

Joseph Perrino and Charles Reeder

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Abstract: Chief Joseph J. Perrino (1919-2021) and Captain Charles J. Reeder (1921-1989) were long-time officers of the Metuchen Police Department, both joining the department in 1946 shortly after completing their service in the United States Army during World War II.

Joseph J. Perrino is a lifelong resident of Metuchen and the son of Italian immigrants Vincent Perrino and Mildred Perrino. As one of six children, he joined the United States Armed Services during World War II and was severely injured via a bullet to the jaw in Guam in 1944. Mr. Perrino received a Bronze Star Award and the Purple Heart for his act of bravery. He was appointed to the Metuchen Police Department in 1946, and was promoted to sergeant in 1953, captain in 1965, and chief in 1975. Mr. Perrino served in that position until his retirement in 1985. He is also responsible for designing the first Indian logo for uniform patches, and his painted portrait of the original Indian sketch hangs in the Metuchen Public Library. In 2011, Mr. Perrino was recognized for his dedicated service to the residents of Metuchen in a borough resolution. He married Theresa Perrino and they had three children.

Charles J. Reeder was also a lifelong resident of Metuchen and the son of Howard Reeder and Elizabeth Reeder. As one of four children, he joined the United States Armed Services in 1942. Mr. Reeder served as a milk deliveryman for Cooper's Dairy before joining the Metuchen Police Department in 1946. He was promoted to sergeant in 1958, lieutenant in 1965, and captain in 1969. His brother, Harold E. Reeder Jr., served alongside him in the department for thirty years. Mr. Reeder specialized in handling juvenile problems and took special courses for this work at Rutgers University. He retired from the force in 1980. Mr. Reeder was also a member of the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (PBA) and the American Legion Fugle-Hummer Post 65. He married Mildred (Kieser) Reeder and they had three children.

In this interview, Mr. Perrino and Mr. Reeder discuss the history of the Metuchen Police Department, focusing on the department's beginnings, police officers, social activities, marshals, issues and crimes, organizational structure, and training. Both briefly discuss their own police involvement and their reasons for joining the department.

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P. Bruno: Today is December 7, 1977 and I'm interviewing Chief Joseph Perrino of the Metuchen Police Department, Metuchen, New Jersey. [recording paused]

J. Perrino: [background discussion] Maybe what we should have are those states that—before we talk about it.

C. Reeder: Yeah. [recording paused]

P. Bruno: Okay, today I'm talking with Chief Joseph Perrino and Capt. Charles Reeder of the Metuchen Police Department.

[loud noise] All right, why don't we just start with how it started and the organization in the beginning. I know you talked to me about it, but maybe you can just go back a little bit.

C. Reeder: This was in reference to Metuchen originally being under Raritan Township years ago. And just what year Metuchen broke away from Edison [then Raritan Township], I'm not sure about. Do you know, Joe?

J. Perrino: Was approximately 1925¹ [incorrect date], around that time.

C. Reeder: That's when they broke away from Edison Township and formed their own [Metuchen] Police Department² and the first chief of police being Mr. [Enos] Fouratt. I remember his first name was the same as his son's or not. Was his first name Enos also?

J. Perrino: I believe it was.

C. Reeder: And after Mr. Fouratt, the second chief of police in Raritan / Metuchen would be Willard B. Hutchinson. The third chief would be Enos J. Fouratt, the son of the first chief of police in Metuchen. The fourth chief would be Edward F. Leiss and he retired—was that 1964-1965 years young?

J. Perrino: Sixty-five³ [incorrect date].

C. Reeder: He retired from the Police Department and we have our present Chief Joseph Perrino taking over in 1965⁴ [incorrect date]. There's a name on the plaque out in the hallway, [Patrick] Moran. The name doesn't do anything for me. Do you remember a member of the department that I've missed there?

J. Perrino: No. I probably can remember when it was about a six- or seven-man Police Department early in the—around 1927-28. And shortly after or right after the war [World War II], during the war, there were some extra men put on and they left. But I believe when I came on the police force [in 1946], there were about nine men on and it grew constantly until we reached number thirty-five. So we did

¹ The Borough of Metuchen was incorporated on March 20, 1900.

² The Metuchen Police Department was organized on March 1, 1900.

³ Edward F. Leiss was appointed police chief of the Metuchen Police Department in 1965, and he retired from the force in 1975.

⁴ Joseph J. Perrino was appointed police chief of the Metuchen Police Department in 1975 following the retirement of Edward F. Leiss. He retired in 1985.

have thirty-five men up until a month or two ago when Sgt. [John] Tilkey⁵ retired. We're down to thirty-four now.

P. Bruno: And are you looking for a replacement?

J. Perrino: We hope to get a replacement for him, yes.

P. Bruno: So getting back to how it first started, when it broke off from Edison, when Metuchen became a borough, were any of the police on the force in Edison come to Metuchen and started the first department? Did you remember any of those original men served on the Edison Police Department?

J. Perrino: I wouldn't know⁶.

C. Reeder: The first chief, which was Mr. Fouratt. I don't know if he really serves on the Edison [force].

P. Bruno: Were all of these men residents of Metuchen? Was that one of the qualifications that you had to live in the borough?

