

John F. Timoney

Oral History Interview
with John F. Timoney

*Interviewed by Jeffrey A. Kroessler
on May 16, 2010*

Justice in New York: An Oral History

Preface

President Jeremy Travis initiated Justice in New York: An Oral History in 2006. Based in the Lloyd Sealy Library, the project was made possible through a generous grant from Jules B. Kroll, President of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice Foundation. The goal was to interview criminal justice leaders – district attorneys, police commissioners and members of the department, elected officials, defense attorneys, and advocates, individuals concerned with the workings of the system.

Each interview is recorded on cassette tapes and/or a digital recorder. The original is deposited in Special Collections in the library. Each transcript is bound and the volume is cataloged and placed on the shelves. A digital copy is available through the library's web site, as are selected audio clips from the interviews (<http://www.lib.jjay.cuny.edu/>).

Oral history is a problematic endeavor. The interview is only as good as the questions asked and the willingness of the interview subject to be open and honest. Some remain guarded, others become expansive. Sometimes memory fails, and details, names and dates are confused. Some individuals have their own set story, and an oral history will add little that is new or especially insightful. Other individuals use the interview as an opportunity to sum up a career; on occasion that means gliding over unpleasant or difficult details. Our purpose was to allow each individual to tell his or her story. In each case, the final transcript has been approved by the interview subject.

Even with those caveats, what emerges from these interviews is more than a collection of personal reminiscences. The interviews shed light on controversies and policy decisions of a particular historical moment. At times, the interviews verge on the philosophical, as with discussion of capital punishment, race relations, or the decriminalization of controlled substances. Always, the interviews contribute to our understanding of the many facets of the criminal justice system – law enforcement, prosecution, incarceration, prisoner re-entry, and electoral politics – and reveal how New York has changed over the decades, as have social and cultural attitudes.

Justice in New York: An Oral History stretches across more than half a century, from the 1950s to the 2010s. Those years saw an unprecedented rise in social unrest and violent crime in the city, and then an equally dramatic drop in crime and disorder. If the interviews have an overarching theme, it is how the city – the police, courts, elected officials, and advocates – addressed and, yes, overcame those challenges. These men and women were actors in that drama, and their narratives stand on their own. The truth or mendacity of the story is for the reader to assess.

Chief Librarian Larry E. Sullivan guided this project from the start and participated in several interviews. Interim Chief Librarian Bonnie Nelson oversaw the creation of a new website for Criminal Justice in New York, a portal for the oral histories, trial transcripts, images and documents from Special Collections, and other resources. Special Collections librarian Ellen Belcher, cataloging librarian Marlene Kandel, and emerging technologies librarian Robin Davis contributed to the success of this project.

Jeffrey A. Kroessler
2013

John F. Timoney
Chronology

- 1948 Born in Dublin
- 1961 Immigrated to the United States with his family; settled in Washington Heights.
- 1966 Father, Ciaran Timoney, died; mother and sister returned to Ireland, he and his brother remained in New York.
- 1967 Graduated from Cardinal Hayes High School.
- 1967 Joined the NYPD at trainee; sworn in as police officer in July 1969
- 1971 Married Noreen
- 1974 Earned B.A. from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in American History.
- 1975 Timoney's partner, Thomas Ryan, was indicted for homicide in beating death of burglary suspect Israel Rodriguez in the Bronx on June 13; Timoney was on vacation. Ryan was convicted on November 5, 1977, and sentenced to four years.
- 1976 Received an M.A. in History from Fordham University.
- 1979 Daughter Christine born.
- 1980 Promoted to Sergeant.
- 1981 Received an M.A. in Urban Affairs from Hunter College.
- 1984 Son Sean born.
- 1992 Responsible for security at the Democratic National Convention held at Madison Square Garden.
- 1993 Deputy Chief, head of Office of Management, Analysis and Planning.
- February 26, 1993 Muslim terrorists exploded a truck bomb in the parking garage under the World Trade Center, killing six and injuring more than 1,000. Omar Abdel-Rahman, a blind Muslim cleric, was convicted in 1995 and sentenced to life in prison plus 65 years.

- January 20, 1994 Appointed Chief of Department, the highest ranking uniformed officer, by Police Commissioner Bill Bratton; jumped over 16 senior officers; Louis Anemone named Chief of Patrol. Bratton: “The message I am definitely sending out is that I will go wherever it takes to find talent in this organization. I’m not going to be bound solely by tradition in terms of people that will be selected to get the job done.”
- June 1994 Addressed the 84th Precinct: “Once somebody turns to corruption, they’re basically not a cop anymore. You don’t own them anything. What you owe the department, what you owe yourself, what you owe the good cops is to turn in those people who have tarnished the badge.”
- March 7, 1994 NYPD began a campaign in Greenwich Village to crack down on quality of life offenses and improve procedures for dealing with those offenders, with the intention of extending it across the city. Chief John Timoney explained, “What we have had the tendency to do in the last 10 to 15 years is to ignore the small things. It’s my sense, it’s Commissioner Bratton’s sense, and it’s Mayor Giuliani’s sense that if we start taking care of the small things, it will have a ripple effect and have an impact on the lives of people.”
- August 22, 1994 At the Lexington Avenue and 53rd Street station, off duty Officer Peter Del Debbio shot and seriously wounded undercover Transit Police Officer Desmond Robinson, who was chasing a teenager armed with a sawed-off shotgun. Robinson took four bullets in the back. As Del Debbio was white and Robinson black, the incident raised questions about racial attitudes in the NYPD. On March 26, 1996, Del Debbio was convicted of second-degree assault for the shooting.
- December 21, 1994 A little after 2 p.m., Edward Leary, a 49-year of unemployed computer technician, set off an incendiary device on the 4 Train as it entered the Fulton Street Station, injuring himself and 41 others. He walked to Brooklyn through the tunnel, where he was arrested. He had set off a similar device a week before, injuring two teenagers.
- January 1995 Appointed First Deputy Commissioner; Louis Anemone, who had been Chief of Patrol, promoted to Chief of Department.
- January 30, 1995 Deputy Commissioner Walter S. Mack, head of the Internal Affairs Bureau since 1993 and the first civilian to head IAB, was abruptly dismissed. He claimed he had been dismissed for proposing

aggressive tactics against officers who lied in court, abused prisoners, or stole drugs and money from drug dealers.

- March 28, 1996 Days after the resignation of William Bratton, Mayor Giuliani appointed Fire Commissioner Howard Safir his new Police Commissioner. Timoney was dismissed the next day after the *Daily News* quoted him as calling Safir a “lightweight” and that the Mayor was “screwed up” in his decision. Upon leaving, Timoney said, “It’s the one thing I do regret because I spoke in anger. I should not have said it. My beef is with the other guy [Giuliani].” Three days later Jack Maple, Deputy Commissioner for Operations and largely responsible for Compstat, announced his resignation.
- February 18, 1998 Named Police Commissioner in Philadelphia.
- May 15, 1998 While jogging in Rittenhouse Square, ran down a purse snatcher and held him until officers arrived.
- July 2000 Philadelphia police officers were videotaped beating and kicking a suspect who had stolen a police vehicle.
- July 2000 The Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, with the police showing more accommodation of protesters than confrontation; Timoney patrolled downtown by bicycle.
- January 2002 Joined the private security firm Beau Dietl & Associates as Chief Executive Officer.
- January 2, 2003 Became Chief of Police in Miami, Florida; during his first 20 months in office, no police officer fired a shot at a civilian; in four years the murder rate dropped from 20 to 14 per 100,000.
- November 2003 During the meeting of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, protest groups, including the AFL-CIO, accused the Miami Police of being too aggressive toward peaceful protesters.
- November 1, 2005 Son Sean arrested in a federal marijuana sting; pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 18 months.
- November 11, 2009 Announced his resignation as Miami Police Chief.
- December 2011 Brought in by Ministry of the Interior in Bahrain to reform the police department and police procedures.

John F. Timoney

May 16, 2010

JK Could you just identify yourself, please?

Timoney I'm John F. Timoney, former First Deputy Police Commissioner in New York and Police Commissioner in Philadelphia, and then, the last seven years, the Chief of Police in the City of Miami.

JK So, when are you going to get a decent job?

Timoney The problem is, I can't hold down a job! I've been doing this gig now for over forty years.

JK Yes. If you could just go back to your early life, your childhood, which was a little unusual, since you were born in Dublin. At what moment did you decide that being a police officer might be the thing you want to be doing?

Timoney Well, it wasn't until I actually went on a police department, because as most kids, guys growing up in the city, our interaction with the police was generally negative.

JK Even then?!

Timoney Even then. I start off my book purposely saying, when you speak to most Chiefs of Police, Bill Bratton, etc., they'll say all they wanted to be was a cop, and a chief. Not me. I didn't really like the cops. They broke our chops, they took away our stickball bats. They did a whole host of things that parents and teachers generally do. They were authority figures. The 1960s was nothing if it wasn't all about rebellion against authority, so there was some of that. In any event, it was really as a result of the encouragement of a buddy of mine. We're still friends to this day. Isaac Wilbert. He was taking the police trainee exam and he announced it to us on a Friday night, when we were all going to drink beer at the park. We were eighteen years old, out of high school. He said, "I don't need beer. I'm taking the exam tomorrow." I said, "Okay." I guess about six or seven of us went with him. Back then, they had walk-in exams, so you didn't have to pre-register. And so, we took the A train down from Washington Heights down to Lower Manhattan. I went to Seward High School and took the exam that morning, that Saturday morning, and back then, and I'm not so sure it still goes on, but on Saturday night, if you put on WOR, you can get the test results of all the civil subject exams that were given the following morning. They say, "Police Trainee Exam #110, here are the answers. #1, C; #3, D."

JK You're kidding!?

Timoney Yes! So, I sat there with my mother, grading my paper and barely passed.

JK Because you had been such a great student all those years in high school.

Timoney Well, I don't know if I was a great student. I was great in certain topics. I was horrible in others. But I was great in history. I scored in the high 90s on every exam. I think one may have been 100. So, that was my forte, history, for whatever reason, which is why I went on to go to John Jay College of Criminal Justice and majored in history. I had some fantastic professors here. Trumbull Higgins. Blanche Wiesen Cooke, who today is still a dear friend of mine, and a bunch of others. David Levin. I mean, there were some fantastic professors back then. For a burgeoning criminal justice college, they had some top-notch historians, which is great. Then I went for my Masters in American History at Fordham University, up in the Bronx. The deal was, remember I didn't want to be a cop? I still didn't want to be a cop! Even though I was now seven years into the gig. But my plan was to be a teacher, so when I got my Masters I had done things, as they generally do, ass-backwards. I had to get my education credits, so I got my Masters, and I spent the next year at Pace University, taking eighteen education credits, so I got my Teacher's Degree. I got my license from New York State.

JK That takes lots of years off your time in purgatory, spending time in education classes.

