

Interviewer:

Just stop recording, Ben. Please

Ben:

Okay.

Interviewer:

All right, so it's started. All right, so today is March 27th. My name is [inaudible 00:00:07] and I'm here with the Santa Ana History Room conducting an oral history for the Raitt Street Chronicles. Sir, if you could please introduce yourself, a little bit about where you were born and your first and last name.

Harlen Lambert:

Okay. My first name is Harlen, H-A-R-L-E-N. The last name is Lambert, L-A-M-B-E-R-T. And I'm a native of Bonita, Louisiana. I was born in Bonita, Louisiana and my mother and father left there when I was a little baby. So, that's all I remember about Bonita, Louisiana.

Interviewer:

Okay. And can you just tell me a little bit about yourself? About where you grew up, what you did when you were in school and a little bit about your early life.

Harlen Lambert:

Well, when I tell you this, you probably won't believe this. I'm one of 16 kids. That's a lot huh? My mother was married prior to marrying my father, she had two. My dad was married prior to marrying my mom, his wife died. He had three. So my mom and dad married. I'm the first of the third group. My mother and father left Bonita, Louisiana when I was a little baby. They moved to a city in Arkansas, Pine Grove, Arkansas, near Little Rock Arkansas, near a hot springs. I went to high school at [inaudible 00:01:32] high school in Pine Bluff. And from there I went to Chicago. Worked as a porter on the Santa Fe trains.

I was drafted in the Army in '59. I was fortunate enough to make the all Army basketball team, which today I'm still reminiscing about that. I had a 37.2 average per game, 37 points per game, we played 52 games.

Desiree Noriega:

Woo!

Harlen Lambert:

Thank you very much, I needed that. [crosstalk 00:02:13] So I had a chance to travel throughout Europe. When I left-

Interviewer:

I'm sorry, can you get your mic a little closer?

Harlen Lambert:

Yes.

Interviewer:

It slipped out.

Harlen Lambert:

When I left, was discharged. When I was discharged from the Army, I had a scholarship at several universities, NYU, Temple, USC. When I was discharged from the Army, I went back to Chicago. And I left Chicago and I came to California to go to USC on a basketball scholarship. Now this is going to really surprise you. I got here to go on a scholarship because I had played basketball a year, two years before I came here, I had to lay out a year because I couldn't play. That was a rule back in those days, '62, '63. So I didn't play basketball for USC, but later on I went to USC. So, 1967 I joined the Santa Ana police department. I rode as a reserve for six months. I was fortunate enough to pass the written, the verbal, oral, the physical. Santa Ana PD hired me as the first person of color to be hired in Orange County as a police officer.

Now none of you were born except for a couple of the adults in 1967. 1967 was a rough time for people of color. When I say rough times, rough times. Things happened to my house, they threw rocks at my house, they tried to burn it. Told me the direction my kid went to school. Excuse me, it kind of [inaudible 00:04:26] a little bit. I was fortunate enough when I was on the department to make officer of the month, first medal of valor, officer of the year. I went into a burning house, saved the lives of three kids. The mother died in the fire. The next day the newspapers said here in Santa Ana, "It's tough to be a hero when you're a nigger cop." You think that didn't tear me apart? It really got to me, really bad. And today when I think about that, tears come to my eyes. But that's bygone.

I've been fortunate enough when I left the police department, I owned my own business training dogs for law enforcement. 1978, I sold the business. I started working for ITT Cannon as a sales engineer. I traveled the United States for ITT. I did not have a home address, I was on the road 24/7. I did that for three years and I decided I didn't want to do that anymore. So I started working for Hughes Aircraft as a contract negotiator. Again, I traveled on the road, didn't have a home address.

That's when I met my beautiful wife, 30 years ago. So, I retired from Hughes Aircraft as well. I own a company that did entertainment, disc jockeys, we performed at most of the major companies in Orange County, Hughes, Irvine company, all the big ones. After I retired, I wanted to be a realtor. So I took the test, I was selling homes down in Newport Beach. That's when the economy went the other way. So I had to go the other way. So, I quit and I became ... I went to [inaudible 00:06:56] bullets. I opened a store in New York, [inaudible 00:07:02] as the security manager. I left there, I was in New York, I came back to California because it was too cold. You talk about cold, I was in White Plains, New York. That's cold.

I was fortunate enough to become a Chief of Police as [inaudible 00:07:24], I'm quite sure you've heard of [inaudible 00:07:27], right? I stayed there for three years, then I took the test to own my own security company. I still own my ... I'm not doing security, but I still have a license, I have an ATF license, alcohol, tobacco and firearms. The DEA ATF. ATF has allowed for me to carry guns, hand explosives. The EA allowed me to have drugs, I can have as many drugs as I want. And if I was a bad person, believe me, ATL would not let me store 60 pounds of explosives on me, right? Remember that. And the EA would not allow me to possess 40, 50 pounds of drugs or to train dogs for law enforcement.

Today, let's go back five years. Five years ago, my wife and I opened a training facility in Fullerton. We were the first person in the United States to train dogs to find cell phones for law enforcement agents. Five years ago, we owned this business, five and a half years. Our hours of operation, 5:30 in the morning, we opened the doors up at 5:30. We closed at 5:30 in the afternoon. We

had vehicles that we put out over the county as promotional vehicles. By the time we took in all the vehicles, it'd be about seven or 8:00 in the evening. So we did that for five and half years, working 24, working 15, 16 hours a day. We did that for five and a half years. We didn't have 21 days off within five years, so I told her two and half months ago, "We're closing the business."

So now, if you have a problem with your dog, you call the number, I'll go to your house and train your dog. You know why I did that, can anyone tell me? Overhead expense. I do not have any at all. Isn't that nice? That is really nice. When I drive the vehicle in the driveway, close the door, walk in the door, I'm through. But before we had 25, 30, 40 dogs a day. We trained dogs, we board dogs, we'd keep dogs overnight for people.