J. Perrino: At that time, I believe it was, yes.

C. Reeder: It was all the seven men that I can remember before I even came on. I shouldn't say seven, probably excluding Daddy Smith [Frank Smith]. I can remember the other police officers when I was going to school and I think you do too, huh? Talking about Willard Hutchinson was the chief and [Titus] Schmelzer was a lieutenant, right? And we had Enos Fouratt, the son of the first chief on the Police Department, and Charles Frohm, and Costen Manziano, and Henry Salaki. She asked me a question before if Elsie Salaki was the wife of Henry Salaki.

P. Bruno: We have a tape of Mrs. Salaki.

C. Reeder: I don't know. Was she?

J. Perrino: Yes.

P. Bruno: Her father [George Hanemann⁷] was the baker in town.

C. Reeder: That would be, what, she was Hanemann?

J. Perrino: Right.

P. Bruno: I was just wondering if it was the same man because the name was familiar. Okay, where was the headquarters located?

⁵ John Tilkey retired in July 1977.

⁶ According to email correspondence with Joseph Perrino in March 2006, Mr. Perrino indicates that no members of the Edison (former Raritan Township) police served on the Metuchen police force at the beginning.

⁷ The Hanemann family name was also spelled in historic newspapers and census records with an additional "n" (Hannemann).

J. Perrino: At one time, the headquarters was on Main Street where the Metuchen Hardware is.

P. Bruno: That was Robins Hall [at 401 Main Street], right?

J. Perrino: Right.

P. Bruno: So the headquarters was in Robins Hall?

J. Perrino: Uh-huh.

P. Bruno: Yeah. And just from listening to other tapes and reading about the history of Metuchen, that was also used for social functions?

J. Perrino: Yes.

C. Reeder: Um-hm, upstairs.

P. Bruno: And the Police Department was downstairs?

J. Perrino: Well, some part of that building. I wouldn't know where.

C. Reeder: I didn't think that they had much more than just one room at that time really.

J. Perrino: I believe they also were located in another area. I don't recall, but I think there also was another place they used as a headquarters until this building [Borough Hall at 500 Main Street] was built and they moved them to be a part of what was the tax office.

All the men who were on the department prior to World War II are no longer with the department. Everybody on the department now are post-war fellows. Capt. Reeder and myself being two of the early birds (1946), and we came on in July and August respectively, and I think that started the new regime so to speak.

C. Reeder: Yeah, because Lt. [James] Kover [came on as a patrolman] in 1948 and Capt. Howard Reeder [Jr.]⁸ in 1950.

J. Perrino: And on and on it went.

C. Reeder: And from that point on, there was Sgt. [Edward] Studnicki, I think, around 1952. And from that point really, the department really started to grow.

P. Bruno: Okay. Prior to that, like if you can remember, what were some of the functions of the police? Now this may seem kind of ridiculous for you because—but a lot of people don't know like exactly what the old-time police did. Certainly, there weren't that many people living in the town at the time. So was it just basically patrolling? Did they carry firearms?

⁸ According to email correspondence with Joseph Perrino in March 2006, there were no captains in the Metuchen Police Department until 1965 when Mr. Perrino was named the first one in that new position.

J. Perrino: They always carried firearms; they did patrolling. I can recall the second chief, Hutchinson that was mentioned before, when he would ride on a motorcycle with a sidecar. And then it was around 1933, I believe, we had the first patrol car.

P. Bruno: And before that, did any police use horses?

J. Perrino: I don't ever recall horses being used in town, but they had foot patrolmen. I understand, at one time, some of them used bicycles to go from one point of town to another. And so the stories are told to us by some of the older members that they did have a bicycle they used to travel on from different points of town where they had to go. And they had call boxes to call into headquarters or they would use someone's phone to call in someplace that was open and make their checks with headquarters that way.

P. Bruno: Okay. What about social functions, like the little thing that you just read me about that ticket for twenty-five cents? Did the police have any social functions like a Policeman's Ball or something? Does Metuchen have anything like that?

J. Perrino: The police always had functions of some sort. They had—normally they called them **Police Dances**.

P. Bruno: Were they held in Robins Hall?

J. Perrino: Well, in those days, yes. And of course, as buildings went up in different areas, why the sites were changed from one place to the other. And up until recently, we used to have dances and the PBA [Patrolmen's Benevolent Association] in the last three years, I think, eliminated having the dances.