Timoney Yes. Exactly. In any event, I did that, and I was teaching school, first as a student teacher in Pleasantville High School, then when I fully qualified and finished all my education courses, I continued on at Pleasantville High School as a per diem. I worked six at night until two in the morning at the Police Department. I would teach Russian History and American History in the day time. Not every day, but a couple days a week. A few extra bucks, it was handy. I established a great relationship with the head of the History Department, Lou Stastel, a guy who had fled Czechoslovakia during the war, and he thought I should stay in the profession. This is 1976, and they were laying teachers off left and right. So, I managed, I guess on his recommendation, to secure a job, a full-time job, the beginning of 1977, not at Pleasantville, but at White Plains High School, which is over there, in Westchester County. And I thought about it, I thought about it, I thought about, and I said, "I can't do this." I did not like the regularity. I didn't like Monday through Friday, weekends off, night time off. I liked working weekends, I liked working nights, I liked being off sometimes Tuesday and Wednesday, I liked the idea of going to work Sundays at four o'clock in the afternoon, I liked getting off at eight o'clock in the morning and having the rest of the day. You know, most people complained about the rotation, I actually enjoyed it! So, I made a decision, I think I'll stay with the cops. That was a crossroads in 1977. At the same time, I went into the Bronx Narcotics. So, I spent my first two years as a trainee in the 17th Precinct and then when I became a full-fledged police officer, I went to the 4-4, I spent my first eight years in the 44th Precinct, which, at the time, was the busiest Precinct in the Bronx.

JK Okay, the 17 and the 4-4. You're going to have to translate that for me because I don't have that map in my head.

Timoney Okay. The 17th Precinct, where I started as a trainee, which is on 51st Street, between 3rd and Lexington, so I was in the Silk Stocking district. It's got good stuff, you know? And then I went from there to the bowels of the South Bronx.

JK At a time when saying "the South Bronx" meant something.

Timoney Yes. And where I was, the 4-4 Precinct, which had been a largely Irish-Jewish neighborhood, Irish on the west side, Jews on the east side along the Grand Concourse. That was nothing short of a rapid transition, because what happened, the real South Bronx was Fort Apache, the 4-1 Precinct. And the 4-0 was burning like crazy. And there's a reason for it. Peter Salins, who was a buddy of mine, was a professor at Hunter, and wrote a book, *The Ecology of Housing Destruction*. Bottom line – the government programs at the time created an incentive for people to burn their apartments. That way you could get ready cash and a new apartment! It was typical of the idiocy coming out of the 1960s. A lot of great things came out of the 1960s, a lot of great things, but some stupid things came out of it, also. That wasn't one of them. When you put social programs that encouraged and rewarded bad behavior.

JK Well, to get philosophical for a moment, it's a time when they took personal responsibility out of the equation and put into effect societal laws. And suddenly, we're all guilty of whatever social ills there happen to be.

Timoney Yes.

JK But when you joined the police force, you just had a high school education?

Timoney That's correct. And, as a result of John Jay College, where also, the Law Enforcement Education Program [LEEP] did for the police profession what the G.I. Bill did for G.I.s coming out of World War II and Korean War. It educated, literally, in the case of the G.I. Bill, it educated an entire generation. In the case of LEEP it educated an entire profession. When you look back, it's extraordinary. The hatred of Richard Nixon, to this day, if people actually looked back and saw all the things that he actually did do.

JK Yes. Environmental Protection Agency.

Timoney Oh, yes. Everything! But they will not give the old guy his due. It's just extraordinary. But the Law Enforcement Education Program, I'm telling you, literally, they packed the halls of John Jay College and other institutions across the country.

JK Can you still join the NYPD with just a high school education?

Timoney No. We changed that when I was there. I believe it's an Associate or 60 credits, you don't need the full 66 for the associates.

JK But you want some education beyond high school came into the force. You were set on this path because, as a young man, you could decide, after a couple of beers in the

park, that you want to go down and take the test tomorrow morning, and today it's not quite that casual a decision.

Timoney Yes, yes. There were other exogenous forces at play here. Let's be honest. There was the Vietnam War. So, what you wound up getting, you wound up getting a deferment. You were in college or you had a job in the police force.

JK That's a good incentive.

Timoney That's a very good incentive. And so, I wouldn't say that was the primary motive, but that was certainly a thought.

JK When you entered the force, it was still a very Irish police force.

Timoney Oh, yes. Actually, the last chapter in my book is on race. And so, when I entered the NYPD, it was, they all looked like me, by and large. There were some Blacks, not many. Obviously, a strong contingent of Italians and other ethnic white groups, Poles, stuff like that, but it was largely male, white.

JK And Catholic.

Timoney And Catholic. And so, coming out of the 1960s, and this is certainly a good thing, and the cops I worked with, these old-timers, when I came through the door, were a good bunch of guys. You don't say guys and gals, because there weren't any gals. There were a bunch of guys and almost all of them were veterans. Some of them had fought in World War II. My partner had gone as a seventeen-year-old Marine to Korea, fought in the Korean War for two years. So, these are tough guys. However, what was coming around the mountain, if you will, the changes from the 1960s, a new model of policing had to be designed and there was no holding it back, and so the whole notion of integration of police departments, both racially and gender-wise, the idea of getting a police force to reflect the population served as much as possible. And so, in 1973, was the first big class of female police officers in the NYPD. Now, there had been females, they were matrons. They worked in the Sex-Bat Units, they worked in the JD Units and stuff like that, but they were not on patrol. 1973, that all changed, first class.

JK So, you're joining one kind of police force, and as you're in that police force, by the time you leave, it's an entirely different.

Timoney Completely different, completely different police force. And Tom Wolfe, who is a good buddy of mine and wrote the introduction to my book, I was giving a talk the other day at Harvard Club and Tom introduced me. He was reflecting back. I first met him around 1985 at dinner, and I guess he liked me. He said, "By the way, are there any more like you?" I said, "What do you mean like me?" He said, "You know, guys who are born in Ireland, Irish cops, the tradition. Are there any more like you coming around?" Well, today, if you looking for an Irish cop of that ilk, hire a Puerto Rican, because that's what was taking up, and, by the way, rightfully so. This is the way this country is all

about. And so, if you went to a Medal Day ceremony, beginning in the late 1980s, you started to see the predominance of an Hispanic officer name, at Medal Day ceremonies, for fantastic acts of bravery. The new Irish, the Puerto Ricans, and after them it'll be the Dominicans, and that's what America is all about.

JK And when you say the police force is reflecting the community that's out there, it doesn't happen automatically. The city changes, and then the police department changes.

Timoney It does. The really interesting one is the Chinese, the Asian kids. I was the Captain of Chinatown in 1986, and there were maybe twenty or twenty-five Chinese American officers there, in that Precinct. I think they told me in 1980 there were two city-wide, right? But as you got twenty or twenty-five and they formed the Asian Jade Society, and people like me, I'm not just saying lots of people because, I heard some tough union guys describing the Chinese cops and he said, "These guys, they're smart, they've got a fantastic attitude. Not one of them had a bad attitude, unlike us." He said, "They're smart, they've got a great work ethic, and they don't have an attitude, like us." They're just decent people, you know? So, I remember me going around and doing community meetings and telling them, "Do you have any more Asians – Chinese?" And it's interesting, there was a hesitancy on the part of Chinese parents to encourage their kids. But slowly or surely that was overcome. And so, the last time I checked, there was well over six or seven hundred Asian American police officers.

JK That is a remarkable thing.

Timoney Yes. A terrific change that took off. But the biggest growth and the fastest growth, it's interesting, was the Hispanics. They took to the profession like a duck to water. They just did, you know. It's great.

JK It is a different police force, it's a different city, and you were, you aged along with it.

Timoney Yes.

JK It's not like you had an easy time of it when you came in. Soon after you came in, the Knapp Commission hit. How do you, as a young guy, what are you, twenty years old, twenty-two?

Timoney I was twenty-two when the Knapp Commission, and again, this is the interesting parts. Working nights, I was able to watch it being televised on Channel 13, during the day. And I remember an old-time Sergeant, I think it was Nicky Sforza was his name. He said, "Listen guys, you're going to be out there, and what you see on television, we're going to pay for it. It's going to be thrown in your face." I remember, there was so much they predicted. So, about a few hours later, we were at some apartment, myself and my partner, it was a domestic thing, a guy beating up his wife, he's drunk. And so, we're dragging him out and he's screaming about the Knapp Commission, "I know you guys are all crooked. I saw the Knapp!"

JK He's sober enough to watch the Knapp Commission.

Timoney Yeah, yeah. And as the Sergeant said, and you learn this over the years and you tell it to the younger cops, when somebody starts like that, you want to belt him! But the Sergeant says, "You've got to bite your tongue, tough skin, you've just got to take it. We're the cops, we can't." And so, it was interesting that they said it at roll call at six o'clock and by eight o'clock, some drunk was spewing off all the stuff he saw on television on the Knapp Commission.

JK As a twenty-year-old, twenty-year-olds aren't necessarily known for self-control, and as a police officer, you're still a twenty-year-old.

Timoney I was twenty-two.

JK I know, but you had been in the force since you were eighteen or nineteen.

Timoney Yes, nineteen. And what you need then, the senior people to kind of guide you. I was fortunate in that regard. I also was fortunate in having this guy, this is the guy I was telling you about, Richie Sable. He'd gone into the Marine Corps when he was seventeen and fought in Korea. He was a really tough guy. He would have no problem straightening anybody out. But there were certain rules that he had, that he played by, and you don't break the rules. And if another cop broke those rules, he'd go after the other cop, which is really unusual, other cops won't confront another cop. But, he had no problem doing it. If he saw a cop do something wrong, for example, take a swing or hit a cuffed prisoner, I remember one time him saying, "I'm going to take the cuffs off this guy and let's see how tough you are." He told the cop, "You're a coward." Once the cuffs are on, that's it. I saw a lot of good cops like that, they knew the rules, when it stops. And it was interesting, there was one time, there was this guy. A beautiful blonde-headed kid, about four or five, Carolyn. I'll never forget her. And her mother's boyfriend, sexually abused her. And we found out where he was, and I said, "We're going to go get him," and Sable said, "Get somebody else to go with you. Because I'll tell you. If I go over there, I'm going to kill him." He had four kids. He said, "Because if I go over there I'm going to kill him."

JK It is true. Your own personal perspective. You're a single guy without kids, and to you, yeah, it's a bad thing, but it's abstract. But for him, having kids, it resonates.

Timoney Yes. And so, to have that much control and forethought, to say, "No. If I go over there, I am going to kill him." That was interesting. I've used this quote quite often. I think it was used in the *New York Times*. He knew. You know, there's an official mission of the police department, all the nice words they put up there on the chalk board, and the Mission Statement. His was pretty simple: "We're here to protect the most vulnerable. The very young, the very old. The rest of them can figure it out for themselves." Not a bad philosophy!