Interviewer:

Going back to your experience with the Santa Ana police department, is that where you first started training dogs, or was that something that had already started before hand?

Harlen Lambert:

I did not train dogs on the police department. Let me tell you how I got into dogs. I was working as a crime scene investigator for Santa Ana PD. I worked public relations for Santa Ana PD. I was a field trainer officer. Every new officer that came on to that department, they had to write my name. Because I operated by the rules. The rules said you couldn't do this, you don't do that. Not riding with me, because my life is in jeopardy. Especially back in the 60s and 70s era. So I had to be protected at work in particular, and I wanted everybody to really know how I operated. Because, let's face it, there were no people of color within the department. Let's be honest, the officers didn't know how to react, respond to me, didn't know how to communicate with me. But see that's all in the past.

I want to say something to all of you. You have to remember this. If you can't control the situation, if you can't turn it around and make it better, leave it. Because the only person upset is you. If you can't change it, leave it. I lost 34 pounds in seven months. I couldn't control that because back in those times, when I was on the police department, officers were reluctant to about doing things for me and with me because they didn't know how I was going to react. Give an example. When I traveled to the donut shop or coffee shop to get coffee, remarks were made to me, "Oh, there's the nigger cop." We're not talking about just the officer, we're talking about management. So who could I go to and talk to? You know what I did? Went over to the corner and cried there. Okay.

I'm not asking for pity, I'm just telling you what I did. It's hard to be successful. I'm prouder now to be successful because I went through it to be successful. And today, I'm not rich, I'm not poor, but I'm very comfortable. Because I was strong enough, had the guts enough to get up then kick me, I'd get right back up.

Interviewer:

What led to your initial decision to join the force in the first place? What led to that moment?

Harlen Lambert:

I wrote as a reserve, I did not see any people of color on that department. And I had concern about that. Why aren't we having people of color on the department? Well, I inquired about why don't we have people of color on the department. I was told that there were other people of color applied for the position, never passed the written, never passed oral or never passed the regular one. Well that was

hard for me to believe. Now, I can understand not passing all of them. No one's perfect. But if you have a record, they're not going to put you on there to work.

Interviewer:

What were those first patrols like when you initially joined the force?

Harlen Lambert:

What were the first patrols like? Well, let's go back to when I was a reserve. I didn't know what to do. I had a uniform, I had a gun. I'm ready. I didn't know what to do. So once I became a reserve, I rolled with an officer who had years of seniority. So I watched him. He wouldn't let me get out and help him do anything. He goes, "I didn't know what to do." I'd be in there for ten months before I went to the Academy. And once I went to the Academy, they told me everything I should know. And I retained that information. I'm glad of this, the officer called me first aid because I was cautious of everything that I did. And especially if I'm training you, I want you to follow me because I'm following what the book tell me.

Interviewer:

I actually wanted to open it up to questions from any of the audience members. Maybe just starting over here on the left.

Harlen Lambert:

You can ask me anything you want to. And I'm going to answer you.

Interviewer:

Yeah, and if you could just state your name for the video.

Desiree Noriega:

I'm Desiree Noriega. My question to you is what was the best part about your job as a police officer in Santa Ana?

Harlen Lambert:

I'm glad you asked that question. What is the best thing I enjoyed about being law enforcement is to help people. That's the key. Because you got to remember, an officer will do anything to help and save a life. His life is in danger every time he get in that car. An officer will be the first person to run to save you if you're hurt. Do you think his life is lying in jeopardy? Yes. First time something happens, call the police. What do you think your officer will do? Red lights and siren waa, to get there an help you. And that's not a thrill, but you feel good when you know you're doing something for people in society.

Marcos:

My names is Marcos. How you said that, you experienced ... How did you say, mistreatment on your house or on your children or anything. I'd like to ask a question on when you first got into a police officer position, did you experience any racial slurs or any different treatment than the other officers when you first-

Harlen Lambert:

Oh when I first went into the department, officers were really stand offish because they didn't know what to say to me. I'm new, a brand new kid, never socialized with me, all of a sudden they see me in uniform riding in the car. They did not know if they get in a fight what I would do. That's something to think about. And I had times when I'd request for assistance, I didn't get it. And I asked why. "We didn't hear you calling." Well that's a lot of air because other officers were nearby call on me, they came. But when you call for ... There's a code. Like 999 means you need help from all the other departments, everybody. When you get that number, it doesn't matter what you're doing, you drop it and help, go to that officer.

Jose Evangelista:

I'm Jose Evangelista and I wanted to ask you what do you think is the proudest moments in your career as a police officer?

Harlen Lambert:

What's my proudest moment on the police department? When I saved the lives of those three kids. I couldn't sleep for two or three days because I jeopardized my life, I went into a burning house. The third kid I found would have died. I went into to save the first two, I went in after the third and I lost my equilibrium, I was walking around in the smoke like this. And one of the officers pulled me out of the room, that's why I'm here today.

Erica Evangelista:

My name's Erica Evangelista and I wanted to know what was the saddest moment in your time as a police officer?

Harlen Lambert:

What's my saddest now? Well, I don't work with the police and I'll say this. I am armed 24/7 because people don't forget if you were the officer that put them in jail or something. Believe me, believe me, they do not forget. I'm not saying I'm a big, bad guy because I carry a gun. No, that's not it. I got to protect my family, I got to protect Lambert. Forget myself man, but the first one in the nation is me and the second is my wife. And I'm going to protect her.

Gabrielle Garcia:

Hey, I'm Gabrielle Garcia and just going off of that, I wanted to know, as a minority police officer in that era, what was it like seeing other minorities in your community? How did they treat you?

Harlen Lambert:

I am so glad ... When you finish, I'm going to shake your hand. I think that's a good question. Today I see officers riding around in different cities or in Santa Ana. I said to myself, "You don't even know who I am. I'm the cause of your butt being in the car." [crosstalk 00:19:06] If I had not gone through trials and tribulations, you wouldn't be in this car. I kind of sluff that off, but that's ...