P. Bruno: Do you want to read that little paragraph because I thought it was really interesting?

J. Perrino: Well, as I indicated earlier, the owner of the taxi business [Independent Taxi Company] in Metuchen, Angelo Donato, purchased the building on the corner of Main Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, which was Burroughs Building [at 396 Main Street]. It used to be the Metuchen Pharmacy and now is Crawford Travel Agency. Well, Mr. Donato purchased the building and while he was doing some renovating last year, which would be 1976, in the wall he found a piece of paper, which I indicated to you, and a dance ticket for a charity entertainment given by the Raritan Township Tax Payer's League at Tearse's [phonetic] Auditorium on Woodbridge Avenue in Piscatawaytown, Wednesday evening, December 17, 1930, general admission, twenty-five cents. Now they also had a little bulletin that they posted that was put out earlier, which was called *The Police Reporter*. And this is dated April 2, 1927 indicating some of Raritan Township's functions in that they appointed a new department retaining all the old members and adding Harold Peterson, Ed Minew, and George Palko, and Alexander Bors as chief. Now I never heard the name Alexander Bors⁹ until I read this paper. And it states that what these fellows did, these new members that were put on, Lt. Henderson and Charles Grandjean¹⁰, who was a past chief of Edison, where they

⁹ According to notes from Paul Stephens, Albert E. Davis was police chief from 1923 to 1932, but he was demoted to lieutenant and replaced by Alexander Bors for a few months in 1927.

¹⁰ Charles Grandjean, also spelled Grand-Jean, was the police chief of Raritan Township from 1934 to 1959.

served their time in the service in Germany and it also mentions a Walter Murley, [who] was a drillmaster in the Canadian Army holding a rank of sergeant major in the Royal Canadian Infantry Regiment and he put in three years with them. Also on this paper, there's a note of a "Police Benevolent Association Local No. 60 holds Annual Dance."

P. Bruno: Now that's Metuchen No. 60?

J. Perrino: That's the Metuchen Local No. 60. It reads:

PBA Local 60 of the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association held its Annual Dance at Masonic Hall in Highland Park on April the twenty-second with the proceeds going to the benefit fund. The affair was well attended and the music by O'Brien's Orchestra from Perth Amboy supplied toe-tickling melodies to the delight of the crowd whose pleasure was evidenced by the generous applause following each number. Committeemen Fouratt, Frohm (Fouratt was the ex-chief of Metuchen and Frohm was a patrolman at that time) and [Alfred T.] Smalley (Smalley was the chief of police in Highland Park) and Chairman [Russell] Rockhill (I believe he was also with Edison Police) spent a busy evening receiving the congratulations of the friends and brother officers on the excess of the event.

And it goes on and at the bottom of the page, it says "More" but we never found the other page.

P. Bruno: But that's really interesting.

J. Perrino: Interesting to see especially if you knew or remember some of these older men who were on the Police Department in Edison. The only one that I can recall now who was around is Lt. [William] Henderson and all the others I believe have passed away. Also as far as the retired men from Metuchen Police Department, I think the only two retired people who are fully retired—I mean put in their service—is George Breen and presently our last chief, Edward Leiss. All the others have since passed away.

P. Bruno: Were there any special requirements at the time to be a policeman? I mean now you have to go to police school and do all sorts of things.

J. Perrino: No, [not] in the early years.

P. Bruno: It was just a sort of a desire.

J. Perrino: It was just a selection. If someone was in town and had a desire and made his desire known, if they could afford to pay their own way, they used him. In Metuchen, they had marshals who supplemented the Police Department.

P. Bruno: Yeah, Capt. Reeder was telling me about marshals.

J. Perrino: Yes. My father [Vincent Perrino] was a marshal for a number of years.

C. Reeder: Did they get paid, chief?

- J. Perrino:** Yes, they got paid a very small fee.
- P. Bruno: But it was more of a voluntary service.
- J. Perrino:** That's right, it was a supplement to the Police Department and they used those men. Percy Milligan, who lives on Blair Avenue in Metuchen, I think he's one of the oldest and one of the original marshals who was on and assisted the Police Department. He's up in his age now; he's up around eighty-some years old. And he can probably give you a little background on marshals, but I do recall in Metuchen when they had medicine shows and carnivals on Middlesex Avenue, opposite where Franklin School is, in the field there that the marshals used to work extra duty during functions like that and they even came in town.
- P. Bruno: What are medicine shows?
- J. Perrino:** Well, it used to be sort of a knack where somebody would sell different kinds of medicines they claimed would heal you or cure for you.
- P. Bruno: Oh, cure-alls.
- J. Perrino:** Yes, cure-all thing. And then they'd go around selling tickets for prizes and maybe some of the prizes would be a big doll or something. And you purchased the packets that they sold, and if you picked one out that had this certain prize in it, that you won a doll or whatever they were giving away. And they used to put on sort of a little show, a little dance, a little act, entertainment of that sort.
- P. Bruno: And so what else did the marshals do? How else did they assist the police?
- J. Perrino:** Well, they were used wherever they would have any function, any large function, dances, or sports events.
- P. Bruno: Just where extra men were needed?
- J. Perrino:** Yes. Similar to what they have today in so far as police specials are concerned or police reserves, so to speak. Many communities now are still using police specials: Milltown, Jamesburg, Helmetta all use police specials as they supplemented the regular Police Department because the community isn't large enough to pay their wages for patrolmen.
- C. Reeder:** In the earlier days, the department first established the patrolling marshals [who] came out at night and they patrolled the streets on foot (right?) for security of the community. Of course, they held regular jobs in the daytime and they gave them themselves for nearly not too much and patrolled the streets in the community assisting in the security. Because in the beginning, we just had the chief of police. I don't know how often they put new men on, but it couldn't have been too many because we had seven members and what date would that we'd even recall those seven members? That goes to about 1927, 1925?
- P. Bruno: Did any of the marshals become officers that you can remember?
- J. Perrino:** Yes, the last chief [Edward Leiss] that was here was a marshal.