JK Yes. You're here to protect the most vulnerable.

Timoney The most vulnerable, yes.

JK I mean, if you're on the street, that's certainly a good part of it.

Timoney Yes.

JK How did the Knapp Commission change you and the force? That's what I mean, when you came in it's one force and you left it's different.

Timoney It had immediate very beneficial effects. Good recommendations. And it had a long time negative effect. The immediate effects, better educated cops, better pay, a whole host of stuff. I can remember an inspector coming in about a year later, when we got our first contract post-Knapp, and we got a significant raise. And he actually had us at roll call, forty cops. "Gentlemen, you get this, you get that. You're making a good salary now, there's no need to steal." That was at roll call!

JK "No need to steal!" Well, at least using language that the men will appreciate.

Timoney Yes. So, all of those things were very, very good. What was bad wasn't the recommendations of the Knapp Commission as much as it was how does the police department embraced it. And that's the idea of corruption. So, beginning with Pat Murphy. Pat Murphy made tremendous reforms, created the new Internal Affairs, centralized the OCCB, which had its very good points. It had some negative points, also. Because it took away from the street officers any kind of responsibility for low level drug crime, or what-have-you, and you were clearly discouraged as a dutiful cop from making drug arrests and dealing with those quality of life issues. On top of that, the apparatus was set-up with Internal Affairs, and the supporting structure for a corruption-free department was put in place, that within ten years had become this boondoggle of just paperwork and reports and cover-your-ass, and Ben Ward, in 1984, or '85, said it best. He said, when he had a bit of a corruption scandal on his watch, and he had been doing very good the first years of the crime, he was actually dealing with it, and then this thing blew up in his face and he was scared. He said, "Listen, this corruption stuff, you've got to make sure the corruption skirts are clean, because nobody gives a shit about crime. Right? But corruption can take out the Mayor and me." A corruption scandal. And so, that idea dominated, that the most important thing for anybody, for any Commander, was corruption. Well, that's ridiculous, on the face of it. Corruption, it's like having police car accidents. It's one of the issues you deal with. But if you ask the average citizen, "Why do you think you hire police officers?" The last thing they would tell you is to fight police corruption. They say, no, I want you to knock off the bad guys, clean up the streets, deal with the quality of life. So, the citizens know exactly what they want the cops to do. The cops didn't know what they wanted the cops to do, the bosses in this case. That changed in 1994 when Bill Bratton came in. He and I had these conversations at length. Yes, you've got to deal with corruption.

JK It's a constant. It's not something that comes and goes. It's always going to be there as part of it, and you deal with it.

Timoney Yes. And we need to focus on crime, and we began to focus on crime. Now, having done all that, I was then, in 1995, I think it was, these various corruption scandals were unfolding, and I was literally fighting with prosecutors to try to get these things moving, let's get them over with, because they're actually interfering with police operations. They were dragging these investigations out. I was described by the *New York Times* as, "The senior most police official, most tolerant of corruption and brutality." Thank you very much!

JK Okay, another reason not to subscribe.

Timoney That's still my favorite paper. The *Times* didn't say that. They quoted a prosecutor saying it, but it was in the *Times* as the paper of record.

JK Mike Armstrong, who was the counsel of the Knapp Commission.

Timoney Sure, I know him.

JK He says that at the end of the Knapp Commission, it changed the culture of the police force.

Timoney Oh, without a doubt.

JK What he said is, "When they came in, ten percent of the force was absolutely honest, ten percent was thoroughly corrupt, and eighty percent were dishonest, but wish they could be straight."

Timoney Yes.

JK And he said after the Knapp Commission, that eighty percent could now go straight. They didn't have to play along with the pad and the rest of the corruption that went through it. Do you buy that kind of summary?

Timoney Well, I don't know about the numbers. I deal with them all the time, they pluck them from the air. However, when I came on, and I was too young to participate, obviously, but there was organized corruption. So, whether it was at the plain-clothes level, the guy's doing vice enforcement, or plain-clothes in the precinct level, or the sector cars that covered various areas, you know, they're getting Christmas gifts. It would just be like a postman who gets gifts. So, they would get ten dollars and it would be from each store owner in the area on the beat. When a postman gets it, it's a Christmas gift, when a cop gets it, it's corruption because there's this notion of a quid pro quo, you're going to overlook something.

JK Or, you're going to give me special protection.

Timoney Yes.

JK And not protect me if I don't pay you.

Timoney Yes, yes.

JK But there is a crucial difference between the Mafia and the police, in the way the protection racket works.

Timoney Yes. So, it changed. There were brighter lines in the sand, of what was permissible and what was not permissible. And that was fine. But Ben Ward took it to the next level when he started getting involved in, and I agree with Ben Ward on most, on ninety percent of the stuff he did. He was a fantastic Police Commissioner. For a cup of coffee, it was, and I remember, because I hadn't made Captain, I was a Lieutenant, about to make Captain, and I would work some over-time shifts in Manhattan. Back then a cup of coffee was fifty cents, in those Greek diners. So, I go in. I order a cup of coffee, it'd be three in the morning, I had been working the over-night shift. I give the guy the dollar. He says, "No, just take it." I say, "No, no." So, I had to leave a dollar for a God damn fifty cent cup of coffee! So, I paid twice as much as the average citizen because he wouldn't give me change. So, I had to go and leave a dollar there. The cup of coffee stuff, I'm not so sure. People talk about, it's a slippery slope. That's ridiculous. But I went with the program, I was good, I always paid for my coffee, but it was stupid.

JK Yes, because at some point, there is a respect for the person who wants to honor what you're doing, or, it's just being courteous. It's three in the morning, have a cup of coffee, for God's sake, what's it cost me. You know, it's not like a steak dinner.

Timoney No, no, no. It's strictly a cup of coffee!

JK But, you're right. One of the issues with putting rules at the place is that it's hard to admit there are grey areas. But life is nothing but grey areas, and if you're an officer on patrol, it's nothing but grey areas. I heard the head of the New Jersey State Police say, "Everything we do, every stop is discretionary."

Timoney Yes.

JK "Everything we do is discretionary." And that, to me, was an eye-opener. In some ways, for an officer, everything the officer does is discretionary. Do I stop this guy or not? Do I go after this guy for an open beer or do I let him pass. And how do you determine where to go on the gray area? What's your judgment apparatus?

Timoney From the time I was at John Jay College, and I'm sure before that, and certainly since then, the whole issue of police discretion is one that gets debated heatedly. Is it good? Is it bad? When do you know you have too much? When is there enough? Should you have more parameters? It's a real, real difficult situation, because I've seen

cops using police discretion, make superb decisions. Superb decisions. I've also seen cops using police discretion make absolutely horrible decisions. The problem is, if you come down too hard on the discretion and you remove the discretion, you have an automaton that'll just respond to your individual directions and all of a sudden, the organization gets bogged down. It's really, really difficult.

JK Uniformed officers cannot interfere with drug sales, even if they witness them.

Timoney Right.

JK Once that comes down, it brings down the whole force. "Let me get this straight. You don't want me to enforce the law?"

Timoney Yes. I'll show you another one where you take discretion out. This is as a result of lawsuits. We probably in policing, and this is not just New York, this is all across America, if I had to pick out one area where I think police have done the most radical change, the most training, the most anything you can think of in a twenty-year span, it would be the early '80s up to 2000, in the whole area of domestic violence. When I came on the police department, it was pretty easy. This is how they trained you in the Academy. You go up there, the assumption was it was a husband and wife. The assumption was he beat the shit out of her, he had to cool off. Take him for a walk and send him on his way, right?

JK That was the training in the Academy?

Timoney That was the training in the Academy. Make sure, keep him away from the kitchen, so, the stuff, if we have a knife or something like that, the tactical part, but the end of it was take him for a walk. You take him for a walk, let him cool off, you leave, he goes back and beats the shit out of her and sometimes kills her. So, it was as a result of that where police officers all across America were sued. In the case of New York, I think Richard Kohler may still be a professor here. Richard came up with a policy back in the mid-1980s called a Carol Agreement, on how we would handle domestic violence. And this was happening all across the country. So, we went to this thing called Mandatory Arrest. This was mandatory. So, we were told, "Listen, there's no discretion. Mandatory arrests!" Then we locked them both up. And then they said, "Hold on, hold on. You said mandatory."

JK Arrest them all, the court will sort it out.

Timoney Yes, but meanwhile, hold on, there is such a thing as a primary aggressor. So, it's not mandatory. Okay. So, we eventually we morph this down to a pro-arrest. You would arrest the primary offender. So, that would be one of the areas where there was, I mean, great chance, lawsuits. What's really, really interesting about the whole thing. The underlying rationale for all this was that you lock them up and you prevent future assaults and homicides. And after about ten or twelve years, they did a study, starting out six or seven years of study was done, and they've looked back at homicides as the homicides

going back to the mid-1990s started to really go down, when back in the olden days of the homicides, ten percent were domestic. As homicides started to go down, the percentage of domestics now rose to sixteen or seventeen or eighteen percent. It turns out that there was no reduction of female victims in homicides. So, despite all the efforts and what-have-you with the ultimate goal of reducing female victim homicides, that didn't result.

JK That's the kind of information that takes a while to get back to the officers on patrol, but that's the kind of information that really has to guide policy.

Timoney Yes.

JK So, how do you?

Timoney Well, I think at the end of the day, what happens is, where they did find a reduction in homicides, in the domestic area, were the guys getting killed. Because some of the women who would be in those really awful situations would leave and go to a shelter. So, she had the shelter, so they didn't have to kill the son-of-a-gun! So, less men died. The goal of the policy was less females getting killed, and what happened was less men getting killed.

JK It's the law of unintended consequences.

Timoney Exactly.

JK I was telling you before we began that I was in the City, I came back after I was in college. I came back here in 1973 and was going to graduate school here, working here, doing all this at the time. And that really was during the fiscal crisis and the criminal explosion. It really was not a great time to be in the City. And even the police officers were getting cut, entire police classes not hired, and all the rest.

Timoney Yes.

JK When I spoke with Mayor Koch, I said, I have this impression, this image of you coming in as Mayor, and the City being almost out of control on social issues, economic issues, whatever else, and that beginning in your administration, there was a gradual taking back of the streets and the public spaces, the subways.

Timoney Yes. There were two times in my life in New York when I thought, this is Armageddon. This is going down and it's not coming back up again. One of them was right before Koch got elected, 1975-1976, they had to lay off five thousand police officers in one day, my brother included. And then we attrited down over the next five years, we attrited down another five thousand. So, that by 1980, when I was a Sergeant, the NYPD had gone from thirty-one thousand to under twenty-one thousand. In any event, it really came to the surface the summer that Koch was elected. He was elected in

November. But that summer we had the black-out. Now, I'm sure in 1965 they had a black-out. They made a movie about it. People got married. Romances were spawned.

