tape...If you want to sit down. First thing I want to ask you is your name?

Jent: Mike Jent.

Angle: Mike Jent? (To Jones) This is your buddy, then, huh? How long you been with the department Mike?

Jent: About two and a half years. A little over two and half years.

Angle: We were just talking about what makes a good officer. What do you think?

Jent: (Long pause) Experience and knowing how to deal with people mostly.

Jones: I think self-control is a lot of it. In an officer, it has a lot to do with it because when I first came here there was one situation that Chief Watson, he had to exercise his self-control, I mean just beyond the line of duty. I mean, there was a guy right in his face calling him a son-of-a-bitch and telling him to get out of his yard. I ...

Jent: Is that when he was going to hit him with his protable?

Jones: Yeah, (laughter) I mean, you know, the Chief handled it in a professional capacity, you know, it wouldn't have been no, I'm confident, it wouldn't have been no problem for the Chief to just take the guy all the way out of it. But instead, and I'm sure that if it had been in another situation, he would have liked to do it maybe, you know, because if somebody called me a son-of-a-bitch and was in my face and said something smart like, came up and said, you know like we all had on our blue shirts, and Chief wears a white shirt, and he goes "Where did you get that white rent-a-shirt?" I mean, he was subjected to all these, all this slander and stuff and he excercised his self-control and that's real good for the men because it sets an extremely good example because it would have really been hard for me to or a lot of people to exercise that much self-control.

Angle: Do you think part of being a good officer is linked to the - to not wanting to put the man in a position he wouldn't go into himself.

Jones: Mike would know alot more about that than I would.

Jent: Well, ...

Angle: I guess what I'm trying to say, is it hard to follow an officer who is not ready to go in there with you?

Jones: I haven't been subjected to any officer who wouldn't go in there.

Jent: No, uh uh, me either. Not on this shift.

FOLK LIFE ARCHIVES
KENTUCKY BUILDING
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
DOWLING GREEN, KY 42101

INTERVIEW AND TAPE # 2
INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER:

DENNIS ANGLE

Jones: Just like Chief Watson, the last fire where I was telling you about the stairs burning and stuff. Well, you think about a Chief standing back being an administrative part of the fire, taking everything in control. Well, I come out of the house when we come out to put an airpack on and we got ventilation up on the roof. I looked up on the roof and the Chief was up on the roof ventilating. He'd done climbed up there and he was work that essentially is a Private's work. So, I don't think, in this shift, every time I've ever been in a fire, my Captain's been right there with me so if anything happened to me it was going to happen to him, too, so ...

Jent: Like in that fire, Perry was, if we'd a went down in the hole, Perry would have been right there with us.

Angle: Yeah, Perry told me about that, right before I started this one.

Jones: Now, you see like that's where just a couple years experience - Mike said he'd been here two years, colse to three, and I'd been here about six months. We were sitting in the hall and it was hot and everything. Perry, ..we'd knocked the fire down and we thought we had the fire out.

Jent: Fire was out.

Jones: Well, it wasn't in the basement.

Jent: It was.

Jones: Well, there still were, well it was still burning coals and stuff, but it was like we didn't know it was...

Jent: Yeah, thats the (unintelligible)

Jones: ... that that heat was there and Perry... Now Jent might have knew there was more heat but I thought that we had the fire knocked down. But Perry says "There's a lot of heat in here." Me, you know, from his experience he knew that there was still something there.

Jent: Yeah, I felt the heat but there wasn't no fire. He kept saying, "There's fire over here on my left, or on my right or somewhere." I said there ain't no over there, we got the fire knocked out. It was breathing up through that basement and it felt just like it was burning. I could feel it. Felt just like it was burning right there beside you.

Jones: And when you get to working with people like, even though you might know these people - like I've only known Jent really a month or so because he's been out to the substation and he just got sent back to Central - but when you get into a fire, even though you haven't known somebody that long you can anticipate a lot of their moves and especially when you get to working with them. We was in there and we did have the fire knocked down and we were going to do some search and seizure - I mean some search and rescue - (Laughter) Some search and rescue, and I go "Let's go to the room to the left," the one we just knocked the fire down in because I saw a bed in there and we got Perry

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2
Interviewee; JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER: Dennis Angle

to holler outside to see if any cars were in the driveway cause it was early in the morning, and see if anybody was home. There wasn't any cars in the driveway so I said "Let's do some rescue," go through the house." And Jent goes, "No, we need to go out and get some air." Me, I probably, not anticipating, I guess I got hyper, and got in there and was working and you really don't have any - it's hard to percieve time im there - because man, it just just goes like that (snaps fingers). Jent goes "Let's go out, we're just about out of air." Although we've got a warning on our airpack, that hadn't went off. As soon as I stepped out that front door, my warning bell went off.