- C. Reeder:** Yeah, they thought he could work two years as a patrolling marshal.
- J. Perrino:** Two years or so before he was [appointed as a patrolman]. That was in 1936?
- C. Reeder:** Nineteen-hundred-thirty-four, 1934. And he was appointed to the Police Department in 1936 and he serves. And his last position was chief of police, which he retired from when Chief Perrino took over. That's a few years ago.
- J. Perrino:** Now you talk about salary. I don't know what the salaries were back in the early days, but I do recall during the Depression where salaries weren't paid and they had to give the officers a slip of paper. And when somebody came in to pay their taxes, they would give them that money to—
- C. Reeder:** They called it script.
- P. Bruno:** Yeah, somebody else mentioned that.
- J. Perrino:** Yeah, to pay them for it because they didn't have the funds available to pay them. In 1946, I believe when I started, my salary was \$2,800.
- P. Bruno:** Yeah, I was telling Capt. Reeder that we listened to a tape of Major [Charles] Carman and when he first started working as an engineer, I guess it was in the twenties, he was making two dollars a day and that was considered good pay. But in the Depression, did like other departments give out this script too or was it just the police? Were a lot of people paid in that method?
- J. Perrino:** Well, it wasn't payment. This script was something that later on, when funds were available, they turned that piece of paper in to get the cash for it.
- C. Reeder:** To get money for it.
- J. Perrino:** It was sort of an IOU [I Owe You]. I believe the duties of the officers were generally about the same except for the times changing, the mobility with automobiles and transportation being as it is today. Everything is a little faster and more complex than it was in those earlier days when the population was probably down about 7,000 or 8,000 people.
- P. Bruno:** This is when the borough just was formed, it was about 7,000?
- J. Perrino:** Yes, talking about in the late 1920s and much of Metuchen was field. A lot of Metuchen was field. I'm sure Capt. Reeder can recall many of the fields where we hunted.
- C. Reeder:** Mason Drive, Morris Avenue.
- J. Perrino:** In that Mason Drive area, Morris Avenue, and—
- C. Reeder:** The horse shows.
- J. Perrino:** Forrest Street.

P. Bruno: Did you have hunting clubs?

J. Perrino: No, but there was a lot of hunting area in Metuchen, just on the outskirts of Metuchen where [there] was quite a bit of land that wasn't built up at that time. And we were reading some time ago of some of the details from an old book that was taken from the basement when they were doing some cleaning out of the vault downstairs. And reading some of the books that go back, I guess, thirty-five, forty years and the problems were the same. The officers were detailed to certain areas to talk to people. Some of it was disputes between families that lived in town—not too much people who come from out of town into Metuchen because of transportation problems. Everybody was pretty well settled. But today most of the problem is from transits coming through Metuchen or coming into Metuchen. And the majority of the arrests or investigations are of individuals, [who] are people who don't live in Metuchen. This is our biggest problem: traffic and the people who come in town, go through town, and because of the build-up of industry and housing all around the outskirts of Metuchen, Edison Township, Piscataway, Woodbridge, et cetera.

I think the biggest crime that I can recall goes back to 1930s when a saloonkeeper was shot on Main Street.

P. Bruno: Can you tell us about that?

J. Perrino: Well, there was a tavern on Main Street in the area of where Morris Stores is located now.

P. Bruno: Do you remember the name of the tavern?

J. Perrino: It was the Ratskeller [saloon formerly located at 419 Main Street]; it was run by the McGuinness¹¹ family.

P. Bruno: Oh, I've heard of them.

J. Perrino: And as I recall, one night one of the McGuinness boys [William McGuinness] closed the tavern and walked out the front door. And they generally went around the side of the building and to their residence, which was right behind the tavern. And as he came out on the sidewalk, I believe he had a box or a cigar box or some kind of box that he carried his receipts in and was accosted by someone who fired a shot at him, killed him. And the case has never been solved¹².

¹¹ The McGuinness family name was sometimes spelled in historic newspapers and census records with one "n" (McGuiness).

¹² William McGuinness was murdered on the porch of his home in 1937. According to the *Metuchen Recorder* from July 14, 1938, "The tavern keeper, who locked his place of business at the usual time, stopped in the restaurant across the street as usual and then proceeded to the next entrance, his own, was shot once through the stomach, as he pushed open the door from the street onto the side porch. McGuinness staggered back and dropped on the sidewalk, where his cashbox and a copper-nosed bullet were found, the only clues in a puzzling case ... While no motive has ever been definitely established it is believed that McGuinness' movements had been watched and that a robbery was planned, but something went wrong. Unless the revolver turns up at some time, it is improbable that the crime will ever be solved."