Gabrielle Garcia:

No, I got the point.

Harlen Lambert:

Okay.

Speaker 9:

You were at USC, did you live in Los Angeles prior to coming to Santa Ana?

Harlen Lambert:

Yes.

Speaker 9:

So were you there for the Watts riots?

Harlen Lambert:

No, I was here.

Speaker 9:

Okay. And what did you think of the Watts riots from Santa Ana, and why Santa Ana if you were living in LA? I would be scared to go to a community where I would be rare or [crosstalk 00:19:52] community.

Harlen Lambert:

When I came to Santa Ana, I came to Santa Ana to work for Uniroyal, a lab technician. When the Watts riots, I was in Santa Ana. I worked the Watts riots. I don't know if you guys can remember, 1970, we had our first officer killed at First and Raitt. I worked that case.

Speaker 9:

Tell us about that because there was Black Panthers involved in that?

Harlen Lambert:

I played basketball with the kid until it happened. I was assigned the case, worked it. The kid went to court, he got 20 years in jail, he went to San Quentin. So he came back to Orange County. And you can imagine why he came back to Orange County, read between the lines. He was eligible to come back to Orange County. Why do you think he came back to Orange County?

Speaker 9:

To get you.

Harlen Lambert:

To find the guy that put him in jail. It's simple, think about it.

Speaker 9:

So that's really terrifying.

Harlen Lambert:

Of course it is.

Speaker 9:

During the trial, did you recall any protests or intimidation? And was he really connected to the Black Panthers?

Harlen Lambert:

Sure, he was one of the leaders. For sure. During the Watts riot, from the park on 800 North Raitt. Is that Tom-sell park? Used to be at 800 North Raitt.

Interviewer:

It's a different park now, it might be El Salvador.

Harlen Lambert:

Okay. From that park all the way to Myrtle, we almost had a riot here in Santa Ana. I worked in community relations. I got permission from the chief because I knew all the kids who was in this riot alone. And it used to be from First and Raitt, about two blocks down, there used to be a big department store there. Santa Ana had asked for mutual help, we has probably 500 to 1,000 cops waiting for the sign to go. I went alone. One of the kids, who was the leader, his hand was bleeding. They had bene at the park. His hand was bleeding and the kid saw it and they thought that the cops did it. So I was able to get to him and ask him, "What happened?" He said, "I slammed my finger in the door." I got on ... This is the truth. I asked him, sit on the police car with me. I drove down Raitt street all the way to Myrtle and Raitt. We stopped and told the kids what happened. And that saved Santa Ana from being torn up. I'm telling you.

Speaker 9:

I'm going to pass the ball and I'll ask you some more later.

Harlen Lambert:

Oh, sure, sure.

Darla Genning:

Sure, I'll ask a question. My name's Darla Genning. So you've had a wonderfully varied career, professional life. Is there anything you would do differently?

Speaker 9:

That's a great question.

Harlen Lambert:

Yes. I want to continue training dogs. This would be my fourth retirement. Okay. I'm going to continue training dogs because all a dog wants is a pat on the head and you treat them right. My wife asks me, she said, "Why do you like to train little dogs?" And my response is, "Because they don't know anything. They learn what you teach them." So I wouldn't work another job other than training dogs. And that's my gift back to the community because ... Let me back up. What my wife and I are going to probably for the next month or two. We're going to do obedience classes for people. Anyone who has a dog that need obedience training, especially if it's a shelter dog or a rescue. Bring your dog out, give you some

training points of how to train your dog for nothing. They can't beat that. It will be online, on the internet. You'll see it.

Darla Genning:

So, you prefer dogs to people?

Harlen Lambert:

I like you. Okay red sweater.

Jackie:

She took my question about how the community saw you in a uniform versus in civilian clothing. Were you treated differently?

Harlen Lambert:

How did the uniform accept me?

Jackie:

Yeah, well how were you treated in regular civilian clothing versus you in a uniform in terms of the community. How did they react to you? Was it the same, different?

Harlen Lambert:

Yes they did. Once they saw me off duty, out of uniform, they'd go the other way because they don't know what I'm going to do. They're afraid that I might arrest them not knowing that you have to do something wrong to get arrested. And they called me an Uncle Tom because I'm working the white society. But that didn't bother me. I did my job and I'm going to use this terminology, I don't care if they're technicolor. If they did wrong, they went to jail. And that's the only way I can work. I have to do it like it's supposed to be.

Jackie:

Oh, my name is Jackie [inaudible 00:25:54], by the way. For the record.

Harlen Lambert:

Just a minute. And for my neighbors, they were okay. After I came home in that uniform, they looked at me and they was still friends, but we didn't socialize at each other's homes anymore.

Robert Salaz:

I'm Robert Salaz and my question is did you get any death threats when you were on top?

Harlen Lambert:

Yeah. I had the KKK card stuck in my door with a knife. They told me the direction my kid go to school, the clothes he wore, the license plate on my car. Yeah, so I was threatened many times. But see, you have to remember this one thing, guys. Whether you take the [inaudible 00:26:51], you've got to remember this one thing. When you put that uniform on, you've got to make up in your mind that you are going home that night. Okay. You've got to make your mind up. And if it means taking your life, it's



not going to be me, it's going to be you. You got to have your mind made up that if it means saving someone's life, one person shooting 10 people, whatever. You've got to be at peace with yourself when you decide to do that. And when you put that gun on, you have to really know that, "I got to do this job." It's not because you're bad you have a gun. "I have to save the lives of these people."

Robert Salaz:

That's my question.

Harlen Lambert:

Okay.

Richard:

Hi, my name is Richard. And you said something about there was something funny about USC and basketball. [crosstalk 00:27:48]

Harlen Lambert:

Well that was a rule back in those days, if you played at a four year university before you went to another four year university, to participate in sports, you would have to lay out a year. So that's why I didn't play for USC.