JK Neighbors had candle-light dinners.

Timoney Exactly. So, fast forward twelve years, 1977, we have three days of riots. I go through this in my book. In any event, then we had the Son of Sam, which literally terrorized an entire community. And you just had a fairly, but Koch came in and he was fantastic. I love Ed Koch. He was what the City needed at the time. He was a great civic booster and he was, he was kind of a take-charge guy, but he was a typical New Yorker, just what they needed. I think they started to hire again, but what happens is, it's very easy to lay off five thousand cops. You can do that with a stroke of a pen. When you want to hire people, there's a lag process. Ed Koch actually began the hiring in late 1978, for the big class that started in 1979. But you didn't start to realize those numbers until the early 1980s. And Ben Ward, by 1984, he started to get some of the benefits of those four or five or six years of prior hiring. He just started to see the benefits. Still not reaching where it was in 1973, but you're starting to see the benefits in 1984, 1985, 1986. And Ben Ward did a real good job with the crime the first two years. But then he got knocked off his kilter with the corruption scandal, Dowd and the 77th Precinct. He reacted like the rest of them in the past. He got nervous. And it's actually that scandal that starts off, the tease in my book, there's a scene setter, if you will, and it talks about the scandal that broke out in the 77th Precinct. I was the Captain in Chinatown at the time, and when it hit the fan, all over the *Daily News*, McAlary and Michael Daly were hammering the police department, and Ben Ward summoned all the big bosses – the two- and three-starred Chiefs to Headquarters for a career-threatening session. My boss at the time was a fantastic guy from Manhattan South, Gerry Kerins. Funny guy. A World War II veteran. He came back from Headquarters and then he called all of us in, all the captains from Manhattan South. Manhattan South is all the Precincts from 59th Street south down to Battery Park, those 10 or 11 Precincts. We all get summoned down to 21st Street, to Headquarters, for our tongue-lashing. And Keretz says, "Okay, gentlemen. I was just down with the Divine Trinity." And he said, "They're like scared rats, and they're going to strike out at anybody! Their careers are threatened! And if their careers are threatened, your careers are threatened!"

JK Well, that's one way to get the message down and across. But you had to do more with less. As an urban historian, seeing how New York City came apart at the seams in those years, the graffiti on the subways, the crime and the perception of crime, the decline of city services, the vandalism of the public spaces, and really, you had an expectation of menace in the City. People say, "Well, everyone was afraid." Well, yes! It was a fearful time. How did your policing have to adjust, was it defensive?

Timoney I think it was always defensive. And so, since there was so much of it, every day just another horrific crime. Remember I said 1977 was the first time I thought the City was going down? The next one was 1990, when we had almost twenty-three hundred people killed! There was a sense of lawlessness like you'd not seen. And then we had the Crown Heights riot in '91, Washington Heights riot in 1992.

JK In the first half of 1990, forty children were killed by stray bullets. Forty children, by what's called stray bullets.

Timoney Well, there were three in one weekend. And that's what sent either the *Post* or the *Daily News* over the top: "Do Something Dave." And again, you've got the special Safe Streets – Safe Cities money. But the beneficiary of that was Giuliani. Again, it takes a while to build-up and get the numbers out there. It isn't, and this is why it's so dangerous, not that the police are more important than anything else, but when you lay them off or you fire them, getting back up is, it isn't like, okay, this guy sweeps the streets. So, you fire them and the next day they're sweeping the streets. No! There's a six month Academy process. There's training. There's a whole host of things that go on.

JK And then you've got a rookie on the streets that needs to be trained.

Timoney Yes, it's not a good situation. But anyway, that was 1990. 1990 was a horrible year. The Happy Land Social Club fire, eighty-seven people.

JK What rank were you in 1990?

Timoney I was an Inspector. Then you had Brian Watkins, the kid from Utah, killed right here on 51st Street. That thing I remember because it was on the Transit. There was a guy named Cavanaugh, a nice guy, he was from Ireland, Sligo. I saw him the next day. He said, "Jesus Christ, this age is going to kill us now. My mother called me from Sligo, she saw me on TV on CNN." This is a killing in Manhattan. It's being broadcast all across Europe on CNN. I mean, within an hour or two hours, talk about one world.

JK But what's amazing about that case is that was really good, sharp, fast police work. That case was broken that night.

Timoney Yes. But the damage. The whole idea of a tourist.

JK Yes. Coming to the defense of his parents.

Timoney All the stereotypes of a city, the negative stereotypes, that just fulfilled it all. It was real bad.

JK But I'm still impressed that the officers just, I mean, this is pre-computers, pre-anything. It's just, "Okay, who are these kids? Where would they go? Why would they go there?" And they knew.

Timoney Yes.

JK They went and found them at Roseland.

Timoney Yeah, yeah.

JK Are those instincts still here? That kind of policing, the kind that put the men and the women on the spot in a high profile, very unpleasant murder on the subway, and their training and instincts help them solve the crime, without all of the add-ons that we've got today.

Timoney Yes. I still think it exists today, especially in New York. You just see it time and time again. When they crank it up, there's nobody better. Now, by the way, New York does have the numbers. It's very helpful to have that. So, you'll have some real, real, real superstars. I talked about this the other day at the Harvard Club. One of the things I talked about was, the NYPD is an extraordinary organization. Now, when you're growing up in it, you don't realize that, because you're being told every day by the *Daily News* and the *New York Times* that you're horrible, you can't do anything right. And you say, "Okay, I guess I can't do anything right." Then, like me, when you go elsewhere, you look back and you say, wait a minute. Wow! You see all the police functions, the NYPD is so far ahead of everybody. Not by accident. Not because it's New York. But there are two, best as I can tell, two huge differences on the NYPD. First of all, people would always talk to me, back in my younger days, about tradition. Not tradition. What was the word? Is there a police culture? I say somehow it was negative. You know, it can be negative, but there are very good parts of police culture. And one of the NYPD is this whole idea of valuing education. There are two very strong, and it exists even today, two very strong influences on the NYPD. The British Civil Service System and the Catholic Church. Both of them brought to you by those old Irish sergeants in the 1860s and 1870s, that came from a Catholic country under British rule, the British Civil Service System. The whole idea of creating rules and regulations for anything – even for the patrol guy. There's not anything they haven't thought about! Including airplane crashes. How do you respond to that, handle that? It's just, there's nothing left to chance. And when you have a huge organization like that, it's very, very helpful to kind of guide you. It's a kind of spine that keeps it going generally in the right direction. And then the rest, of course, is leadership and management and what-have-you. But the education part, I'm a typical product of the NYPD. Two Master's Degrees.

JK Typical product?

Timoney Typical product in the NYPD. Ray Kelly is the typical product. Mike Julian. I can go on and on and on. Literally, hundreds and hundreds of top managers that have been educated courtesy of the NYPD. Given, in my case, and Ray Kelly, and a whole bunch of other people, years of absence with pay. Full paid scholarship. You invest in these people, and you look at these investments, it's going to come back at you. So, it's not like some other company where, you train them and you give them an education and then they take off to somewhere else. They come back, whether it's me or all the rest of them. Look at Ray Kelly! He's back and at it again. Coming back, paying off that investment. And so, you're not going to find, anywhere in the world, anywhere in the world, the talent that you have in the NYPD. Anywhere. I've been all over the world. Not even close. Not even close. The NYPD is that sharp, and the bench is that deep. The only thing that misses every once in a while is the leadership department. Do the leaders

fail, do they get overwhelmed by life's circumstances? So it isn't like you don't have the right team available and ready to move on, absolutely. There is tons of talent. Deep bench. How do you get to appreciate that? When you get to Philadelphia or Miami, you're scraping. You get a good first team. There's nobody behind them. NYPD, that's a huge bench, ten deep.

JK It's like the Yankees. The golden years of the Yankees.

Timoney Exactly. Ten deep.

JK Yes. If not this Inspector, we've got five more just as good.

Timoney Exactly. Exactly. Extraordinary. And you just don't see that any place.

JK I read the introduction that Tom Wolfe wrote for your book. Somehow it popped up on-line. I think they printed it in an Irish paper.

Timoney *The Irish Independent*.

JK That's where I found it. And they wrote about the book from a particular angle, obviously. But he told the story of your partner, who was involved with beating a prisoner.

Timoney Yes. I worked with him. I was partners with him for a short time, filling in. But I was actually a childhood friend. I wouldn't say childhood friend. He grew up in Washington Heights, but I knew him. We played football against one another. When I got into the 4-4 he was a trainee there, so I knew him very well. And I rode a police car with him and what-have-you, and to this day, I'm still friends with the guy. His name was Tommy Ryan. And I thought I'd use that Tommy Ryan incident in my book as, my book is all about success and failures, lessons learned. And Ryan, still in my career, may have been *the* most profound lesson, where what happens that night, what was allowed to happen. I was on vacation in Ireland.

Side 2

Timoney The organization was at fault, but there was a tremendous amount of culpability on the patrol sergeant that night, who was a jerk, who thought some of the stuff was funny, and who didn't intercede.

JK That's the worst part of the old idea of the police culture and the old New York Police Department.

Timoney Yes. Because what happened then, that station house, it's a very proud station house. We still have our meetings. We just had a reunion last September. They literally split the station. It was a very tight station, great camaraderie. But that case,

because you wound up having cops testifying for other cops, in a pretty ugly situation. Ryan got indicted for manslaughter and then convicted. But there were four other police officers that got indicted, but it was thrown out. They were just bad indictments anyway. I mean, there was one guy, Joe China, a Puerto Rican guy, they indicted him for beating another prisoner in the car. Because he wouldn't go to the Grand Jury without immunity, they said, you know, we're going to indict you. So they indicted him for beating the prisoner in the car. He said, "That's pretty interesting because I'm the only Puerto Rican at the scene, and I stayed in the apartment the whole time. I was the translator. So, if he was beaten in the car, it wasn't me!" He was the only one there. He was up doing the translating in the apartment, so the whole indictment was thrown out. But there was this rush to judgment at the time, because it was a highly volatile case. The 4-4, which had been in its previous location down on Cedric Avenue and by the Harlem River, we used to call it Cedric by the Sea, as if it was some pleasure palace. It went from that to the headline of the *Daily News*, 'Murder House' with a big picture. I've used that incident my entire career. And in all three departments, I told them, the most important person, the sergeant. And I'm telling you, these cops are going to screw up. I'll get to the cops. I want to know what the sergeant did. When I promote new sergeants, they hear from me. This is very easy. The cops, they're going to go out there and do the job. And you're going to make sure they do the job. Your job is to keep them out of trouble. You better do your job. Because my job is to make sure you do your job. I'm going to be doing my job. You won't like the way I do my job, but I'm doing my job, so you better do your job and they better do their job, and once we all understand that, everything will be fine. When you explain that to the cops, for example when I got to Philadelphia and then again in Miami, when I changed the shooting guidelines, no more shooting the cars and a whole host of other restrictions.