No Now if we'd have took maybe my choice as a rookie that one time and maybe been a little gung-ho and was going to be a little cocky and go on and go a little more and just try to be a little more efficient and get a little more work, boy, we'd have crawled off into that hole and would have had about five minutes worth of air. It'd been a pretty bad situation.

Angle: Do you find that that happens in a lot of other situations, as well, Mike? That where the man will anticipate things like the airpack going out, running out before the bell goes off, or where you anticipate the needs...

Jent: Well, that's just where you've been in a couple or three fires, you know how much air your'e going to have. The reason behind that was that before we started to search I wanted to have enough air cause when you get - I looked down at my regulator; it's got a guage on it, shows you what you got and by the time we'd have got halfway around that room, our bells would have went off and we'd of had to back out. And so I just wanted to start out with fresh bottles and we could have covered more of the whole house instead of half of a room.

Angle: Are you single or married?

Jent: I'm married.

Angle: I had asked him if - how it affected his life outside here. It's a little bit different for a guy that's single, I think. Do you find that being a fireman, there was a , shall we call it a period of adjustment that your family has had to go through to get used to the idea...

Jent: Oh yeah, to a certain extnet but it wasn't nothing to speak of.

Jones: Well, your family had like a jump on that because like your wife was subjected to the firefighting... her father was a fireman.

Jent: Been a fireman all his life.

Jones: And so, he probably wouldn't go through it as much because his wife was more already adapted to it probably, Correct me if I'm wrong, than most other people because she knew, she was raised around it, she knew more or less, you know, the hazards involved, the work schedule, and how everything went along.

Angle: When your'e in that fire situation, do you ever think about the dangers

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2
INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE
FOLKLIFE ARCHIVES
KENTUCKY BUILDING
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, KY 42101

OF WHAT you're doing? Or is it, are you under too much pressure to think about it?

Jent: You dont think about it, but you tend to look for them. You don't think about them but you've got to have a certain respect for the situation you're in and watch. Like when you crawl in there, you don't think "I'm going to crawl in here and get killed" or something but when you go in, you watch for things.

Angle: Do you think of this as a job or do you think of it as more of a way of life?

Jent: It's just a job to me.

Jones: I think of it as a job, but no job I've ever had up to this point in my life has the rewards plus - like we were discussing this the other day on our off time - you have to adjust to it because you have to come in, like we was talking about earlier, you have to come in and meet these people and it does - to me you know, its like had an effect on me. I think I've had to alter my life a little, not my life but my personality here at times just to benefit and get along with everybody and stuff like that. It is a way of life for me. I'm not saying that since it's not a way of life for Jent that he's not dedicated, because you can ask anybody here; if he wasn't in here, I'd tell you the same thing.- He is a hell of a firefighter.

Angle: That's what I've heard from everybody is that if you weren't dedicated to it, you wouldn't be here.

Jones: In me, I don't know, I've never been in the services or anything, but I kind of like a challenge and it's stimulating to go into a fire knowing the chances are that you know, I don't think anybody - maybe one guy's been killed? (asking Jent) Hurt bad or killed? Wasn't that about thirty years ago? Or something?

Jent: I don't think there's ever been anyone killed. Unless it was before it was a paid department or way back. I don't know. We've been extremely lucky Jones there.

Jones: It's like to me, like I've never been in service, but it's like going into combat zone, you know, I'm not saying ironic, but it is like going into a combat zone because like you go in and it's you against the fire. And, man, you got to get it at a certain point, don't you agree with that, Jent? Don't you kind of get stimulated when you go in there and you see one rolling, don't - that just, man - you adrenalin and your - i don't know - I think you ... Now I sound like Tom Snyder. (Laughter) Jent say something; you know alot more about this that I do. I've done used up half of a \$6 tape here. You are going to censor some of this tape, aren't you?

Angle: Just the bad parts. I probably won't use all of the material but I will use quite a bit of it and them it will probably go into the archives at Western if I can get release forms from you guys but without your permission, we wouldn't put it in the archives.

INTERVIEW #2, TAPE #2
INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT
SIDE 2

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE
FOLKLIFE ARCHIVES
KENTUCKY BUILDING
EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, KY 42101

Angle: Being in the firehouse for 24 hours, I know that a lot of your day is laid out for you, you have certain things you have to do, the classroom activities, and cleaning up and stuff like that. What do you do in your spare time to fill in the hours?

Jent: Watch television, play ping pong, play a lot of cards, on this shift we play spades, rook, anything to pass the time.

Angle: Do you ever get to the point where you think to yourself that you're just dying for anything to happen to break the monotony, or do you manage to keep enough entertained that that never happens?