Anna:

My name's Anna. What did your family think about you coming a cop?

Harlen Lambert:

Well, my son was a little slick about it. He was seven or eight, nine years old. He thought, "My dad's a cop, I'm big stuff." But it didn't work, it didn't work. I think I was probably more watchful for him than anybody, because everybody knew me and they'd take it out on him trying to get through to me. So, I had to watch him and make sure he was okay.

Speaker 15:

I have two questions. Getting back to what was the racial makeup of the area that you patrolled during the time that you were working in Santa Ana?

Harlen Lambert:

We had nine of 14 cops.

Speaker 15:

No, I mean of the population. Of the people, the zone. Was it predominantly Hispanic, was it predominantly white, was it-

Harlen Lambert:

White.

Speaker 15:

It was predominantly white. So then my question was, during the time that you patrolled, what was your strategy for reaching out to young people and for speaking to young people.

Harlen Lambert:

I worked community relations. I spoke at every high school, junior high and high school in Santa Ana. That was my job. And I just laid it on the line to the kids. "This is the way it is. This, this, this, this, this." You can't be a bully, not in this market, because you're not going to last long. You got to work together and be yourself.

Speaker 16:

Just to bring it back, because I've been fascinated with the period of time in Southern California around the Watts riots. And because you were actively on duty during that time, what was it like for you to participate as a member of the law enforcement or justice to enact justice in this huge period of unrest and social injustice. To see so many people outraged. Because I wasn't here during that time, I was just probably five or six or something. So what was it like to physically experience that chaotic time and try to find the balance and keep the peace within a society that was not out of control, but in so much protest and angry.

Harlen Lambert:

Well there was so much going on. There was some violence in Orange County, in LA and other cities. There's so much, it can't hone in on one incident. You just have to ... Kind of like a fire. As the fire begins to burn, you put this one out, there's another one starting over here. You just have to go until it's out.

Speaker 16:

Did you, in some level, there's that thing that happened during Occupy with the police officers who were workers and the protestors where this was almost this empathetic or sympathetic relationship. Because you can relate to why people are upset, but you also have to ... You're a professional. You're a law enforcement officer. So there's that tension that happens in these-

Speaker 9:

Well, especially since the Watts riots was started because of police harassment, given Marquette Frye being pulled over, accused of drunk driving and then the whole crowd threw bottles on a highway patrol officer's car.

Speaker 16:

So as a worker, you aren't safe in that environment either, so I'm interested in these tensions that you may have experienced in terms of maybe relating to the individuals who were upset or protesting. But also, how were you safe in that very tense place?

Harlen Lambert:

I can relate to a person in a bad situation, I can understand that. Okay. but if the law said you can't do it, you can't do it. I have to do what the law says. Okay. There are times when ... For an example. You're driving down your street in your car and you're stopped somewhere for a violation. It's your choice to give that person a ticket or not. It doesn't say every time you stop them, if he does wrong you have to give him a ticket or arrest him. You have to be smart enough to pick and choose what you're going to

react to and what you don't react to. But someone being hurt or vandalized, you have to take action. You just can't turn your head to things that people are doing and you know it's wrong. You just can't. Did I answer your question?

Speaker 16:

Kind of. I mean, we can spend probably 24 hours exploring this topic. But I think it's more about, my question is in a period of social unrest where justice is being questioned by the plural, what is it like to try to maintain the status quo or the model of justice that is enacted by our government, the police force, in that time where you can't really see clearly about truth or justice. There is that time where there's no real answer. So I'm just wondering, if you had an experience like that, if there were dialogs happening in your workplace about how confusing it was, because it probably was not, I would imagine, a straight line or a straight path to be able to evaluate these things. So do you understand what I'm trying to ...

Harlen Lambert:

Yes. Let's say for instance, there are some rules, laws are being changed now. Let's say immigration. The officers work very hard on the border to uphold the law, that's what they're doing. They get here, the law said if they come over illegally, you have to arrest them. Now, if I was an officer, I would think, "I put myself in jeopardy to do the work, get them over here a few years and they free them or let them go back." That affects an officer real bad. It's nothing he can do about it.

Speaker 9:

A question that would maybe help me answer this is have you ever witnessed police brutality while working on the force? I knew police officers who got in trouble for reporting what they saw. The blue code of silence about problems within the force. Did you ever see that and have to grapple with that? Abuses of power.

Harlen Lambert:

I can't say I did and I can't say I didn't. Because I think if I would see officers doing something wrong, kicking someone or beating them up, I would have to stop it.

Speaker 9:

Yeah, so you were the police of the police, since you trained them to begin with.

Harlen Lambert:

Yeah.

Speaker 9:

So they would not have done that in front of you.

Harlen Lambert:

Better not. I mean that. I'm fair, I'm probably one of the fairest persons you ever want to meet. You can't wear two hats, you can't be a crook and be straight too. Either you're crooked or you're straight.

Speaker 16:

How did you keep yourself safe? In terms of, there were different standards for safety and now we see vests and things like that that the worker, because you were a worker. So as a worker, the standards were different then than they are now. So how did you keep yourself safe in your environment when you would go out there? What was that like for you?

Harlen Lambert:

In the Academy, they're taught ... The Academy will teach the officer what to do, what not to do. How to stand even when you're interviewing someone. How to shoot, how to disarm someone. Those are the things you got to remember once you hit the field. You have to remember those things. Those are safety things. Those are things they taught you to save your life other than shooting someone. Believe me, I had a mirror in my house, one of those big mirrors. And in the Academy they said, "Always know where your gun is." I'm a rookie, I know [inaudible 00:37:35]. Nothing here. Making sure I can draw fast. I was just showing off, but those were silly things I did.

Speaker 9:

So it becomes instinct.