JK No more shooting at cars?

Timoney Yes. And one guy said, "Hey, aren't there any exceptions?" I said, "Sure, these are only guidelines. It will be a case-by-case situation. If I find you have tire tracks down your chest, I'll make an exception. Otherwise, get out of the way." And the cops get it and they respond, but you've got to go down to the roll calls. If you're going to do a radical policy change, you've got to go to roll call and sell it. You've got to give them the opportunity to ask questions why.

JK As a historian, I'm very fond of dumb facts, and I found a dumb fact that stood out. In the first twenty months of your time in Miami, no one fired at a civilian.

Timoney Not a single bullet.

JK Even in New York, they fire their guns from time to time.

Timoney Yes.

JK It couldn't have just been you standing up there saying, "There is no shooting, please. Thank you."

Timoney No, no, no. There were a couple things. The day I was sworn in, thirteen police officers who were going on trial in Federal Court. So, I had their attention. I had their attention. I said, "You don't want that. You don't want that for yourself. You don't want this for your family. That's not what you signed up for, okay? We're going to get through this together." So, we changed the policy. We changed the training. We tried to change the philosophical underpinnings. We also gave them Taser weapons. The Taser, even though I do not own stock in Taser. I hate the people that own Taser, but it's actually a good weapon. And where it's a really good weapon is in dealing with the so-called sometimes street people, or emotionally disturbed people. What we know about street people, EDPs [Emotionally Disturbed Persons], people that are bipolar, and every city has these encounters, and every city, whether it's Margaret Mitchell out in L.A., Windshield Wiper Charlie in Philadelphia, Avocado down in Miami, a whole bunch of them here in New York, they can be dangerous. They can have a tree branch, they can have a knife, they can have this, they can have that.

JK Eleanor Bumpers.

Timoney Yes. But they don't have guns. And so those situations, while they're very dangerous, a Taser is a perfect weapon. It gives you enough space, fifteen or twenty feet, you stay inside the zone of safety and take them out with that. And so, it's a fantastic weapon. So, in my first year in Miami, there's at least three instances, absolutely three officers would have had to use their weapons had they not had a Taser. Absolutely. So, it wasn't just going through roll call. It's never any just one thing. The other thing, you never can tell if things prevent something. You can't measure prevention because you don't know about it. You don't know if that's it; all you know is at the end of the day, nothing happened. But you don't know what caused it. In Miami, I got this from John Miller. In L.A., where he's working for Bratton. They had had a pretty bad shooting. I forget the circumstances. A couple of kids. A cop shot and killed them in a car. And Bratton was under, obviously, a great deal of pressure. So Miller says, "Let's reach out to Timoney. He's got all these policies." So, they reach out to me, one of Bratton's captains. Okay, I'm helping some guy, who's a lieutenant, who is going to give him all that stuff, fax it to him or however you're going to get it to him. So, the Captain from L.A. is talking about the cop who let ten shots go. So, my Lieutenant from Miami is telling him, "Oh, so, that wasn't his first shooting? He's had other shootings, right?" He said, "Yeah, he had two other shootings. How did you know that?" He said, "Well, he shot ten. Usually, your first shooting, you'll let one or two go. You get nervous, and then it gets easier." He said, "Really?" He said, "How many do you have?" He said, "I have eight." This is a Lieutenant in Miami, "I have eight shootings." He led the Miami Police Department. He said, "I almost had my ninth. I'm on patrol, I roll up on, there was a stick up at a bodega or wherever it was. A guy comes running out and he's holding his pants up. I'm going to take him out but I know that God damn Timoney." He said, "I chased the guy, and I think he's trying to get a gun." He had baggy pants, that's what he was holding up. He said, "I finally talked to the guy and he didn't have a gun." He said, "Thank God. In the back of my mind, I ain't shooting this guy. This guy, Timoney." So, there's something to it.

JK Yes. You know, when you were talking about the sergeants, I think it was Dwight Eisenhower who said, "The sergeants run the Army." And it's that level of control and patience.

Timoney I'm not going to be there at three o'clock in the morning. It's going to be the sergeants. Now, they can be there, or they can hang out, drinking coffee in the station house. And I want them out there. We train not just the sergeants. We train the 911 operators and the dispatchers. You get something going, get the sergeant on the air. Don't listen to the bullshit that he's doing something. No, get him on the air, get him over there. And we have a thing where you got to get on the air, in command, taking charge, until you're relieved by a higher authority. It's a fixed responsibility.

JK We could go on about the history of New York City and how the police intersect with it, and politics and economics and everything else, but let's talk about your particular career in the NYPD. You rose steadily through the NYPD.

Timoney Right.

JK Number one, you didn't have to have that kind of ambition. Not everyone takes all of those tests or looks for promotions.

Timoney Right.

JK A lot of people don't want to go above Lieutenant or Captain, for obvious reasons.

Timoney Yes.

JK But you did. So, what makes you different? What was the motivation?

Timoney I think it's just strictly ego.

JK A technical term for it.

Timoney Yes. Some guy called me up last week, I was down in Philadelphia, and said, "You said something to the effect, 'it was great being a cop, but it's even better being a boss.'"

JK But you did work your way up through the ranks.

Timoney Oh, yes. And it was fun, it was challenging. You know, when I made captain, sergeant was a huge rank because you're getting into management; lieutenant was, I happened to have an interesting job as a lieutenant, I was in charge of police shooting investigations for the Chief of the Department. So, I was allowed to get into all sorts of studies. I liked statistics. I liked studies and all that stuff. The academic side, I

loved doing that. So, all of that worked out well. But by-and-large, lieutenant is a horrible rank. It's a kind of a waste land between sergeant and captain, with not much to do, not much responsibility. You're just kind of waiting to take the captain's exam. The captain, you're now not just part of middle management, but you're running a precinct. You're your own little chief. And you get to rearrange the furniture and the chairs and you've got a hundred and fifty, two hundred cops . I was in Midtown South, we had four hundred cops.

JK You're heading a precinct is bigger than the police department in Syracuse, or Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Timoney Yes, yes, exactly. They'd have a hundred and twenty or a hundred and thirty. Here you are at Midtown South, four hundred cops. So, you have a little mini police department, and you get to do all sorts of great things. But being a captain, this is going to sound like arrogant or something, but actually, you get treated differently by the public itself. It's just, there's this aura about a captain. And I remember saying, "Jesus, where's that come from." Because I've been a cop and a sergeant in Harlem and the South Bronx, and now I'm a captain down in Manhattan, they're calling me 'Sir.' Wow! I've never been called 'Sir' before! I've been called everything in the book, but 'Sir.' It's just, you're at a different realm. You're all of a sudden, meeting with peers from other city agencies, from the business community. You're going to community meetings, not as some cop, but as a leader, kind of a mover and shaker in that community. Not in the city, but in that little community. That's pretty heady experience, and it's great experience, and you get to learn to, oh, oh! You know, when you're a cop, you can say any God damn thing you want! You can say anything stupid. They say, "Well, it's a cop. What do you expect?" Cops can never be held accountable.

JK "What do you want us to do? Your kids are the ones who are doing this crap!"

Timoney Right. Politics stuff, all the most inconsiderate stuff. All of a sudden, you're a captain, you're expected to be able to play the game of politics. You're expected to be able to mimic, what's the philosophy down at Headquarters, how is this going to fly down there. You've got to watch your Ps and Qs. It's the first time when you say, oh, I've got to kind of grow up and mature and be cognizant of what I'm saying. I really am. I'm representing the Police Commissioner down here, at this level, and the Mayor, and so, you can't be uttering Timoney's philosophy. People don't give a shit about Timoney's philosophy. This is the police department, right, and you march lockstep, and whatever the operating philosophy is of the day. So, the captain is this fantastic rank where you get to do your own thing, but you also learn the game, the politics.

JK Do you remember a time, you become a Captain, and suddenly everything you say matters where you were, "Oops, I really shouldn't have said that?"

Timoney Oh, yes. I was chastised quite a few times. We had a horrible drug problem at 43rd and 6th Avenue, where the HBO Building was. The drug dealers plied their trade there.

JK What year was this?

Timoney This would have been 1985 or 1986.

JK I did see Bryant Park.

Timoney Yes. I've got stories of Bryant Park in my book. And this one particular thing, I was going to clean this plaza up. It was disgraceful. Right around noon time, I'm going to make a statement. I had the Narcotics Division respond with a bunch of cops, and I kind of sealed off the entire plaza. We wouldn't let anybody out, and we locked up all these people. Meanwhile, the *New York Times* was a block away. They were down there, taking pictures. I guess I was accused of suspending the constitution for a half hour. As I roused all the junkies and drug dealers.

JK The Fourth Amendment, Habeas Corpus, what else do you got?

Timoney Yes. And so, I get the phone call and started screaming at me, "Timoney, what the hell are you doing? Everybody's upset! You're suspending the Constitution!" I said, "Listen. This thing is a mess. I've got to clean it up. It's disgraceful what's going on there." So, what are you going to do?

JK The officer in uniform doesn't have the discretion to go after every drug deal that he sees, but you have to make a decision as to when to go after a drug dealing situation.

Timoney Yes, and it had gotten completely out of hand. It had gotten completely out of hand. So, we did it.

JK So, you're a Captain. You move up to Inspector. William Bratton comes in as Police Commissioner, and he promotes you over.

Timoney Well, when Bratton came in, I was an Inspector and I was handling most of the big events for the City, back in the early 1990s. Christopher Columbus quincentennial, a whole bunch of things. I handled the site selection committee visit for the Democratic National Convention, and then we eventually, I went to Washington. We eventually got it. And so, I was put in charge of running the 1992 Democratic Convention as Inspector and wound up in the process, we had been given, I think, six million dollars back then, for police over-time and what-have-you. I spent three million. So, I gave the City back a check for three million. Yes. Right after, the following week, I was promoted to One Star Chief.

JK So, all it takes is three million bucks and you get the star?

Timoney You can buy your own star, yes. So, I got that and then I was in Manhattan South, and then, for about six months I was a One Star Chief. And then I got a call from Ray Kelly, who was the new Police Commissioner, first time around, offering, not

offering, he was giving me, in New York you don't get the choice, to come work for him as the head of OMAP, the Office of Management Analysis and Planning. There were, back then, probably twenty One Star Chiefs, maybe twenty-two One Star Chiefs, and then like eleven or twelve Two Star Chiefs. And then seven Three Star Chiefs. So, I was one of thirty One Star Chiefs, so you could argue they're all the same. But OMAP, is the One Star Chief who works directly with the Police Commissioner, and everybody who had that position before me, including Ray Kelly, jumped into pretty significant positions. Ray Kelly went from there, as a Two Star Chief in OMAP, right to First Deputy Commissioner. So, I worked that position for a year for Kelly, his last year, and when Bratton came in, I had immediate access to Bratton, as far as breaching the transition. Plus, he had heard about me. He heard about a few people, this guy, this guy, this guy, Julian, Timoney, these are sharp guys. And then actually interviewed myself and Mike Julian. Mike was my best friend, he was a One Star Chief also. A really, really smart guy, lawyer. He interviewed Julian first and then he interviewed me. Julian went out and I came in and Bratton looked at me and he says, "That's some friend you've got there." I said, "Really?" He said, "Yeah, I've just been interviewing him, and he said you are the best guy for this job in the Police Department. I wish I had a friend like that." So, I got the Four Star Chief. Mike went from a One Star to a Three Star. He's the Chief of Personnel. And [Lou] Anemone went from a One Star to a Three Star, Chief of Patrol.