Jent: You get bored, but you don't really go to that kind of extreme. There's enough people here that there's always something going on somewhere.

Angle: You were - you just came back to Central, right?

Jent: Yeah.

Angle: Where were you before?

Jent: Industrial Drive.

Angle: Was it a different situation there in a substation where there's fewer men?

Jent: Yeah, it was different but it was basically the same.

Angle: Probably not as much - as many different things to do but still stuff to choose from. We talked about jokes, playing jokes on one another and Chief told me that you tried to restrict practical jokes that would interfere a man's ability to perform his job. Is there any other kind of joke that you play on people or that people have played on you that you'd want to share? Like, I often wondered if there was any sort of an initiation for a rookie, you know, some little thing like putting water in your boots...

Jones: Now, that right there, now we play, you know, I don't know, you know, we, you have a tendency to cut up, you know, but I think it's less, I really don't know, but I think it's less on this shift than on any other shift, but this - I know I can say this for sure on this shift anything pertaining to firefighting equipment, or nobody messes with your airpack, nobody messes with you boots, nobody will ever put like water in your boots.

Jent: They're liable to put your shoes in the refrigerator.

Jones: Now, now ... (Laughter) Mike...

Angle: That's the second time somebody's mentioned that. Why do people put your shoes in the refrigerator?

Jent: Just a practical joke, I guess.

Jones: Break the monotony.

INTERVIEW #2, TAPE #2
INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT

3-18
FOLKLIFE ARCHIVES
INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE
KENTUCKY BUILDING
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, KY 42101

Jent: Break the monotony. Fill your pipe up with water.

Jones: Well, anybody that, you know, smokes a pipe that looks like a bubble pipe (laughter) almost deserves to have bubbles in it. (laughter)

Jent: The first day I come to work on the fire department, back at the old station practical jokes was a whole lot bigger down there than they are up here, now. It's just about cut down to nothing here. First day I worked, I went to bed and woke up the next morning, my dress boots was glued to the floor. (Angle laughs) They done four or five different - my bed was full of flour when I went to bed, just all kinds of stuff. The lock on my locker so they took and stuck toothpicks up in it and broke them off so the key wouldn't go in it. In the summertime, you better have three or four sets of dry clothes because somebody was constantly wetting you, or was. I doubt if that's goes on down here.

Angle: Do you think that results from the change in the officers in recent, in recent months here? The retirement of Chief Bellamy and all that, do you think that's part of the reason that may have, practical joking may have eased out a little bit?

Jent: It's just the difference in the - yeah, that's part of it. But you know it's still going to go on, because the people that's, you know, together at a certain time.

Angle: Mike, were you in the service?

Jent: Uh uh, no.

Angle: Okay, just wondering. A lot of people tell me that - that things about being in the - draw parallels between being in the service and being in the department and I was wondering if you'd ever been in. Let's see, Oh, I wanted to ask you guys a question about how you feel about women in the department. Do you think a woman in the department could perform the job in a, in a, with the same amount of professionalism as a man does?

Jent: Oh, myself, I think to a certain extent she could, but (unintelligible) - I look at it from a lot of different viewpoints. Her physical capabilities, mental capabilities, having to live with - you'd just have to hang around the fire department for a couple of days to understand what a woman would go through down here. You're working with 14 or 15 men down here...

Jones: And I...

Jent: (Laughs)... it's just a nasty situation for a woman to be in.

Jones: And also, you talk about physical capabilities, I'm not a sexist. I think if a woman can do the job, I think you know, she should be as entitled to it as any, uh, as any male. But in my life, in my whole lifetime, I've seen very few women that I thought could perform this job to the capacity that any - you pick any one firefighter, and I don't think that there's any woman that I've ever met that had the strength and endurance, just the physical strength and endurance of a, you know, of a male and I think that this is one job, you know that, you know, women could be beneficial to it but, personally, if I was in a fire and I was on a roof and I stepped through a roof, and somebody

FOLKLIFE ARCHIVES
KENTUCKY BUILDING
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, KY 42101

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2
INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE

grabbed my, grabbed the back of my collar to keep me from falling through on to the floor into some burning embers, I'd, you know, I'd much rather it be oh, Jent or a strong male that I know could at least, you know have the chance to pull me out, where maybe a woman through physical limitation, you know, wouldn't, would be limited, you know, where she couldn't perform her ...

Angle: I'd just like to say that that's the way I feel, too. I find it hard to believe that a woman could...

Jones: Well, just like...

Angle: In a back-up position maybe, in some of the, you know, less physical things. I find it hard to believe that a woman could drag a five-inch hose that's charged, drag it down the street, you know.