Speaker 16:

Thank you. I don't want to ask a lot of questions ...

Scarlet:

My name's Scarlet and my question is now that you're in Santa Ana, do you see any difference, good and bad difference? Do you understand?

Harlen Lambert:

Santa Ana has changed. There are mixture of people in Santa Ana now than ever. Majority of Santa Ana when I was a cop were Caucasians. Santa Ana is a mixture now. Santa Ana has changed a lot. Just a real fact, you drive around Bristol, you'll see a change. Look at Santa Ana College, it's twice the size than when I was here. [inaudible 00:38:40] used to be at 17th and Bristol. It's changed, everything has changed. Drive down Bristol street from 17th, everything has changed. People have changed.

Scarlet:

But is it a good change?

Harlen Lambert:

Is it what?

Scarlet:

Is it a good change?

Harlen Lambert:

Oh yes, oh yes. Look at his building here. Look at this park. Look at the facility you guys have. We didn't have any of this, none of this. The only thing we had was this school over here, and this church right here. This was 1967, before you were even born. Think about it.

Okay. I know you have about 20 of them.

Speaker 18:

I also wanted to apologize for earlier because somebody had asked my question. But it was actually answered now. Thank you.

Harlen Lambert:

That's okay. I'm not going to accept it.

Speaker 9:

Do you have another question?

Speaker 18:

No, I didn't ask my questions yet.

Speaker 9:

Oh sorry.

Speaker 18:

When you came here from Louisiana, or was it Arkansas, to Santa Ana?

Harlen Lambert:

No, I came from Arkansas.

Speaker 18:

Arkansas.

Harlen Lambert:

From Chicago to here.

Speaker 18:

Chicago to here.

Harlen Lambert:

And from Arkansas to Chicago.

Speaker 18:

So, when you came here in Santa Ana first day, what was your impression of it? Just about social injustices. What was your impression of ...

Harlen Lambert:

Well, I'm glad you asked that question. I was living in Los Angeles when I first came to California. 10424 South [inaudible 00:40:15] Road. 1962. Never forgot that. I was working for ITT Cannon on Dire Road.

And all I did was come to work and go home, come to work. But I didn't socialize in Santa Ana at all. And finally I moved to Santa Ana and knew the area. Let me back up, I didn't tell you this. Probably one of the reasons too why ... I'll answer your question. How I became known in Santa Ana, I was a funeral escort, riding my motorcycle.

So I got a chance to meet the officers and I liked the city. And I became a cop.

Interviewer:

So, could you talk maybe about ...

Speaker 18:

Sorry, I have one more. In the police force in Santa Ana, did you have a friend? One of the officers, someone?

Harlen Lambert:

I had a field training officer. He was born and raised in Mississippi. When I was being trained, a lot of tricks that I encountered training me to be a good officer or to be an officer, I know why he did it. To see just how much I would take or if he could break me down. He'd take me ... Most of Santa Ana, past [inaudible 00:41:57] was orange groves. Used to take me, if I was working a 12:00 shift, take me down in the orange groves area, make me get out of the car. I thought he was going to do some car searching and teach me. So I got out of the car, he took off. I'm standing out there in a dark field, no light. What?

I didn't know what to do. So five, 10 minutes later, he came back. He backed all the way up, I'd open the door to get in the car, he'd take off again. Just to see how I was going to react to that. But see, again, I couldn't fix it, because he was my training officer. I couldn't do anything, couldn't say anything. All he had to do was say ... We'd rate me. He has a supervisor, he'd go to his supervisor and say, "Well, man he's not going to make it. This, this, this, this, this," and I'm out. You just have to take it and shut your mouth and roll with the punches.

Speaker 18:

So were there people who didn't act unfairly with you. People that showed gestures of compassion or helped you out in dark situations?

Harlen Lambert:

That's a very good question. He asked me, who could I take my problems to. That's basically what you're saying, right? No, I didn't have anyone to take my problems to. And I'll tell you the reason why. When I went for a rest break. I'd be driving my car and I said this before, up to the donut shop to have coffee and donuts. Remarks, not just to the officers of me, the supervises to me. I didn't have a choice, but just go off to myself and recuperate, get myself back the way it's supposed to be. It hurt me. It tore me apart. But I took it. That's why I am here today. Because some bad things happened to me, I didn't take out my gun and start shooting, killing people. I didn't do that.

Look at the officer who used to be in LA three weeks ago, a month ago, said things happened to him bad in LA is why he did what he did. Well, no. If you can't fix it, you can't control it, walk away from it guys. Remember that. Because by you being, I'm going to use the word stupid, stupid, you're not going to fix it by being stupid. To me, being stupid is violating the law, taking the law in your own hands, that's not being smart.

Speaker 18:

Were there situations just like what happened some random day where someone was going to hurt you or do something to your family or somebody and you needed help? Did anyone just come and help?

Harlen Lambert:

The question was, if I knew someone was going to hurt myself or my family, what would I do? The first thing I'm going to do, I would have to report it to the PD. This is what's coming down that I was told that this was going to happen to me. So that they could be aware, I can't take the law into my own hands, wait until they come and I'd start shooting. I need help. So, now I tell my boss, my supervisor's supervisor's supervisor. I have to tell them that so that they can be aware of that. They can help me out. They ask you a question. Yes, I have stopped vehicles and I needed help and I called for assistance and it never came. Yes, that had happened. But, what can I say when they say, "We didn't hear the call?" I have to believe that.

Speaker 18:

Thank you.

Harlen Lambert:

Mrs. [inaudible 00:46:01], do you have anything to say?

Speaker 19:

Yeah, I do. I'm hearing, so he's holding back on some of the things that's happened to him. And I'm getting the feeling from a couple of the folks here, tell me a little bit different side. Am I right or wrong?

Erica Evangelista:

Yeah.