JK A lot of young guys suddenly jumping into control of the NYPD.

Timoney Yes. I go through it in my book, because if it was up to me, obviously Bratton is going to make the ultimate decision. But he's new, so, it lands on my desk: "Put together your team. We'll go over it, but what are you looking at?" I talk about this in my book. About when Ben Ward brought all the bosses down, and now, all of a sudden, they're going to be fighting corruption again, and forget about fighting crime. I said, "Boy, if I ever get to the top, that'll be different." I understand that saying, "Be careful what you wish for." Eventually I do get to the top, now what, big mouth? Big mouth. Bratton gives me the Four Star job, "Give you two days to put together a team, two or three days, and let me know what it's going to look like." So, I go home, and these were friends of mine. Some of them were my bosses. Some of them I didn't like, but most of them I loved. I stayed awake the first night, and I stayed awake the second night. I tossed and turned. And finally, the second night, about three in the morning, I just said to myself, "They all have to go." So, I went to see, my immediate boss was Dave Scott, who I'd replaced as the Four Star Chief. I knew, I thought, he would say, wait a minute. Because at least two of the guys that I was saying got to go, they were tight friends of his. So, I went into his office before we go to see Bratton. I tell him, and Dave said, "Okay, fine. Let's go see Bratton." That was a surprise.

JK There was no, "But you've got to keep Billy because Billy's been" --?

Timoney Yes. None. I said, "Wow." So, we went to see Bratton, told Bratton, "Here's what it looks like." Fine, let's go. Let's do it.

JK And what was your reasoning for an entire generation of brass had to go? Because that's how it turned out.

Timoney The second time. The first time that happened was under Pat Murphy.

JK Yes. He let go of almost everyone in his three years, a complete.

Timoney Right. That's what he did. These are the first ones. But within the first year, we had changed, there were 76 Precincts. We had changed 67, 66 out of 76 Precincts the first year, in addition to the entire top brass. So, it was a radical change. People used to say, "Well, you know, this Department needs a good shake-up." You hear guys over coffee, guys who are looking, they're a captain looking at becoming an inspector and an inspector looking to be a One Star Chief. They're going to shake it up? Well, Murphy come in, the place needs some blood-letting. We had a series of Chief Commissioners. Ben Ward, being the most notable, but also Lee Brown, no change we're talking about. No change. Now, if somebody retired, they would make that right, but there was no wholesale change. And so, the place had to be shook up. Nothing against the gentlemen that were serving then, it just needed to send a message that Young Turks were in charge.

JK It's not just that you're all in your forties and the cops are in their twenties and thirties. I mean, is it simply a matter of age and that the old guys are, the old guys are out of touch, or?

Timoney You know, I never thought of it that way. Some people have said that. I think maybe Len Levitt is one of the people that has written about this stuff. There was a double generation gap. I just thought it had to be shook-up.

JK Why?

Timoney Because the police departments, especially a place like the NYPD, where you have discretion, to promote above the rank of captain, you know, people live for promotions, they'll work harder. It's the whole notion. It's a form of capitalism.

JK Yes. As you said, ego.

Timoney Ego. We also, I think for the first time, we really did set up a meritocracy. I go through this in my book at length. There was a guy named Pat Brennan, Lord rest his soul. Pat was the captain of the 5th, an Irish guy. I was at the time forty-five. Pat must have been fifty-five. He's an older guy, silver hair. He's got a kid on the job. A very fun-loving guy, just great. He was one of the oldest Captains around. He benefitted the most from Compstat. He got three promotions in a year-and-a-half. Because he was the top captain performer. It has nothing to do with age, you see. He got promoted right away from the 5th, and then he went to the 7-0 Precinct, did a fantastic job there, and was promoted to full inspector. He stayed in the 7-0. And apparently, unbeknownst to me, Anemone had all his captains in at the beginning of 1995 and told them all, by the way,

just to give you guys a little competition. Whoever has the highest decline in crime this year, of all of you, some of you will be promoted, anyway, but I'm guaranteeing you that one, whoever has it. So, sure enough, the end of 1995, who comes leading the pack? Pat Brennan. So, January of 1996, we're doing the Promotion Advisory Board. I sat on there, along with Mike Martin. Mike was the Chief of Personnel. And Louie Anemone, the Chief of the Department. We're going through, we're sorting out, what we're going these recommendations. Anemone says, "I've got a bit of a problem." "What's the problem?" He said, "I started to open my mouth. I said whoever." And so Brennan was not up for promotion. There were some senior people who had been inspectors longer. He said, "Brennan turns out to have the highest, like fifteen percent decline in crime." I said, "All right." He said, "I feel bad because I set-up, I put my reputation on him." I said, "Louie, you want to promote him, you promote him. Be my guest." "Really?" "Yeah!" What a message this is going to send. So, Pat Brennan, as a result of Compstat, probably our oldest captain, certainly the oldest precinct commander – got three promotions. Deputy Inspector, Inspector, and One Star Chief – in a three year period. Unprecedented. That was the idea of the meritocracy; you controlled your own destiny. And the whole idea of, for the first time ever, there was always lip service, "Patrol is the back bone of the job." That was all bullshit. After all, the high swingers are the Detectives, the Academy. They were here, they were there. Nobody, only fools were in patrol, right? We actually made a reality, certainly in my time in the police department. These Precinct Commanders, these are the ones. We're putting all of them, they're our go-to people. Not necessarily the cops. But the ones who are going to implement these policies, going to carry it out, that we're going to hold accountable, we're going to give the responsibility and then we'll hold them accountable. You hear these terms – delegation, responsibility, accountability. You'll hear them, they'll be used interchangeably, and people don't quite understand them. Here's how it works. I delegate responsibility to a captain. But that's easy. Do this, do this, right? But for him to do his job, he's got to have authority. So, I delegate him the responsibility. I also give him the authority. What this means is, I don't care what you do, Captain Timoney, or whoever you are, go do it. You've got fifty cops turning out tonight at roll call, in uniform? You want to put them all in plain clothes? I don't care. Your command. You run it as you see fit. You've got my authority to do anything you want. So, four o'clock today, you've got my authority to do whatever you want. At twelve o'clock, I'm going to hold you accountable that the public is properly serviced, you've made arrests, etc., and that's the whole idea. So, you delegate the responsibility. You give the authority, and then you hold them accountable. That's how it works.

JK And you also say, "If this is how you're going to do it," – this is how a friend of mine who is a retired Lieutenant said, "And I have your back."

Timoney Oh, absolutely!

JK I will protect you so that you can do what you want to do, and I'll make sure that I'm running the interference for you.

Timoney Right. That's got to be part of the deal. You can't leave them out there nothing by themselves. If they're trying to do the right thing, you've got to stand by them.

JK And if the heat comes down on them, you can't be invisible.

Timoney Yes. I'll take it. It doesn't bother me.

JK Now, Compstat, and coming out of the whole broken-windows theory of police. Was it really a revelation for the NYPD to put broken-windows philosophy in place? Am I supposed to believe that the broken-windows theory of policing had no place in the NYPD until Bill Bratton and company came in?

Timoney No. Actually, the guy that really, on broken-windows, the guy that brought it in was Ben Ward. Ben Ward was exposed to it in 1984 or 1985. He went up for one of those symposiums at Harvard, and he came back and it was required reading for all of us captains. And it was a whole notion of dealing with the quality of life. We did a decent job dealing with the quality of life, but it was done in a haphazard fashion. When the quality of life, the broken-windows theory, in 1984 when Bratton came in we developed six or seven strategies, written-out strategies where every cop got them, on how we're going to be dealing with drugs and guns, robberies, stolen cars. The quality of life was just a strategy. Broken-windows is the underlying philosophy, if you will. And that was, depending on the neighborhoods, it was a powerful tool. You should be doing quality of life, even if there weren't any, and there were plenty of anti-crime benefits, but even if there wasn't, you should be doing that anyway, because people deserve to have a decent quality of life, right? You shouldn't have to watch guys drinking out in the street, pissing on the sidewalks, all of that. That's part of your job. But there were benefits that accrue. Some are more easily serviceable than others. So, for example, the enforcement of the open drinking beer in public spaces in the Village, is a perfect case in point. On the weekends in the West Village, kids, middle class kids, all from the suburbs, sons of firemen and cops come into the Village, drink, get in trouble, "Let's bash the gays," do all sorts of silly shit.

JK Stuff they wouldn't think of doing at home.

Timoney Right. But they are crimes! And so, but they wound up getting arrested sometimes. Sometimes they don't get arrested, they get away. No problem. We started at seven o'clock at night. The minute they get off the train, they come in, confiscated their beer, give them the citation, send them home. Doing that --

JK Right at the Christopher Street PATH station.

Timoney Exactly. The nonsense that was going to happen ten, eleven, twelve, later on, didn't happen. It just reduced the robbery. It's the same thing, and what's crazy about this is, people didn't think about it. George Kellig writes about it. In the subway system, when they started to enforce the turnstile jumping, by the way, the quality of life

enforcement, the one thing that people don't realize, cops hate doing it! They hate doing it!

JK They want to go after the bad guys!

Timoney Thank you! The sexy crimes, the rapes, the robberies, that's all bullshit, you know? So, you've got to do it. It's got to be supervised. Quality of life has got to be supervised, and it's labor-intensive. In any event, the jumping the turnstiles, there were, either two hundred and forty thousand or two hundred and eighty thousand people on a daily basis that jumped the turnstiles. There was one train station in Brooklyn where they expected that eighty percent of the people didn't pay. People who pay are chumps because everybody's jumping over, right? Once you started the enforcement, and what they did was they let the cops work in plain clothes. They like doing that. To do this ticket enforcement. Once they started to enforce it, that two hundred forty thousand got cut by two-thirds. "I guess they're breaking chops, can't do that anymore." People behaved themselves! So, all of a sudden, the numbers are manageable and they continue doing it. Within the groups that are now jumping the turnstiles, are guys who are jumping turnstiles to go into the system, to commit robberies and purse-snatches. If you think for a second that some guy who's going to do a purse-snatching on the subway.