Jones: Well, I can't drag a five-inch hose that's charged; I don't think there's very many people here who could drag a five inch hose that-s charged.

Jent: You got - when you go up to a burning building, you got to have - like, if I go in there (unintelligible), I want somebody behind me that I, that I can depend on and that I know is capable of doing their job, and I don't think that I could have that kind of faith in a woman. And I don't think that if I did have a woman backing me up that I would go to the same extremes. You know, I wouldn't go into some of the positions I've been in with men behind me. So I think she would hamper my work.

Jones: And more recently, like, I'm not in excellent physical condition, but I'm in moderately good physical condition and like when we took our physical agility test, and there's just , like I said before, I just don't believe there's very many women that could pass the physical agility test that I took because it was a strain on males. There was a lot of males, I mean, that, you know, healthy, big men, you know, that just like couldn't, you know, just

Jent: They cut that test, they cut that test in half from what it was when we took it.

Jones: And I don't think, you see, I don't think since we are working in a, you know, not every day, but it is, you know, its a strong possibility we could be in a life or death situation and I don't think that we should, the city or anybody should make the standard for the testing lower just to accomodate women just for the fact of having a minority on the force. I think, that if, you know, now, if she can perform the job, I think that's just great, you know. But....

Jent: Well, that already...

Jones: Well, they've already proved that like in the past that women women just haven't been able to pass the physical agility and now, you know, I understand that they're going to lower it again, aren't they?

Jent: I don't know.

Jones: I'm not sure, but....

Jent: If they lower it anymore...

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2
INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE
FOLK LIFE ARCHIVES
KENTUCKY BUILDING
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, KY. 42101

Jones: If they lower it any more...

Jent: ... an old man in a wheelchair could pass it.

Jones: ... we'll have, you know, the next step will be, you know, hiring handicapped you know, or something, you know, because

Angle: Mike, I talked to Ben about this before you came in, I'd like to get your reaction to it. Do you think that the rookies today, the guys with say two years experience, look at their jobs in a different way from the guy that's been here for ten years or 15 years?

Jent: Well, I look at the job as a career, and I'm sure someone that's been here for 10 or 15 years looks at it like a career.

Angle: The sort of a feeling that I got from Perry and Watson was that they don't - they consider this a way of life more than an occupation, and they feel that there's a lot of ... what's the word I'm looking for? They feel that there's a lot of ... there's a lot of reasons they do it that they can't put their fingers on, but they weren't sure if a rookie always felt that way.

Jent: Oh yeah, there's - it's a rewarding job except for the pay. The pay isn't too rewarding but you know, if I had to, I could do something else. I don't have to be a firefighter. It is the best job I've ever had, not as far as pay or anything goes, but it's the most rewarding job.

Angle: Is that - what are the rewards of it? What is it that you get out of it that makes it worthwhile?

Jent: Self-satisfaction I guess would be one thing. And you feel like maybe you've got a , you're doing something purposeful. You don't feel like your'e wasting your life altogether. Like when I get 40 years old, middle age crazy or whatever you want to call it, I'll be able to look back on my life and be able to say I done something useful.

Angle: We talked earlier about the ways of training that you get in the classroom, and what happens to you or what you hear from other guys in storytelling and stuff, is reenforced when you're in the fire situation. Can you think of any examples of when something was, where you were in that fire situation, and you thought to yourself, "Damn, I'm glad that when we were in the classroom that we said something about this" or something like that. Do you get that reinforcement ?

Jent: You get a confidence that being well-trained gives you, but I've never, like, learned something in the classroom now and then ten minutes from now go out and have to use anything that's, you know, major. Maybe just some minor stuff or something. I wouldn't want to be in that situation at all if I wasn't trained to do it.

Angle: Do you ever feel like the physical aspects of the job outweigh the mental

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2
 INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE
 FOLKLIFE ARCHIVES
 KENTUCKY BUILDING
 WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
 BOWLING GREEN, KY 42101

aspects of it, or is there a balance struck in there somewhere between the two?

Jent: I think the job is more mentally demanding than it is physically demanding because you have to make a special mental effort to be able to stay down here with these guys for 24 hours. And then you've got to make a mental, uh, I'm having a hard time finding words.

Jones: Just like me. I've said that about 20 times.

Jent: Well, I completely lost my train of thought here. You've got to prepare yourself mentally for what the job's, for what's involved, you know, in your work.

Angle: I got one last question I want to ask you guys, and that is: Civilians are terribly ill-informed about what it's like to be a fire fighter. They have absolutely no idea what's going on. How do you feel about their image of you as a guy who sits back, you know, on his rear end all day long waiting for somebody to call in a fire and if a fire never comes then they don't have to do anything. They see you, you know, they see you sitting out in front of the station and they think "Oh, man, that must be the life, you know, 48 hours off and 24 hours on sitting around the fire station." How do you feel about that kind of image that the public has?