Speaker 19:

That's kind of what I was feeling. What was the truth of it. So let me just bring up a couple of things and then he can address it for you if you're interested in hearing that. When he first went to Academy, the things that happened to him. He was treated differently in order to get through Academy. He did have supervisors who would stop him in a hallway and say, "Why are you still here? Don't you think you should think about something else?" He did have a friend that we still have a friend today that was close with him who, because of the times, who is a white person, did not know what was going on over here. The equipment the officers had, at that time, period of time, is so different than it is today. What they did and did not have, actually.

Field things that happened to him when you were in. Not only from other officers, but from the general public, which has been brought up. Blacks at that time didn't know, they did call him Uncle Tom, for example, didn't know if they should go to him when there was a problem because would he help them, or was he so entrenched in the white authority that at that time, would he help them? So those were just some of the things that he has been very calm and quiet about. But it was very, very turbulent. They threatened his wife at the time, his second wife. They attempted to burn his home. There were just a lot of things at a personal level that went on as well. So, if anyone wants to ask him or address any of that, then-

Speaker 9:

Why are you shielding us from that?

Harlen Lambert:

I wasn't trying to pass on purpose, it's just so much happened. I guess I stuck around because so many things ... Let's talk about the Academy for a minute. We never talked about that.

Speaker 18:

I wanted to ask about that.

Harlen Lambert:

When I went to the Academy, I think about 26 maybe 30 officers. The instructor says, we had our break, "When you get up, you push your chair under the table." Every time, I got up, I pushed a chair under the table, when I came back in, my chair was out like this. That meant I had to run around the entire Orange Coast College until they got tired of me running. Things like that man. Okay. So, still around today.

Interviewer:

As far as the physical geography of where different races or ethnic groups were located in the-

Harlen Lambert:

Say it again.

Interviewer:

As far as the physical geography of where different ethnic groups or minority groups were in the city, were there very distinct neighborhoods where, "This is where the African Americans live, this is a Latino neighborhood, this is a Caucasian neighborhood, this is a working class community," or was it all at least intermixed in certain parts of the city?

Harlen Lambert:

When I worked patrol in Santa Ana, [inaudible 00:49:52] Street, Myrtle Street. Myrtle was really, they called it the ghetto. Standard, going to Standard was straight to the ghetto. That's what they call it. And there were more Hispanics on Myrtle Street and Standard, everywhere.

Interviewer:

Yeah. Did you notice that was there for any particular reason or just as ...

Harlen Lambert:

Yeah, well a more illegals. Less expensive to live in those apartments with four, five, six, eight, 10 people in one room.

Speaker 9:

Do you recall where the Bracero Program-

Harlen Lambert:



I'm sorry.

Speaker 9:

You know, the Bracero Program was a group of Mexican farm workers that were imported. And maybe they were before your time, it ends in '63.

Harlen Lambert:

I was on the PD ... Oh no, I was ... Yeah, I was here.

Speaker 9:

Do you recall where they lived? Do you recall that?

Harlen Lambert:

No.

Speaker 9:

Okay.

Harlen Lambert:

I didn't go on the department until '67, I was observing in '66.

Speaker 9:

I was doing research and I noticed that there was a John Birch scandal in the '60s on the department. Do you want to expand on that a little? Who the John Birch club was.

Harlen Lambert:

I'm glad you asked me that question. A majority of the cops, when I was on the police force, didn't know who John Birch was, period.

Speaker 9:

It's like 10 out of 11 on a four star.

Interviewer:

Could you explain a little bit about what that would entail at that time?

Harlen Lambert:

They were very, very close knit. For me to tell you some of the things that they ... What they're about, I can't tell you what they're about. What I know, whatever they do, it's very, very close knit and if one of their officers does something wrong, if he's a Bircher. I don't want to say it on tape.

Speaker 9:

The John Birch Society started as an anti-Communist movement. It was very much part ... And that's one of the reasons why Orange County was so good for that, because it was a conservative area. And John

Birch was someone, I think he was killed in China, that's what they named it after. But yes, they were very close knit, but at one point they were trying to get rid of Police Chief Davis. Do you recall that?

Harlen Lambert:

Yeah. Alan.

Speaker 9:

Alan.

Harlen Lambert:

I took philosophy ... A senator, he became Senator at Santa Ana College. He died. I took philosophy with him, I can't remember his name ... Smith. Smith was his name. John Smith.

Speaker 9:

So that must have been a very difficult time to be on the force when half of it was trying to get rid of the police chief. Right?

Harlen Lambert:

He had to try and take out all the other officers, not just them.

Speaker 9:

I wanted to ask you what the lure of Chicago was.

Harlen Lambert:

The what?

Speaker 9:

Because that seems to be a big magnet at some point in your life. You go to Chicago a lot.

Harlen Lambert:

Because my oldest sister moved to Chicago and I went to live with her, I was 17.

Speaker 9:

So were you there when Emmett Till was killed in '55? I believe it's '54.

Harlen Lambert:

'55, I was still in Arkansas in '55. That's the year I graduated high school in '55.

Speaker 9:

So do you remember what happened with Emmett Till? Could you share, if you do?

Harlen Lambert:

I remember, I don't know specifics. I know who he is, yeah.

Speaker 19:

I'm going to interrupt again. Somebody asked about when Sasser got killed and the Black Panthers was here. There were two brothers that were involved in this and he and another officer had duty to protect these two ... What was it.

Harlen Lambert:

Suspects.

Speaker 19:

Suspects. Okay. Tell them a little bit about what happened with that.

Harlen Lambert:

Okay. As I told you, I worked that case. The other two officers that were with the league. I was assigned the case. We had to, on city money, take these two suspects away from Santa Ana and to other cities to socialize them, keep them happy because they were going to testify in the state's behalf. So whatever they wanted, we had to give it to them. It didn't matter. So we took the two suspects to Ocean Side. Let me back up. My lieutenant called Ocean Side and told Ocean Side what we were doing, we were bringing two suspects who was going to testify on the city's behalf. We got a hotel, the department got the hotel. We took the two suspects in and their room was so unkempt, we decided, "We can't stay here." So we went to San Diego.