P. Bruno: And when was this?

J. Perrino: Back in the 1930s.

C. Reeder: Yeah.

P. Bruno: Do you remember any other details from the case, no?

C. Reeder: Just what the chief mentioned to you.

P. Bruno: Did they have any suspects?

J. Perrino: They had some suspects. I understand they questioned two or three people who they thought may have had something to do with it, but nothing final came of it. I believe they found the bullet across the street that hit one of the stores on the opposite side. At that time, it was a candy store and it was near where this bakery was, this Hanemann Bakery [formerly located at 395 Main Street]. As I said, the case was never solved. Since then, I think we've had two or three murders.

P. Bruno: That have been solved or haven't been solved?

J. Perrino: That have been solved in Metuchen. And recently, well, I say recent, we can go back maybe ten years or maybe not quite—but anyway, in the last ten years, we've had two or three that happened that were solved. So we actually don't have any murder cases pending in Metuchen.

P. Bruno: Well, that's good. [chuckles]

J. Perrino: Years ago, there was a murder in Metuchen and the man that was killed, his name was [Rev. Samuel] Prickitt. He was the father of the late Charles [A.] Prickitt and he ran the newspaper.

P. Bruno: The *Recorder*, the Metuchen paper?

J. Perrino: Or is it the grandfather of the late Charles Prickitt? I think it was the grandfather of Charles [Norris] Prickitt, because I remember the father¹³.

C. Reeder: I think so. Right.

J. Perrino: And I don't know what. There was some kind of dispute between a man named [Archibald] Herron and this Mr. Prickitt¹⁴. And he walked up to the house, knocked on the door, and shot him with a shotgun. And Mr. Herron was sent to the State Prison in Trenton for the insane and he was there until, oh, maybe fifteen years ago. And he had several opportunities to leave, but he wouldn't

¹³ Samuel Prickitt was the father of Charles A. Prickitt, who ran the *Metuchen Recorder*. Charles A. Prickitt and Helen Norris had two children: Charles Norris Prickitt and Helen "Dolly" (Prickitt) Buchanan.

¹⁴ The December 4, 1992 edition of the *Metuchen-Edison Review* states that Rev. Samuel Prickitt was the minister of the Centenary Methodist Church (1893-1895) and later served as a municipal judge. In 1908, he was shot to death in front of the house at 92 Clive Street after sentencing Archibald Herron to ten days for public drunkenness. According to the paper, "Mr. Herron was convicted and sentenced to death, but he escaped his punishment through a series of insanity appeals."

leave. He died in prison. But he was there for a number of years; he was there for a long time.

P. Bruno: And when did this murder take place, this Prickitt murder?

J. Perrino: Oh, that's—

P. Bruno: Just approximately. The twenties or thirties?

J. Perrino: Earlier than the twenties. Either early twenties¹⁵, probably before I was born; maybe in the teens because I know in the—it might have been in the early twenties. But I remember the son of the man that was in prison. It was Archibald Herron [Jr.] and he lived on [48] Durham Avenue next to Campbell School in that house that's still there.

P. Bruno: And the son stayed in Metuchen?

J. Perrino: The son stayed in Metuchen.

P. Bruno: And how did townspeople react to that?

J. Perrino: Well, he was sort of a hermit-type man and he didn't bother with people too much. But I do remember him with his old Model T Ford. [chuckling]

C. Reeder: The small house that's still on Durham Avenue by the Campbell School?

J. Perrino: Just past the school; go past Campbell School on Durham Avenue, the first house on the right. We used to play ball in that field there where the Campbell School is and the balls used to go into his yard and—

P. Bruno: Nobody would want to get them? [laughs]

J. Perrino: Nobody cared too much about getting them. But we always managed to run in and grab them, come out again.

P. Bruno: Did you have any like town drunks or sort of vagabonds hanging around Metuchen back in the old days? Do you remember? Or can you remember stories?

J. Perrino: Well, more or less some stories. And when you say can we remember them, you're talking about when we were—

P. Bruno: When you were young.

J. Perrino: —probably thirteen or fourteen years old.

P. Bruno: Folklore.

¹⁵ According to email correspondence with Joseph Perrino in March 2006, the Prickitt murder took place in July 1908.

- J. Perrino:** Yes, we had—were a few people in town who were known as town drunks. But I guess you have them in every town.
- P. Bruno: Yeah, but no interesting stories?
- J. Perrino:** Well, I wouldn't have any interesting stories to tell about any that I can recall, do you?
- C. Reeder:** You're talking about people [unclear]. Well actually, most of the people that we can recall who drank really didn't have any real problems. Of course, most of them are not living today. [coughs]
- J. Perrino:** I can't say that there are none today, but I think it's handled in a different way. And there are facilities to go to and things to do to try to correct it.
- C. Reeder:** And our earliest problem that I can recall was on Grove Avenue. They used to have the Pennsylvania Railroad work camp and when they used to get paid, what, once a month? Once a month they would be paid, and of course on payday, some of those people would indulge a little heavily with alcohol until they'd spend all their money and they might spend an evening in the jail. They sobered up and maybe two days later, they'd go back to the railroad camp and they'd work for another month until payday.
- P. Bruno: This is when they were building the Pennsylvania Railroad?
- J. Perrino:** No, not when they were building it, just as workers. Workers that used to work along the tracks.
- P. Bruno: And were these Metuchen residents or sort of outsiders?
- J. Perrino:** Well, they were sort of wanderers.
- C. Reeder:** They were from all over. They worked from all over and they worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad and on Grove Avenue today, that would be the spot where Hillside Avenue comes out onto Grove Avenue. That area there is where the railroad work camp used to be located. That goes back a long while ago, there's no signs that that used to be railroad working camp at one time today.
- P. Bruno: Okay, I can't think of anything else about the history. Okay, besides the murder cases, what were the most common crimes? Theft?
- J. Perrino:** You're talking about the present?
- P. Bruno: No, I'm talking about the past.
- J. Perrino:** In the past, I think theft.
- C. Reeder:** Yeah, I would think so too.