JENT: To a certain extent, that's the way it is. We work 24 hours and maybe we have an hour and a half clean-up every morning. Then, if you got a kitchen job, you either cook or wash dishes, or mop the floors, something. And then, right between nine o'clock and 11:30, you don't have anything to do, it's just all your time. If you don't have any runs. Unless, you know, there's window-washing or something like that. and then you have two hour training period which goes from one to three, and then, you know, you'll eat supper about five and you'll have a couple of hours in between training and supper. for your own time. And then after you get all your kitchen duties done after supper you've got, you know, the rest of the time is your own free time. But when we do work, when the bell does go off, then we make up for all that slack time, in my opinion.

Watson (from outer office): Lay it on 'em. That's something I keep in my Locker. (Hands Angle a framed poem titled "What is a Fireman?"; then exits)

Angle: Is there anything you would do to try to educate the public or make them aware of, more aware of what goes on down here?

Jent: I wouldn't know what to do if it was me. You know, you can, I mean, they know, the public knows what goes on. I don't think they think you just totally sit on your ass 24 hours a day, but ...

Jones: I would like to

Jent: ... you could educate the public but I wouldn't know how you ever have a successful way of going about doing it.

Jones: I'd like to see it more, probably without the misconception that we don't

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2
INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE
FOLKLIFE ARCHIVES
KENTUCKY BUILDING
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, KY 42101

do anything because of like, you know, we might a percentage of the time when we don't do anything, not not anything, but when we do something, I mean, like I said, you could just step off into a hole and be gone and I think that's worth, hell, you know, if you work an hour under those conditions man, you deserve to sit around for eight hours, you know.

Jent: Going into a burning building, it was told to me when I come on, was like walking into an oven blindfolded. And you have to experience that. Your air's restricted first off and that makes you, if your'e not used to it, makes you tense right off because you're having to pull for air. And then you're totally, I mean totally blind, or I am when I get the mask on half the time. An example of that, I was trying to go through, he tried to kick a door down (points to Jones) and kicked a little hole out. I could see the fire rolling back in the background, and I had the line trying to crawl that little hole in the door.

Angle: I'm going to ask you another question that I know you can't answer, or that I know you're going to have a hard time answering. And that is, do you know exactly why you became a fireman?

Jent: I needed a job. At the time, I'd been unemployed for about 8 months and when you hire on, you don't really, you know, you're just like the rest of the public, you don't know what its all about till you get into in and it gets in your system. It's just different from anything you can do.

Angle: It's easier to know why you stay than why you came.

Jent: Yeah, why I came was I needed, I needed a job. I never in my life, you know, when I was a kid or anything wanted to be a fireman. I just needed work.

Jones: Yeah, I always wanted an executive position, but ...

Angle: You'll have to wait till you make Chief for that.

Jones: ... personally, my background, my family has always been in personal care. Like my mother was an owner-administrator of a nursing home, my sister is a nurse, all my family has more or less served the public in a certain capacity. And I went to Western and that's how I met Bill Carter. He told me, I was taking some Fire Science courses, and he told me that they was having, you know, a test. And I thought, well, you know, this is, you know, I wanted a job real bad, I wanted a job being in, you know, ... fighting fire and I've lost my chain of thought too again.

Jent: Do you have the fire service in mind when you was taking those classes? Was you thinking you was wanting to get into the fire service and soon?

Jones: Oh, yeah, you know, like that was, you know, my...

Jent: Was it an easy class, you sort of ...

Jones: Well, no, my four year degree was a law degree with a minor in psychology with an area of concentration, an associate degree with fire technology. And after I got into fire technology I really, you know, I really just,

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2
INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE

Like I say, I like something that's a little, that's more stimulating than working a 8 to 5 job at Holley and punching out, standing in front of a die you know, that they could actually, you know, could have a robot doing, and almost teach a chimpanzee to do it, you know, so .

Jent: Yeah, I tried that kind of work for a while. I worked at Holley for 3 or 4 months and didn't have no other job and just couldn't stand it and left, just quit, without another job to go to.

Angle: I get the feeling, all the guys I've talked to, everyone has mentioned the self-satisfaction of working as a fireman, and I wondered if there's ever a time when you feel like that's not worth it, if that's not enough. Do you ever feel like that?

Jent: What's that again?

Angle: Do you ever feel like the rewards of the job, the self-satisfaction you get out of it, do you ever get the feeling that that's not enough? Or is that always enough?