JK "Oh, wait. Let me get a token."

Timoney Yeah! Come on! It's not going to happen! So, by virtue of the fact that you're doing that, you stop them from getting into the system. Then, of course, you've got the other benefits, they're carrying drugs, they're carrying weapons, they're carrying this and they're carrying that, and so on and so forth. They never even got into the system. They got grabbed. So, the quality of life stuff works. I saw it work in Miami, in Little Havana, where the immigrants, the day workers, they just drink. It's hot as hell, right? I don't mind you drinking! The problem is, by ten o'clock, they're beating the piss out of them, they're stabbing, they're stealing their gold chains, right? That's a robbery! That is the same thing as if you went in and stuck up a bank, unfortunately. What do we do? We lock them up early on for drinking in public, and all of a sudden, you don't have this nonsense at the end of the night, where they're stabbing one another or robbing one another. But that was only one strategy. We had strategies for everything. That was the quality of life strategy. But the quality of life one got the most attention because it appeals to the public, the press. People identify with it. As I say, I do lots of community meetings in some of the toughest neighborhoods in those three cities. I never once heard a complaint about murder. They're probably drug dealers shooting other drug dealers, right?

JK They're killing each other.

Timoney Right. Unless there's some poor kid, a nine-year-old with a stray bullet, then you have outrage. But in general, nobody gives a shit. But quality of life, low life drug dealer, this, that, that's all you hear are quality of life complaints. So, if that's what they're complaining about, why wouldn't you be addressing it? There are crime reduction

benefits, but even if there wasn't, this is what they want. The people know what they want.

JK So, did the numbers come down so quickly as to address quality of life issues, crime goes down. Was it so immediately apparent?

Timoney Yes.

JK It was immediate?

Timoney Yes. As a matter of fact, for the first couple of months we were kind of scratching our heads saying, wow. The overall numbers were down even more than we thought. Now, part of that we kind of new, this is the old textbooks. Expect what you didn't expect. We knew for the first time we were focused on crime, and we were thinking about it, and unfortunately you didn't have the opportunity to meet Jack Maple. An absolute genius. Smarter than anything around. And that's all he spent his time doing was thinking about this stuff. He's been a great, one of my childhood friends was Jack's partner in the transit system, and he said, "Jack was like a – he was a hunter." I mean, he would talk to these kids, these robbers, on the trains. He knew the criminal minds. He absorbed all of that. He knew how they thought, he knew how to checkmate them. Just a genius. And so, it was Jack's, really, the behind it. It wasn't us. It was Jack Maple that kind of created this whole thing.

JK Yes, he started with Bratton in the Transit Police and then came with him in the NYPD.

Timoney Yes. But some of it, we obviously knew, some of it was common sense. Now, the other interesting part on the crime stuff, it wasn't as if prior to Bratton getting there that there weren't great, great crime fighters in the NYPD. Absolutely was. The problem was, there was no corporate strategy, downtown.

JK You mean a precinct here, a sergeant there, a unit over here would have --

Timoney Well, it was really idiosyncratic. Here's what happened. I was the captain in the 5th Precinct. My borders were the 7th Precinct and the 1st Precinct. I came from a crime-fighting background. I had the Bronx, I was narcotics. I liked it. I liked locking people up. I liked a chase, I liked a foot chase, I liked all that bullshit, right? The guy with the 1st Precinct, Philip Lee, had spent his time in IA, so his thing was he wanted, IA was his focus, right? The other guy, the 7th, had been a big boss at the Academy, or Captain of the Academy. His thing was training. So, you do your own thing, whatever interests you! Headquarters doesn't give a shit, just make sure there's no corruption. So, there was no corporate direction. I mean, imagine running GM. Somebody want to make cars, somebody wants to make golf carts.

JK So, let me get this straight. It took corporate direction from the top, One Police Plaza, to say to every Precinct Commander, Job One, crime has to go down?

Timoney Not just that. You better put in place the systems to deal with it.

JK But there hadn't been an expectation before that crime in your precinct is going to go down.

Timoney Right. Well, I'll give you an example. SENU, Street Enforcement Narcotics Units, are the local, five or six guys, at the precinct level, for the precinct commander to deal with the low level stuff on the corner, chase away and lock them up, right? To deal with community gripes. By the time I became a Four Star Chief, twelve or thirteen precincts, not every precinct had them, because some precincts don't have any narcotics problems. Like Riverdale in the Bronx, doesn't have a narcotics problem, so you wouldn't have a SENU unit. Just the tougher precincts. But the 5th Precinct in Chinatown had a SENU unit because you had some real shitholes there. Twelve or thirteen precincts that had had SENU had done away with them. Captains had done away with them. Not because they were short personnel, they needed more personnel. They were too dangerous. There were corruption problems. It was serious corruption. I had to order them, "Hey, start up the SENU. You got my permission. Start it up. Don't worry about it. If they get in trouble, we'll lock them up!"

JK If they get in trouble, we lock them up.

Timoney Yes. But don't say, oh, fear of corruption. No, no. I'm not going to do my job because I'm afraid of corruption. No! And that permeated the NYPD. That was the down side of the Knapp.

JK Well, it's also Knapp and the Mollen Commission, also, the second wave of these things. Do you buy the generational corruption theory?

Timoney No. Like Mike Julian, my buddy who is now in Australia. No, no. Every twenty years. No Every twenty years some stupid mayor decides he's going to have a corruption panel, but there's corruption every day! You deal with it! It's part of life. It's there today. There's no need for a new commission. What the Knapp Commission did, it disrupted forever organized pads. So, it went from pads, which was you ubiquitous, that survived all the other commissions, the one in the 1950s, the one in the Thirties, all of it. Knapp knocked it out. But you still had, it went from organized pads to what are called scores. Individual police officers, acting on their own, doing their own thing, but not a network. Could they be working with two or three others, yeah, they could, but they're making a score. There's nothing organized about it. There's nothing predictable about it. It doesn't go, like a pad, you feel like a Christmas package, like this.

JK And X amount goes to the captain, X amount to the sergeant.

Timoney Right. There's a great story, when I got to 4-4 Precinct. There was a guy, every precinct has them, they were called the captain's bagman, who was making money for the captain. So, this guy, he was actually an Irish guy, but he looked like Dean Martin.

Really good looks. He had dark hair, dark eyes, an Irish guy. He really looked good. And he went around collecting for the captain, and he went to a liquor store on 170th Street and Jerome Avenue. There was a guy named Sy, as you can just imagine, he saw a sign for a liquor store, and the place got crowded around Chrstimastime, and Sy had put up, even though he's Jewish, he put up a little Christmas tree. And he had a parking ticket attached. If you remember back then, in the 1960s, there was a little rope where you tied it on. So, he had tied it on to the Christmas tree as an ornament to let the cops, say, "Hey, I'm taking care of you guys. You're still summons my van outside, right?" So, Jimmy walks in. "Hey, Sy, what's going on?" And the place is crowded. Sy said, "Jimmy, the tree, look at it. Fucking guys, you know." Jimmy, he was embarrassed. He said, "Sy, next year, get a fucking bigger tree!"

JK Cop humor!

Timoney Yes.

JK Getting back to Compstat, you really put the fear of God or the fear of somebody into the precinct commanders about knowing their numbers, knowing their precincts and demanding accountability from them.

Timoney Yes.

JK How did they respond and was there a downside?

Timoney I didn't see any downside. I really didn't. It's been written about, it's been talked about, it's been this, it's been that. What I saw, and I've talked about it, and I was talking about it when it was happening, whether it was Patty Brennan, Artie Storch. Artie had the 106th Precinct. These guys would go over Compstat, and they would come up with solutions to problems. I said, "I thought I was a sharp guy. I could sit here for a hundred years and I couldn't come up with the stuff." What Compstat did is, you're giving them the authority to do whatever you've got to do. Within the law, but creativity. It released the creative genius of all these captains, and the initiative. And they'd come up and say, "Wow, I wouldn't have thought of that." And so, all the captains, it's competitive process, "well, I'm going to use that." There's nothing more flattering than stealing somebody else's idea. I give them all the credit in the world. Take it and run. And so, you had this cross-pollination that was going on. They were learning from one another. The entire department was learning. I just thought it was a thing of beauty, I really did. Now, was it a risk? Did they go too far? Yes. On more than one occasion, I had to have Jack Maple and Louie Anemone into my office and I said, "Listen, knock it off. There are some cops there. You're starting to be abusive to a Two Star Chief." One time with Simonetti, to put up, because he was lying, because he always exaggerated at Compstat, he was a Two Star Chief in Staten Island or Brooklyn, or wherever he was at the time. So, Jack had finally had it with all his fibs, and he put a big picture of Pinocchio on the screen.

JK That's abusive! "We were prepared for you this time. We've got a special"

Timoney Yes. Then, people from all over the country came to visit. Some adopted it, others didn't. I debated a guy, when I was the Police Commissioner of Philadelphia, I debated the Chief of Austin, Texas, at the LBJ Library, on Compstat. And during the debate he said, "I had gone up there. I've never seen anything more disgraceful in my life. Completely unprofessional. You don't treat senior officers that way. I would never allow that." I said, "Listen, New York is a tough city. NYPD is a tough Department. That's New York. That's the way New York is. Cab drivers are obnoxious; cops are obnoxious. That's how they treat one another, right? You've got to take it to your own and meld it, with your own personality. And you see, you do your own personality, that's how you do it. So, in your case, it'll be, like your personality, dull!

JK Yes! And like your city!

Timoney Yes. But when I got to Philadelphia, I wrote this in my book, I was cognizant of that criticism, I really was. I meant to make it more collegial, more fun, more humor, more all this sort of stuff. I think we achieved it. Now, it's easy for me to say that. Some people on the receiving end would say, "It's so tough." I didn't think it was that tough. I really didn't. And most of the really good captains, it was fine. They knew what they were doing. They do.

JK Because if you know what you're doing, and you're producing, here, here are the numbers.

Timoney And I always made a point, this is where, myself and Bratton think alike in a lot of things, but we are different in this one area, and it's a significant area. I've never used the word. I've used the word 'quota' but not imposed a quota. I don't make the numerical goals part of, what I do is, you better know what's going on in your area. If you can't get it done, let me know. If you need Narcotics, you need help with it, I'll get you the help. I'll do my part. You make sure you know what you've got and you deal with it, all right? Work your tail off, I don't care what happens to crime, it goes up, it goes down, because you're working. If you are working, don't worry about it. The numbers will be fine. And wherever the numbers are, the numbers are. I don't do, we don't need ten or fifteen --

JK Ten percent down this month.

Timoney No. Because when you start to tell the police officers, you start to put a tad too much pressure. You're subliminally encouraging screwing with the numbers. And so I don't. And so I tell them, I don't have any quotas. And I don't care if crime goes up. I actually don't care. But what I do care about is, you know the problems in the area, the crime in the area, you've got a plan to do it. That's all. And that's all we can rightfully ask for.