We talked to the watcher man and told the watcher man he was black, why we were here and what we were doing. He said, "Wait a minute." So he left the room for five or 10 minutes and had us stay in this one room. He went and called one of the Panthers groups up in the hills in San Diego. So, he came back and told us, a friend of mine has a nice hotel, he told us where it was. We took the two suspects up there, I called my lieutenant and told my lieutenant where we were and what we had done. Lieutenant said, "Wait a minute." 10, 15 minutes later, he called me back and said, "Get the hell out of there, buddy, they're setting you up to be killed." We got out of there. That's a time [inaudible 00:56:12].

So what we did, we took them out, took them to Long Beach in military concern. Now we're safe because you've got to go through the MP gate. But the suspects were allowed to make calls to anybody that they want to. Think about it. Don't you know they told them where they were?

Speaker 19:

Since everyone is involved in the Santa Ana library in the history room, I am going to give you just a little piece of what I personally know. Some years ago, he started writing a book about his experience. And in doing some research, we went to the library to get information and of course you have books there during the years of the police, Manny has helped us out a lot. A lot of articles about him over the years. But every time we would go, so one, you would look at the photos of the police officers, you will not find him in any of them. One. Everyone he worked with, they're right there where they should be, but he's not there. Every time we went there to pull an article or to get some information, suddenly it was gone from the folder. Couldn't find it.

They kept getting pulled and hidden. Manny and a couple other of the folks, as we were able to get all this information together, made copies for us, digitals and put them in the folders. So then, we went back at another time, I lost some information or whatever. It was buried so deep that if you were

to go in there today and try to find it, you're going to have a lot of research to do. You have to bury deep, because somehow it just kept getting hidden.

Speaker 18:

Yeah, it wasn't where the files are supposed to be initially, so it took a little bit of extra, it'd take like three hours to find the things.

Speaker 19:

Yeah. So, even to this day, and we still have some officers who were on the force with him at that time that have a secret society that he's not invited to. It is what it is. I think his lesson is, as he said, you work with what you have, you do the best that you can, and rise above it. And I think that's one of my proudest things about my husband is that he's risen above it and he's a success and he's not hateful.

Harlen Lambert:

Yeah, a chief of police whom I knew when he was working for another city adjacent to Santa Ana, he's the chief of police now. We saw each other at a restaurant or something. And I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I'm the chief of police." He said, "I want you to come work with us." I didn't work with him, but I did a couple things with him. So he said, "Why don't you come and work with me?" I said, "Okay." He said, "Do you have to take the physical [inaudible 00:59:44]" Burn that baby. So, filled out the application and had the investigator go to Santa Ana and pull my records, everything on me.

Five to 10 years before I went back to Santa Ana to get the records on me, they destroyed all the officers before me. So, my friend told me, he said, "They said your background didn't check." "What do you mean?" "They wouldn't claim you." I said, "Are you kidding me?" He said, "No." So I said, "Fine." The chief of police in Santa Ana right now, Paul Walters, and I worked patrol together. His locker was next to mine, [inaudible 01:00:58]. Yeah. So to answer your questions, people still having problem with Harlen.

Speaker 19:

It took us three years to get his jacket, which today when you leave the job, for example, and somebody wants a referral from that job, they can tell you what your name, that yes you worked there and would they hire you back or something, I don't know. But it's very simple. But three years, we were given a jacket with information in there that never happened, never occurred. Some things were correct, but lines were blacked out and little notes made over here. A lot of things that are wrong, are in error. And still held by some folks that were on the department with him at that time. So paperwork changes, hearts do not. That's the same people. We've talked about this.

Harlen Lambert:

I guess I should really be hard, cold, but I'm not.

Darla Genning:

Because of the dogs.

Harlen Lambert:

Just like the dogs. Really, I'm not cold at all. But I do believe in defending myself and my family. I don't care how soft I am, no one's going to hurt me and my family.

Darla Genning:

So how is your son, Fernando, is that his name?

Harlen Lambert:

Yes. I'm going to share this with you. You can't tell anybody else this, all right? Please don't tell anybody.

Darla Genning:

It's our secret. [crosstalk 01:02:49]

Harlen Lambert:

Oh my goodness, we better not tape this. No, my son I think is in Chicago. He travels a lot. But I'm happy. Guys I'm going to say this for the third time, if you can't fix it, you can't control it, walk away from it man. Because the only person that is upset is you because the person that made you upset, they don't care. You got to get your education, you have to.

Interviewer:

Do we have any more discussions from any of the kids before we start wrapping up?

Desiree Noriega:

I have two.

Harlen Lambert:

What she has [crosstalk 01:03:36]. Wait a minute, we got to make sure we see this. [crosstalk 01:03:42]

Desiree Noriega:

In spite of everything, it seems like you've overcome a lot and I'm glad that I came. It was by accident that I came,

Harlen Lambert:

I'm sure [crosstalk 01:04:00] accident.

Desiree Noriega:

So I wanted to know, one, are you religious? Because you've overcome so much and I wanted to know, how do you, in spite of everything you've been through, come through on top.

Harlen Lambert:

I won't tell you ... I'll say this. I went to school to be a minister and I'll tell you why, why I'm not a minister. It's a Christian school. Everyday at 10:00, we went to class, we'd go to church. If the church was filled and I was sitting on a bench, the students would rather stand around on the wall than to sit on the bench with me. In the church. That really tore me apart and I said to myself, "If you can't serve God in church, where can you go?" I'm thinking, if you want to pray, you should be able to pray anywhere. But everyone stood up around the wall than sit on that bench with me. That's why I'm not a minister today. I just couldn't handle that. I left believing God and I never talked to it about anybody. That's my belief. Yes, I'm a Christian.