Jent: Well, that's, I get, you know, I'm satisfied with the job, you know, I get gratification out of doing it. Just wish we made more money. That's the thing that I don't get enough of, and that's money.

Angle: Do you think that grows out of the ignorance of the public, though? Do you think that if the public really had a sense of what you were doing they'd pay you more? Or that they'd at least ask you for some advice on how to build a fire department?

Jent: Well, it's just a matter of opinion, I guess.

Jones: I think the people, you know, in general the public is never, you know, the majority of the public is never probably really directly exposed to us, you know, on the capacity of fighting fires. And you go into somebody's house and one room, you know, say might be totally involved, and you go in there and you put it out and then a couple of weeks later they send you, you know, a letter telling how they liked, you know, you put salvage covers over it and kept, you know, everything from water damage and smoke damage. I think that those people if you're going to educate the public, you can look through our log book and probably on most shifts, but preferably I'd rather you'd go to the B Shift, our shift, and I believe, that more or less you could go back and ask the people, you know, I don't want to say clients, but just people, you know, that we have responded to and helped. And I think if you asked them, they'd be very , I think they'd be very pleased with our performance and what we do. And I think that the pay, you know, everybody wants to make more money, you know. I'd like to make a \$100,000 a year being a firefighter. That'd make it great. But, and like you said, it gets in your blood. Just like I told you earlier, Chief Watson, you know, we was out there at that fire, there was a couple of other guys that could have jumped up there and ventilated it. I don't know why he jumped up there, I might have a misconception, but I think it's, you know, I think it's in his blood too. I think that he just wanted to get up there and do it to it, too. I think that it's, it gets to be, you know, a way of life and I think it, you know, like money's

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2
INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE

not everything. Personal satisfaction is a lot and I think that I would really like to see the public, you know, really more educated and know a lot more about what this job consists of and that we don't just sit down here and play ping pong, and that we don't just mow grass and sit out and play checkers, or something like that. Because there's, there's a lot to do in the station. If you go through the station, especially the new station, we keep the apparatus in just A-1, A-1 condition. As far as I'm concerned, I hate to, it might sound like we're bragging, I look at us, all of us as professionals. I think that in a professional capacity that the public ought to recognize that instead of, you, know, instead of we work for the city like, I'm not cutting down the Street Department, but you know, you just can't compare it with our job, (Phone ringing in background) because our expertise is a lot more demanding. At times our job is a lot more demanding.

(In background, there can be heard a muffled phone conversation between Chief Watson and whomever called in)

Jent: We're talking about the pay. The city send out a booklet that tells you what you make and you can look at the other jobs for the city, and you can see, you know, what everybody makes. And a guy that works, not cutting down the Sanitation Department, but their job's not near as hazardous as ours, but a guy that works on the back of the truck and picks up the garbage makes the same amount of money that I make. And the guy that drives the truck makes the same amount of money he makes. (Points to Sergeant Bucky Pearson, who has entered room and is quietly sitting in the corner. Pearson is a driver/pump operator) And I figure that within the job comparisons that that's just ridiculous.

Jones: Yeah, you know, that's like paying a doctor the same thing as you pay an RN. Like Bucky has, his expertise and his edu-, not education as such, it's experience, there's just a lot more to know. Sanitation people making the same amount of money he gets, and what does he have to do to learn how to drive that truck? Learn to drive a four or five speed truck. Bucky he has to evaluate the situation, you know, he has to just, he has to know static pressure, and has to know all this different, you know, just a lot of calculations and has to know a lot of stuff, you know, where like this other guy, all he has to do is drive.

Jent: When them red lights and sirens come on, he's got, right now, two privates and a captain's life in his hands. And I mean, when you roll out the doors on a truck you're in a life - you're in a hazardous situation just (snaps fingers) that quick. And that's a pretty good load of responsibility for the pay you get.

Jones: And the public needs to be educated more because like, they don't, it doesn't seem like they yield to us. Like, if we're on a run, they don't yield to us like they would a police officer.

Jent: No, they don't pay any attention to us at all.

Jones: You know, like they just don't, they act like, you know, not like we're an emergency service. They act like you know, like if it was their own

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2
INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE
ELKLIFF ARCHIVES
KENTUCKY BUILDING
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, KY 42101

house they'd yeild...

Angle: I can beat this fire truck to the corner and get out of the way.

Jones: ...and not get a ticket, you know. Now, if you know, (unintelligible). The Chief, you know, so som pumper could get in, you know , and lay aome line, this was a couple of months ago, he pulled in, you know, crossways in the street to block, you know, to block traffic. Well, people just instead of stopping , they just drove around him and...

Jent: What people don't realize is that a pumper moving 60 miles an hour, you ain't going to lock the brakes up to stop it. And if you get hit with one of them things then it's just going to cream your ass.