J. Perrino: I think theft, and as far as changes that have taken place over the past years, well, the department has grown, as I said, tremendously. We've put as high as four men on at one time.

P. Bruno: And how many patrol cars do you have?

J. Perrino: Well, we had at one time, the one patrol car—and I'm talking now when I first came on—one patrol car and that just about took care of everything. And I think the chief had a car and that was it. Today, we have three patrol cars. We have a sergeant's car, we have one in the Juvenile Bureau, one in the Detective Bureau, and the chief has one—about eight cars. We have an additional car that we use for sending police officers to school and court and so forth.

P. Bruno: And are there any marshals today?

J. Perrino: Today, we do have marshals¹⁶.

P. Bruno: And how many marshals are there?

J. Perrino: We have about twelve marshals.

P. Bruno: And it's on a voluntary basis.

J. Perrino: Yes.

P. Bruno: Okay. And what about the training? What sort of training do the police officers have to go through?

J. Perrino: Well, every police officer that's appointed today has to meet a requirement and go to a twelve-week course that the curriculum is set up by the New Jersey [Police] Training Commission. And they must complete these twelve weeks in-training before they can be put out on the street. They have to qualify on the range before they can carry a gun. So every police officer before he's put out on the road is reasonably trained to know what to do and how to act and what is the law and what isn't the law. But it doesn't stop there. Training is continuous. We have officers today that are— [phone ringing]

Excuse me. [recording paused]

P. Bruno: Okay.

J. Perrino: Well, as I indicated, it was something that was, I guess, thought up of the chiefs of police and some of these state officials that was necessary to give the men this type training before they put them on the street to deal with the public. And training is a continuous thing. Men who are on this job twenty-five years, thirty years are still attending schools. It's done through organizations such as the [New Jersey] State [Association of] Chiefs of Police set-up programs; FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] sets up programs, New Jersey State Police sets up programs, Middlesex County [Auxiliary] Police Academy sets up programs. And

¹⁶ According to email correspondence with Joseph Perrino in March 2006, marshals were disbanded in 1985.

they send out these notices and whenever we have men available and we can spare someone, we always send them to the schools. Presently, we have three men attending school now. We have one going to [New Jersey] State Police Academy in Sea Girt to a criminal investigation course, which is two weeks. We have two officers going to a refresher course at the Middlesex County Police Academy. Last year, we used over 110-120 days sending men to schools. And police training schools, we have approximately ten, twelve men attending college courses toward a police science degree, which took away another probably thirty or thirty-five days from us in time that we allowed him to attend night courses or times when he was working when we let him go to continue his training toward the degree. We have several types of schools that the officers go to which vary from criminal investigation, photography, and identification, search and seizure arrests—any subject you want to talk about as far as police work is concerned—hostages, hostage negotiations, terrorism, riot control, and you name it. And it's just a constant thing. We get these flyers and programs sent to us. A lot of programs now have been undertaken by grants and the Law Enforcement Assistance [Administration] that give money toward schooling these courses, and we take advantage of that because the cost is low. So it's an ever-training process; it's continuous training. There's no stop to it so a man could be on the job thirty-five years and he's still going to school.

P. Bruno: Besides the requirements that the state requires, does Metuchen, as a borough, have any special requirements that they require of their officers?

J. Perrino: Not that it's mandatory, but it's practice. We sometimes set up our own schools where—I know we've held a couple here in Metuchen. We've had human relations courses, and of course when we set the courses up, we invite other municipalities to attend. We might ask two or three municipalities to attend so we have a group, maybe forty or fifty people, for the instructors so he's not brought down here or sent here from some distance, maybe Washington, DC [District of Columbia] or some other far-away place, to talk to maybe eight or ten men. We make it worth his while and make it very interesting. We have a human relations course here held at Metuchen, and we had bombs and explosives [course] held here from men from Fort Monmouth who put on demonstrations and things of that nature. We've had tear gas demonstrations and we have an in-service training period every Wednesday for an hour to alert the men— [phone ringing; recording paused]

P. Bruno: Okay.

J. Perrino: All right. Getting back to our in-service training period every Wednesday, the captain of the Uniformed Division will instruct the men as to what has been going on during the week and what to look for that things that have been reported and someone we may be looking for, or what has been the trend as far as maybe damage to vehicles or property being stolen or something of that nature. [recording paused]