Desiree Noriega:

My second question is, how did you have the courage to live in Santa Ana in spite of all the things you were facing?

Harlen Lambert:

Well, I didn't know Santa Ana was like it was until I got on the department. I didn't know that. Because I was a motorcycle escort and I knew a lot of the officers. A lot of the officers would come by my and talking about, "You should join, you should join." So I took their word. There was a couple of motorcycle cops, not all of them, but a couple. But, I didn't think I would encounter as many bad things happen with me as it did. I liked your question, do you have one?

Speaker 16:

You liked my original, my other question?

Harlen Lambert:

Yeah, that was good, thank you.

Interviewer:

All right, do we have anything from any of the other kids or anyone else?

Speaker 9:

What would you say about creating your own opportunities? Because you said, leave a situation if it's something that you can't change. But it also sounds like you were very good at creating new opportunities for yourself.

Harlen Lambert:

I'm going to say this, I classify myself as a thinker, I'm a planner. I plan things in my head before I do it. And I've been pretty successful at doing that, planning and making it work. So you asked me, how do I do it?

Speaker 9:

Just what do you have to say about creating opportunities for yourself. And for them.

Harlen Lambert:

If you really feel it from the inside that you want to be a carpenter or you want to be a car salesman, if that's what you want to do, do it. Don't wait to get a recommendation from somebody else. If that's what please you, do it. You can do anything you want to do. I became a cop, I created a little [inaudible 01:07:47] a things. I'm successful and that's because we'd work hard and I'd plan it and we'd do it.

Speaker 19:

Today he is still in the news, he just finished three movies.

Harlen Lambert:

Don't tell them that please.

Speaker 19:

Three movies, TV productions with Cesar Milan. We have one out on The History Channel for Stan Lee's Superhumans. Recognized again for being the first person into the United States to bring cell phones into the prisons, dogs to locate them. So, it's been an ongoing process with him. But to help answer his question [crosstalk 01:08:28].

Harlen Lambert:

That's why I bring her along, right?

Speaker 19:

He has an entrepreneurial spirit. And that's really the bottom line. You have to want to do it and take steps to do it.

Speaker 9:

And also a pioneer. He likes to do new things that no one else has done.

Speaker 19:

Yes.

Speaker 9:

He seems to break new ground.

Speaker 19:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Harlen Lambert:

Well, I plan it and I do it. If it doesn't happen today, don't think, "Oh, well I'm never doing it." No, just everyday move closer and closer to what you want to do. I was really fortunate to have a partner like Cesar Milan. I'm a certified evaluator through the State of California. Any time he has a problem with a dog, he sends them to me. And that's because of the respect he has for me because I have a license with the state. Let me tell you of an incident. About five months ago, Cesar Milan called my wife and I on Friday and said he would be out of the country for three to five days. Would we pick up a dog in Los Angeles. So I said, "Sure."

Saturday morning, Sharon and I went to Los Angeles and picked up the dog. His trainer told us that the dog we were going to pick up bit Cesar Milan right here, the worst bite he'd ever had. Cesar Milan didn't tell me the dog was dog aggressive. He didn't tell me the dog was food aggressive. So Saturday evening, took the dog to our facility in Fullerton, had the dog over here and food over here, the dog came across and ate food out of my hand. And I said, "Wait a minute. This dog is not food aggressive." Because Labrador Retrievers are the same. So, I said, "This is a nice dog." Sunday morning I went over to the facility. Had the dog here, had food over here, he came across my lab and opened this finger up. It was wide open. Tuesday morning, Sharon and I went back to LA, we took the dog back and he said, "How did it go, man?"

I said, he's right here. But see, he didn't know that Sharon was taping all of this at the facility. So he said the reason why he wanted me to evaluate the dog, and we didn't know this, that the dog

belonged to a customer of his. And he wanted to know if he should give the dog back to the customer. And I told him, "No you can't do that." And he said, "Why?" And I said, "Let's face it. Let's say your customer invited his friend over to his house. And your customer has an 18 month old baby and the kid walked across the floor with a cookie in it's hand and the dog see it and go after the cookie and bite the kid. What do you think going to happen? You're going to be sued." So we told him not to do that and he didn't do it. But when he made the movie, all this was being taped. He didn't put that part in the movie because I told him what to do and obviously because he's Cesar Milan, he didn't want people to know that I'm telling him.

So when he went to Europe and showed this movie without me being ... Back up. Before he left, the History production company called me and said, "Well, we didn't add your part into the part of the movie." So when it went to Europe, he played it on TV. The studio sent me a copy of the entire movie with me in it, so now it's on the internet.

Speaker 19:

But what he left out is that we also found out at that time that the client had a 16 month old crawling baby [crosstalk 01:12:37].

Harlen Lambert:

If we would have given that dog back to the owner, there's a possibility this dog would have ripped that kid.

Speaker 9:

So what happened to the dog?

Harlen Lambert:

He kept the dog and gave the customer another dog.

Speaker 9:

So he keeps all the dogs? He doesn't put them down?

Harlen Lambert:

No, he doesn't put them down, no. He has a 43 acre facility, someone gave it to him. It's nice.

Speaker 19:

Santa Clarita.

Harlen Lambert:

Yeah, near Six Flags mountain. It's really nice.

Speaker 9:

What's your favorite type of dog?

Harlen Lambert:



Probably a Belgian Malinois, that's what the PD uses. And the reason why I like the Malinois is because they do not have [inaudible 01:13:22] like a Shepherd. And they just go and go. They never know how to stop, they just always go and go. Good dogs.

Interviewer:

Anything else from anyone? Time for one question in the back? No, we're good.

Harlen Lambert:

I want to say and thank you for inviting me as a guest. If there's anything my wife and I can do to enhance your program, guys give us a call. We'd be glad to come up.

Speaker 9:

Thank you for your time. [crosstalk 01:13:55]

Interviewer:

Thanks, I think we're good. Yep.