Angle: Is there anything you'd like to add, or anything you'd like to comment on that I didn't ask you about?

Jent: Does that thing (points to recorder) catch all his nods over here (points to Pearson)?

Angle: Anything at all?

Jones: Well, Bucky's a sergeant and we're privates. What do you think about rank Bucky, what do you think? Do you think that plays an important part like until we're like on the scene, like do you think...

Jent: Throw in something constructive there, Buck.

Jones: ...you know, not like, what I'm trying to get at is like we're kind of relaxed until we go onto a scene, you're just Bucky and I'm Ben. Isn't that the way that you think it is?

Pearson: I think to a certain point it is.

Jones: Oh, we, you know, we respect your position and everything...

Pearson: Yeah, it's a little different but you still have to be prepared, you know, before you go. You have to have, you know the truck in shape, things ready. There is a little difference and it does get a little more tense when you go on a fire. You get a few more rules than we do here.

Jones: I think people in general take more pride in their work here because it was like 11 o'clock the other night , well, 10 o'clock the other night. You know, we didn't have to be doing nothing, we didn't have to be, you know, we wasn't required to be doing any kind of work. Bucky, you know, took me out to the truck and something that I, that he would probably be doing and that I might occasionally help him do, chances are that I might do for quite a while yet, he was out there explaining it to me. Like manifolds and stuff. He came out there and spent about an hour of his time educating me, you know, just out of the benefit, you know, as a whole, you know. So it's going to help everybody.

Angle: There seems to be a willingness for the guys to swap their knowledge and expertise.

INTERVIEW AND TAPE # 2
INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS W. ANGLE
KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, KY 42101

Pearson: Well, you still got a few duds, though. You know what I mean?

Angle: Yeah.

Pearson: You got that any place you go. You got some in here, but 90 percent of them you know, are dedicated to their jobs. They're serious, you know, and that's what the public don't really know. Some of them do. There's a lot that don't care.

Jones: Are you going to make any effort with with this? Is this something for school or are you going to make anything else out of it?

Angle: Well, basically, it is for school. I would like to try to get it passed around to some more people than would see it in a school atmosphere. The tapes and stuff will go into the archives at Western and will be there for anybody to come in and listen to. If they're interested in finding out what it's like to be a firefighter, if they want to go to Western and look in the archives all these tapes will be there. And there's a lot of tapes up there now that people don't know about, but see that's the key right there - is that even when the stuff is available the people still have to ask for it, and they can't ask for it if they don't know it's there. So that's why I feel the responsibility that when I finish what I'm doing to try to get a few more people aware of the situation that don't know about it now. See, I've got a little bit of insight because I'm related to a firefighter and I don't think that I would have ever attempted anything like this if I hadn't been related to a firefighter. And the people in my class, when they found out what I was doing reacted in the way that, you know, I said I was going to do an occupational ethnography of a firefighter, you know, which is something they understand. Basically what it means is what's it like to be a firefighter and everybody went "Wow, I bet nobody's ever done anything like that before." And just in the amount of time I been working on it, I've found out a lot of people have, a lot of people have. And it's just that the general public is not aware of it or the people who are doing it are doing it either for themselves or for firefighters. It's like the magazine that Watson gave me that's, I've forgotten the name of it - Kentucky Firefighter? - or something - I never even knew that a magazine like that existed. It's got a lot of good information in it on the history of the Bowling Green Fire Department, that I had no access to.

Pearson: That guy was also a millionaire and he still works for the Fire Department.

Angle: McCurley?

Pearson: That shows you the dedication of some people. He doesn't have to but he does.

Jones: It's in his blood.

Pearson: Yeah, I believe it does. You have to to stay here 24 hours a day.

Angle: I think guys like Dennis Smith, Dennis Smith had a big impact on me. When I read "Report from Engine Co. No. 82", I had never understood why

INTERVIEW AND TAPE # 2
INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE

he (Motions towards Watson in outer office) wanted to be around fires. I read that book and I came a little bit closer. When I was in the Navy and went to firefighting school, I came a lot closer, because that's the only situation I was ever in where I was anywhere near what you guys go through.

Pearson: You got to like it or you won't stay here.

Angle: Is there anything else you guys would like to add?

Jones: I just, the only thing I'd like to add is I'd like for some kind of effort to be made to educate the public in our position. You know, I think, you know, that is a desire of mine and I think it's the desire of a lot of people in the department. Wouldn't you say so, Jent? Wouldn't you think a lot of people, wouldn't you like to see people understand our job a lot more and know more about what we do?

Jent: Yeah. I wish there was a way that from the time that the bell goes off and we have a working fire to film that as it would be from a fireman's eyes. Like if I'm going through the door trying to extinguish a fire...