P. Bruno: Okay, the in-service training on Wednesdays (the meetings), you were talking about those?

- J. Perrino:** Yes, it's our own programs that we set up. We have training film. The men are lectured, new laws are explained to them, anything in Motor Vehicle [Commission], anything as far as changes in laws is concerned, and any new directives or orders that may be issued by me or some of the other officers.
- P. Bruno: Well, just my own feeling—I've had this job for about a month—about Metuchen is that it's a very close-knit sort of community and very small community and a lot of people seem to know everybody else that's living here and both of you have lived here all your lives so you must know just about everybody here, or a lot of people here. I guess you like being in a small place. I mean there's only been like five chiefs in all that time, and I guess once you have this sort of job, you keep it. And I know with a lot of jobs, people are always changing. And I just want to ask you, like why did you become a police officer or is there anything that drew you when you were young to the police department? Both of you, I want you to answer that.
- J. Perrino:** Well, I can probably say that a lieutenant that was with the department, [Costen] Manziano, is a relative and my father was a marshal. And being in the community and knowing everyone, I thought I would like to deal with people and that was my biggest hang up, I think, in making the decision to come here. I like to deal with people and I believe in law and order.
- P. Bruno: So you started out as an officer?
- J. Perrino:** I started out as a patrolman in 1946, in July 1946. I was working with Merck and Company [Merck & Co., Inc.] in Rahway when I was drafted and I was in the service for three years. And when I came out, I went back to Merck and Company. And during that time, I put my application to become a police officer. And six months after, I came back from the service and I was on this job.
- P. Bruno: So you mentioned you have a Juvenile Bureau and a Detective Bureau, and what are the other divisions?
- J. Perrino:** Right now, the Police Department was reorganized about 1972.
- P. Bruno: Okay. Well wait, I don't mean to interrupt. But before that, I want to hear why you became a police officer.
- C. Reeder:** Why?
- P. Bruno: Capt. Reeder, how you came into it?
- C. Reeder:** Well, let me put it this way, before a young fellow and before I was called into the service, I worked on the milk truck at that time. We used to deliver milk at two o'clock in the morning. I worked for Cooper's Dairy¹⁷, which was located in Iselin and is no longer there today. And I served my time in World War II and I was discharged in October of 1945, and I went back to the dairy at the time just

¹⁷ Cooper's Dairy Farm, located at 221 Middlesex Turnpike, was established in 1925 by Mr. & Mrs. Frank Cooper. During its time of operation, Cooper's Dairy was a prosperous business producing creams, butter, and fresh milk. In 1966, a fire destroyed the cow barn and the dairy subsequently declined. The Cooper house still stands and a historical marker commemorates the farm near Woodbridge Township.

to—of course, I didn't go back to my old job. I talked with Mr. Cooper and he needed some help in the creamery at that time where they used to bottle the milk that today—you don't see too many bottles anymore.

P. Bruno: I can remember when I was little, we used to get milk delivered in a little milk box.

C. Reeder: **Yeah, that's right. That's what we used to do, right. So I worked in the creamery for about six months and learned the position here. I don't recall prior to that of really having a desire for police work.**

P. Bruno: When you were growing up, you never wanted to be a policeman?

C. Reeder: **I probably played Cowboys and Indians [game] many, many times when I was young and lived on Middlesex Avenue, but I don't ever recall setting my sights just specifically for police work. But I too, like the chief explained, collect work with people and when the position was opened and I was asked about it, [loud horn] I was accepted. That was in August of 1946, [loud horn] and I'm still here.**

P. Bruno: Yeah, so you must really like your work?

C. Reeder: **Right, when I came on in—around 1958, chief? When Chief Fouratt established the Juvenile Aid Bureau.**

J. Perrino: **Fifty-six or fifty-eight.**

C. Reeder: **Yes, somewhere in there I decided go in there. We found the reason that the policeman should work with the use of the community and he established that at that point. And I started in that area and up until 19—**

J. Perrino: **Seventy-two.**

C. Reeder: **—when they reorganized the police department. Of course, I voted up to captaincy and left Juvenile Bureau where I was involved with on a daily basis. I oversee the Juvenile Bureau.**

P. Bruno: So you worked in the—before you became captain, you worked in the Juvenile Bureau?

C. Reeder: **Yes, um-hm.**

P. Bruno: For a long time?

C. Reeder: **Like I said, since 1958.**

P. Bruno: Since you came on the force. And what about you? Did you work in a special department?

J. Perrino: **Well, I started out as a patrolman in 1946. In 1953, I was made sergeant and I was put inside. I had a desk job; I was in charge of a shift. The next promotion was 1965 to captain. That was the first captaincy established in the department. Then I went into the Detective Bureau because Chief Leiss then was made chief, so I took his place in the Detective Bureau. In the 1972, the department was**

reorganized and we had three classifications. We had the Uniformed Division, which is under Capt. Howard Reeder now, and that's all the uniformed men who work on patrols and the desk sergeants and so forth. And the Investigative Division under the command of Capt. Charles Reeder, who heads the two divisions: the Juvenile Bureau and the Detective Bureau. And the Administration Division, which I handled most of the administrative work. Until two years ago, I made chief and the administrative position was not refilled so we're—that's why you see all this paperwork on the desk. [laughter]

P. Bruno: So you're still the administrator?

J. Perrino: So I'm chief in administrative—

C. Reeder: It followed him right into the chief's position; he handles all the administrative work.

J. Perrino: And of course, our organization is if the chief is out or away, the senior captain is automatically in charge, which is Capt. Charles Reeder. If he's not around, not available, then the other captain is. And then it goes down to lieutenant and so forth.