JK Yes. If you know about this problem, we want you to be dealing with it. You can't solve the problem until you know about it.

Timoney Yes. And when I went to Miami, we kind of perfected that style, even the way we set-up around, the way we actually built a special room just for Compstat. We knocked the walls up and created more of a corporate conference table type, where there's an exchange going back and forth.

JK You had remarkable success as Number Two to Commissioner Bratton.

Timoney Yes.

JK I went to a presentation by an academic historian about studying homicides in Philadelphia, and he came up with a chart comparing Philadelphia and New York. He said, "Now, you can see. Philadelphia and New York are in lockstep all the way up, and then suddenly, they reach this point, and Philadelphia still has murders, but New York drops all the way down. What the hell?" He said, "I'm trying to understand that." And I looked at him and said, "It's Compstat."

Timoney Yes. In Philadelphia you'll see.

JK Your time there.

Timoney Yes. Now, the problem with Philly, what New York doesn't have. Philadelphia, it's a majority African-American, which brings with it its own problems. But more important than that, so, it's got a much poorer population than New York. But more important than that, of the top ten cities every year, every year, the highest proportion of homicides by guns is always Philadelphia. Eighty-three or eighty-four percent of gun homicides.

Tape 2, Side 1

JK We were comparing Philadelphia and New York and the special problem Philadelphia had with guns.

Timoney With the guns. Philadelphia, year after year after year, of the Top Ten cities in America will lead the Top Ten cities every year in the proportion of homicides committed by guns. It's usually around eighty-three or eighty-four percent. New York, which is a strict gun control state, you'll see around sixty-three to sixty-five percent. There's almost a twenty-five percent straight differential. If you convert that to one hundred percent, you almost get a twenty-five percent benefit by having stricter gun control and stricter gun laws. I didn't realize it until I got to Philadelphia how loose the laws were, that Pennsylvania is the second biggest gun state in the nation, after Texas. The Police Commissioner of Philadelphia, unlike the Police Commissioner of New York, signs off on pistol permits, pistol carry permits. It's impossible, almost, to get a pistol permit to carry in New York. In Philadelphia, I can't deny anybody that wants it unless, one, they're certified as nuts, and how are you going to prove that? Or they have a conviction of some kind of a serious felony. That comes right down from Harrisburg.

There is no discretion zone. Dozens and dozens and dozens and thousands of people from Philadelphia have guns, with permits. And then you have the gun shows that go on on a regular basis. We've made more arrests. We had guys, drug gangs going with their girlfriends up to Valley Forge to the gun shows, buying three or four hundred guns at a time, bring them down to South Philly, selling them out of the trunks of cars. So, Philadelphia has a huge, huge gun problem, which is why it will always, even when it's doing well in homicides, it will always have a high homicide rate. But we did manage, when I got there, under Ed Redell, the homicide rate had not gone below four hundred. It was as high as five hundred in 1990, but it was always around four hundred fifteen, four hundred eighteen, four hundred thirty, in the low four hundreds. My first year, we got it from four hundred down to three thirty-seven. The next year down to two ninety-six. The next year back up to 3-0-1, or 3-0-6. The next year we were down to two ninety-two. And that looks like, the best as I can tell, plus the criminal justice system does not work at all in Philadelphia. That's probably as good as you're going to get. Maybe you can get it down to two hundred fifty, but it's always going to be stubbornly high

JK Because you've got those guns out there.

Timoney Got the guns. You've got a criminal justice system that's completely dysfunctional. Completely.

JK New York in the 1970s and 1980s?

Timoney As bad as.

JK As bad as?

Timoney If not worse. It's incredible.

JK You have been extraordinarily generous with your time here. One thing about you leaving New York. You should have been Police Commissioner.

Timoney Some say that. Actually, the papers had me as the odds-on favorite, too.

JK Yes, exactly.

Timoney Don't bet on odds-on favorites.

JK But things really went sour with Mayor Giuliani, with Bill Bratton and his entire team.

Timoney Yes.

JK And that's really unfortunate because it was a successful transformation of the NYPD.

Timoney Yes. But at the end of the day, he's the Mayor and he gets the final say. But for me, personally, it worked out much better, because I probably could not have survived.

JK Under Giuliani?

Timoney Yes. And Bill will be the first to tell you. Actually, Bill didn't have a cross word with the guy, you know? Where I was always fighting with them, I was number two, I was always over there, knocking heads with these guys. I think they thought I was too much. There was real resentment towards the NYPD by the Giuliani administration because they felt, especially under Ben Ward, that the police department was way too independent of the Mayor. That Ben Ward had way too much power, and that Koch didn't control of him. But Ed Koch was a bright man. Ed Koch said, listen, the cops, they screw up all the time. I need to be in the position to be far enough away so that if I have to make my judgment, I can make my judgment. I can't be involved and then make judgments on it. And Giuliani found himself that he was so involved that even when the NYPD was wrong, even when the NYPD officer who killed a guy said, "I screwed up," Giuliani said, "No, you didn't." You know, "The guy's no altar boy." The guy was an altar boy. And he whips out the criminal record and television. Giuliani had entangled himself so much into the NYPD that all he could do was defend the NYPD, even when it was wrong. And that was, I can remember Koch saying, "No, I've got to stay away. Because at the end of the day, I've got to make a final judgment if they screw up. If I'm in there with them, how will I judge them?"

JK You took the job in Philadelphia, and you're coming from a, if I can use the word, 'progressive' police culture.

Timoney Yes.

JK A police culture that embraces innovation.

Timoney Yes.

JK A police culture that respects education and has certain demands on the force vis a vis enforcement of the laws, behavior, corruption, whatever. You went to Philadelphia a completely different police culture.

Timoney Completely different. Completely. Anti-intellectual. I don't mean that in the snobbish sense. You had a former Chief of Police, and mayor, say, "Hey, I don't have a high school education. Cops don't need a high school education." Mr. Rizzo. So, it's that attitude. But when I went there, I started this humongous education program. We brought colleges in and we started this stuff. It's a seven thousand officer department. We had over a thousand police officers signing up for college. I created scholarships. I got money through a foundation.

JK One out of seven?

Timoney Yes.

JK And Philadelphia was just a high school education to get in?

Timoney Or a GED. I had over a thousand interested right away. I've had guys as recently as last week running to Philadelphia. A cop that just became a lawyer. He said, "I would never do that." I've had so many people tell me, "I would have never done that." You'd have to start telling me about the education. There's one guy who is now a chief, a black kid, Keith Sadler. He was a bit of a lazy kid, you know? But he was taking the Civil Service exam and passed them. And his mother, she whacked him in the back of the head and said, "I'm watching your boss on TV. You better go to school." He called me when I was in Miami and he said, "I just wanted to let you know that I just finished my Masters' Degree." He had nothing. He called me six years later and said, "I owe everything to you and my mother watching you on TV extolling the virtues of education." She smacked me in the head and said, "You lazy good-for-nothing, go get an education." I've had lots of Philadelphia cops. So, it wasn't that they were stupid. Nobody encouraged them. Nobody took it upon themselves.

JK Do you feel that you left a lasting mark in Philadelphia?

Timoney Oh, yeah. Oh, without a doubt. Out of the three cities I worked in, I think I'm loved more in Philadelphia than anywhere. It's extraordinary. And especially with the African-American community, which is extraordinary. A white guy from New York. Wow. To this day, I was there this week, I can't walk along, I was there with Mayor Diaz three weeks ago. He said, "I can't believe you." He said, "How long you been out of here?" I said, "Eight years." Everywhere we go, the cab drivers, "Hey, Commissioner! Wish you were back." Especially the Blacks. They have a black mayor and a black police chief. There's this fondness.

JK Well, you're there, addressing the concerns, the black community has law and order concerns that the police department in Philadelphia are simply, you know, "We're coming in to fight crime. We're not getting out of our cars." So, if you make those changes, the public notices.

Timoney Yes.

JK And Miami? That is a minefield.

Timoney Yeah, and it's kind of rife with politics. But I was very fortunate in that the Mayor, Mayor Diaz, he's the guy, the reason why I went there. I had never been to Miami, till I got the phone call. But he and I hit it off right away. We are best friends. We're not just professional friends; we're social friends. Seven years now, there were fights with the unions. We did a bang-up job on the crime front, on the police shooting front. As you mentioned earlier, twenty months without a single bullet being discharged. We had a few shootings, no problems. They were all legit. There was no racial aspect to

them. We went another twelve months without a bullet being discharged and a few more shootings. Not one controversial shooting in seven years. Not one shooting at a car when they're about twenty-five percent of all police shootings. And no racial animus. None of the normal indicia of a screwed-up place and all that. The only real issue was the union, a knock-out drag-out brawl. I covet my management rights and responsibilities. I'm not looking to share them. And I don't back down from a fight, and sometimes I even picked the fights, I even start them.

JK Was there anything I didn't ask you about that you're just dying to say?

Timoney No. You know, I've got a fondness in my heart for this place because this is where it all began. I had some great, great teachers here, including, there was a wonderful woman, Flora Rhetta Shriver. She was the one that wrote *Sybil*. She taught an English/Speech class back at the old Academy. This is back in 1969 or 1970. And she was so pro-police, so pro-police. And she talked about police brutality. Back then the Black Panthers were all the rage. Cops getting killed. She'd say, "What about Panther brutality!" And she'd sit there and she'd smoke vegetarian cigarettes. Oh, she was a wonderful woman. What was really interesting with her, we just had the anniversary of Kent State, which is very, very sad. When that happened, most colleges brought their semester to an end, across the country. John Jay let it be optional. So you had full-time students and you had the people that knew the cops and what-have-you. She thought it was quite revealing out of the, for argument's sake, she had twenty students, the class I was in, ten full-time students and ten cops. So, the option was that you could just take whatever mark you had now and just leave. All the full-time students took the mark and left, and all the cops stayed until the very end of the semester. She said, "That's the difference in the students. The cops have the responsibility. They know they have to do the full course and stay." Those were tough times.

JK The things I haven't asked you about fill hundreds of pages, because you did have the whole radical thing and political groups setting off bombs all over the city all the time. When I do this chronology of New York City crime, there were how many bombs going off in 1980 whatever? And setting them off at random everywhere! It was really a different time.

Timoney Yes, the FALN.

JK FALN, the Black Liberation Army, so-called, the crazy white kids in the East Village.

Timoney Yes. Who is the other one? The one out at Kennedy Airport, was it the Croatians or Serbs, whatever the hell they were?

JK Yes. I think he set off a bomb in the La Guardia terminal in a locker, and it was a Serbian.

Timoney Yes. Wild times.

JK Yes. Well, thank you very much, Commissioner, Captain, Lieutenant, Sergeant, Officer.

Timoney My pleasure. There you go!

End

John F. Timoney

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