Jones: Waking up from a dead sleep at 3:00 in the morning and rolling out the door...

Jent: ...and rolling out the door about 30 seconds later...

Jones: ...and fighting a fire and coming out and the ambulance attendant tell you that the chill factor was what? 18 below, you know, and your response time like (Snaps fingers), lights come on, the bell goes off and man, you're out the door.

Angle: Do you ever wake up on the truck...

Jones: Yeah.

Angle: ...do you ever say all of a sudden, "I'm on the truck and I don't even remember nothing".

Pearson: I did the other night and I was driving. (Laughter)

Angle: Probably halfway to the fire too.

Jent: At the old station, I've woke up at the bottom of the pole a couple of times. About half asleep, and you grab the pole and you don't hit it good and you fall a full story.

Pearson: That's the worst time to have to start thinking ~~what~~ where are you going, what are you going to do when you get there? That is the worst time for me, certain times.

Angle: You don't have any standardized route pattern, do you? Do you have a standardized route patten that you follow, or do you just go by instinct?

Pearson: Generally, generally, no. We have a certain pattern of which way we go. We might not find that way every time, but we try to run the shortest way. And

INTERVIEW AND TAPE #2
INTERVIEWEE: JONES AND JENT

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS ANGLE

it depends on which way the traffic is the heaviest. Like different times up on the square, and stuff like that.

Angle: How do you keep up with things like construction? Does the city, when the city tears up the streets do they let you know?

Pearson: Yes.

Jent: When they see us, when the people see us out riding around on the streets on the truck, we're not going for just a Sunday drive, you know, we're out learning that, you know, where things are and the best way to get to them, a new subdivision's going in, you know, just out looking.

Pearson: I've got to where I don't, it don't bother me anymore about the public. I been here going on 11 years. It doesn't bother me anymore because when they need us, you know, we're there and that's when they appreciate us. Other than that, most of them is not going to. And as much talking as you do, they still think all you do is shoot pool, play cards, sit out front and watch the cars go by.

Jent: Somebody's house could burn, catch on fire right now. We'd go out and put it out and the city'd come up wanting to raise taxes tomorrow to give us a pay raise and they would fight it with their last breath.

Pearson: If they'd have been with us up there on College Street, that two-story on the right up there, inside, ain't too many people would take a job like that. That's where that Western building burnt up there about a month or so ago. Can't think of the name of it, it's right there on the corner just before you get up to, you know, that Cherry statue. That's one of the most scary positions I've ever been in. That's before I made driver. (Unintelligible) I thought about it when I was in there, but I'd still go to another one.

Jent: I don't think I've ever been in one that I really thought of the impending danger while it was there.

Pearson: I did.

Jent: But you come to a blind realization after you get out or the fire is out ...

Pearson: I didn't either when I was your age, but now that I'm getting a little older, I start thinking about it a little bit more.

Jent: Well, after I get out and on the truck, you get, you know, ...

Pearson: A lot of times you just don't have time to.

Jent: No, you just ...

Pearson: But you will when you get a little older, I think.

Jent: You think back on, like the other day and that burned out stairway we was talking about, you know, at the time, you know, it, you know, it kind of shocked me. It was there, I think, that I would have known it before I went through it, but then you always got that second thought. You know,

when you crawl through, you feel the floor and the doorways, or I do, to make sure there is a floor there. But in that kind of situation, that tense, you don't really know if you're doing that or not, you know, if you would have done it or not.

Pearson: Bowling Green's been lucky. They haven't ever lost anybody in a fire. They've got several people hurt, but it's just one of those instances, you know, where they're lucky. I don't want to be the first.

Angle: It's just like Watson was talking about falling through the roof and the only thing he felt like that saved him was the two firefighters that he landed on.

Pearson: Well, that's possible. I know that roof up there could have caved in at anytime. You know, it was fully involved and it was bad. It was hot. It could have went in and killed two or three easy but it didn't. And we've been in where we was walking around gasoline in jars sitting in the floor, and just happened not to knock them over. You know, back years ago, a few years ago. It's been a lot of luck involved, but I don't know of a job here in Bowling Green I would trade mine for, and that's the truth.

Jent: Not unless it was the City Manager's job.

Pearson: Yeah, that'd be alright, but I, I wouldn't trade my job.

Angle: Being a veteran, do you feel - we talked about the growth of the fire science technology - do you feel better equipped to fight those fires today than you did when you started?

Pearson: Yes.

Angle: Does that help ease that, whatever it is, that uncertainty of going out there?

Pearson: Some. It does some. I noticed a difference since.....

(At this point my tape ran out and I had no others available.)