C. Reeder: If the chief or captains are out, the lieutenant is in charge.

J. Perrino: We have a good working relationship. As you said, Metuchen is a unique town and the officers are interested in their work, interested in helping the people. And I think I can say the same is—they must feel the same as I do, that they just get a satisfaction out of helping people.

P. Bruno: Is there a residency requirement that the officers live in Metuchen?

J. Perrino: We had a residency requirement, but it was relaxed some time ago.

C. Reeder: Not anymore.

J. Perrino: And we do have about six officers that do not live in Metuchen, but the trend is now for calling the people back into the municipalities. And the biggest town or city is New York now that's putting the heat on as far as trying to get the officers to live back in New York. We have officers from Newark Police Department, who live in Metuchen and several other communities and I guess vice versa. We have ours living in Piscataway, Cranford, Milltown, Edison. So we try to keep them as close as possible in case of emergencies so it doesn't take too much time to get to the emergency situation. This is one of the main things about having a police officer live in town.

C. Reeder: I think another thing was when you come to talking about when you live out of town, [unclear] never really whether you put your utmost into your community where you're working versus living here. It's like a family, you know you're working here and this is my community, the people are mine, I care about these people. When you live miles and miles away in your family or in another community, I think your concern is a little different.

- P. Bruno: What are the biggest problems today that the police face in Metuchen, in the community? What are sort of the major problems in Metuchen?
- C. Reeder: Traffic.**
- P. Bruno: Traffic? [laughs]
- J. Perrino: Traffic is the number one problem, but you know it's–**
- C. Reeder: Cars.**
- J. Perrino: It doesn't affect the people. But you talk about something affecting the people, then I think larceny.**
- C. Reeder: Larceny, stealing, taking property from people out here who work hard for their savings and of course they'd like to feel that their homes are secure. Yeah, that would be second. But traffic, that's a problem that affects people too; their attitude being tied up in traffic, they become all nervous and upset. It kind of leads to dangerous accidents from time to time. But I think when you work hard for something and you save it in your home and it's taken away from you, that's upsetting also.**
- J. Perrino: We have a couple civilians working too; we have one in Records Bureau, Craig Stenho [phonetic], and we have one up in the Juvenile Bureau. Also attached to the Juvenile Bureau is a psychological social worker that we have her offices down on Main Street away from headquarters. And that position was started through a grant that we secured through the SLEPA [State Law Enforcement Planning Agency]. And I guess that's about it.**
- C. Reeder: She's president of Youth Services Bureau. The grant is, what, her third year coming up?**
- J. Perrino: Try to help families or children that have problems and try to correct the problems without getting them into court or having complaints signed.**
- P. Bruno: What is sort of like the biggest juvenile problem? You probably would know heading the–
- C. Reeder: Today?**
- P. Bruno: Yeah.
- C. Reeder: You probably heard a couple: alcohol and drugs.**
- P. Bruno: Yeah. How about when you first started out and you worked in the Juvenile Bureau? Certainly, it wasn't drugs.
- C. Reeder: No.**
- P. Bruno: What were the juvenile problems then?

- C. Reeder:** At that point, when we really first started out, it was a case again of trying to sit down with the youth group, various mistakes were—in the beginning, we didn't have the involvement of the drugs or the alcohol. We had certain areas where alcohol might come up once in a while. But in the earlier days, it was from mistakes within the community, within the schools where we spent time sitting down with mom and dad and the boy or girl involved, and working out the particular problem and talk it out to keep it from becoming a thing that being involved in court. We still do the same thing. We have to remember at that time when we started out, that our population is a lot greater today than it was in 1958. And we can say that today, there are more mistakes because we have more people. We basically are trying to still do the same thing with the social worker, with the officers that we have working in the Juvenile Bureau, trying to work mistakes out with the parents and the youngster. Still trying to do the one thing to keep problems within the community; to keep them going to further court action within the county and we'll continue to keep trying to do this, really.
- P. Bruno: Well, I don't have anything else that I'd like to ask. Do you have anything else?
- J. Perrino:** I think that pretty well winds it up.
- P. Bruno: Yeah. Well, thank you both very much.
- J. Perrino:** You're welcome, anytime.
- C. Reeder:** You're welcome anytime. And like I said before, between the chief and myself and Capt. Howard Reeder, I think there are some pictures that we might be able to help you with, which will go to the program.
- P. Bruno: Well, that's great. Let's see ... [recording ends]

[END OF INTERVIEW]