

Bob Flowers
Interviewed by Loren Webb
For the Washington County Historical Society

Date of Interview: January 24, 2024

Participants: Loren Webb
Bob Flowers

Webb: Good morning, everyone. My name is Loren Webb with the Washington County Historical Society. We would like to welcome you to our, this is our eleventh oral history interview today with Santa Clara-Ivins Police Chief Bob Flowers. It is Wednesday, January 24, 2024. Let me start out by asking what is your full name?

Flowers: Robert Flowers.

Webb: Okay. And how did you get interested in law enforcement?

Flowers: Well, you got to go back. In my youth I had a friend of mine whose father was a Riverside County Sheriff's Deputy. He was a wonderful guy, and [he had] a lot of pride in what he did. And I'd go to his house, and I'd see the car, and I'd hear the stories, and that kind of piqued my interest. And then through my youth I had a few jobs where I interacted with some law enforcement. And then I watched, when I was in high school, I always thought it was a positive thing. I never really had a negative experience. Then I went into the military, and I worked very closely with the DEA. And at that time I was stationed in Miami. We worked closely with the Miami Police Department. It just seemed like a really cool gig. And then when I got out of the military—

Webb: The DEA was drug enforcement?

Flowers: Drug Enforcement Administration.

Webb: Drug Enforcement Administration.

Flowers: Drug Enforcement Administration, working the drug issues in South Miami a long time ago.

Webb: So was that your first job? Did you work with—

Flowers: I was in the military.

Webb: You were in the military.

Flowers: We worked closely with, you had a lot of drug running up and down the Florida Coast, and part of the Coast Guard mission was to intercept those, and I was a crew member on one of the boats for a short time, and then I worked a couple of other roles in the military, and it seemed fun, for a young guy. It's a lot of fun.

Webb: Yeah.

Flowers: It's a lot of fun.

Webb: Which branch of the military are we speaking of?

Flowers: The Coast Guard.

Webb: Oh, the Coast Guard.

Flowers: The Coast Guard, yeah.

Webb: Oh, wow.

Flowers: Went down to join the Marines, and the recruiter wasn't there, and I wound up in the Coast Guard. Been grateful for that ever since.

Webb: Oh, my gosh. Okay, so what was the, where and when did you first apply for a job in law enforcement?

Flowers: I was a student, I had gotten out of the military and went up to Brigham Young University to go to school, and like most students were poor, and I had a young family. And I just looked at a newspaper one day where a police department was hiring. And they were looking for veterans. And I thought wow, I can solve two purposes. I can feed my family and get a job. And so I went down there and applied, and wound up as a police officer—loved it.

Webb: Which department?

Flowers: It was with the Tooele City Police Department.

Webb: Tooele City Police Department. Oh, great.

Flowers: Yeah, I started there.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: And I was with them about a year, and then I went into the Utah Highway Patrol and worked for the Highway Patrol.

Webb: Where?

Flowers: In Tooele County and Salt Lake.

Webb: Okay. So were you working a lot of I-80?

Flowers: I-80 at the time.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: And a lot of the State routes. And then I left for a short time. I went back to southern California where I was from and worked for the Highway Patrol.

Webb: California Highway Patrol.

Flowers: California Highway Patrol.

Webb: Where?

Flowers: In LA.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: Worked LA, and I was down there for a number of years. And then I wanted to come back and go to school. And so I, I was going to go a different career path. So I came back to Utah, went back to Utah Highway Patrol, went to the, transferred to University of Utah, graduated. And then my career just kind of took off from there and—

Webb: What was your degree in?

Flowers: I have a political science degree.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: And I was, I had envisioned I was going to go off to law school. It was a lot more expensive and you have to do better on the LSAT than I did. I recognized that. And so I stayed in law enforcement, got promoted, came to southern Utah, worked down here for a number of years.

Webb: Doing what?

Flowers: Working as the section commander down here with the Patrol where I ran—

Webb: With the Utah Highway Patrol?

Flowers: With the Utah Highway Patrol.

Webb: So where were you based out of at that time?

Flowers: Right here, right out of St. George.

Webb: But where in St. George? Were you in the basement of the Washington County Administration, or the Court Building?

Flowers: We were actually, we were in a couple of, yes, I'm sorry. We were at the Port of Entry, and then we went up to the Sheriff's Department.

Webb: The Sheriff's Department. Okay.

Flowers: Worked out of the Sheriff's Department.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: And I did that, we worked the drug interdiction, whatever the Highway Patrol mission was down here, four counties. And then St. George City had an opening for a police chief. I applied and was in St. George City for three or four, three and a half years, I believe.

Webb: Okay. So when you, when you came to the Police Department, and how did that, the Chief of Police position, how did that come about?

Flowers: That was kind of an interesting thing. It was a little bit controversial for me in the fact that I was coming from the State, working mainly Highway Patrol, and applying for, St. George at that time, as it is now, was a major Utah City, right? And they, I applied, it was a very, very, very tough process. Kind of a little history there, I wasn't their first choice. They offered it to another individual, and he came down, decided he would stay at the police department where he was police chief at. They called me and asked me if I wanted to be re-interviewed, and I said, "No, if I'm truly not number two, I'm really, I think I'll move on and stay where I'm at," because I was happy with what I was doing. And Mayor McArthur at the time gave me a call and said, "You know—"

Webb: Dan McArthur?

Flowers: Dan McArthur. "We talked to Gary Esplin and the other City Council members, and we think you'd be a good candidate."

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: And so I wound up here.

Webb: Okay. So describe your job as Police Chief at the St. George Police Department, and how did that job change and/or expand during your, your tenure there?

Flowers: St. George City at the time, if I remember correctly, the population was about 60,000 people. And it was going through some changes. We had a growing recreational aspect of the City. We also had, folks may not remember this, but we had a pretty serious methamphetamine problem. And we had some major things coming our way. We had complexes, apartment complexes, growing. And I felt like we needed to maybe not look at ourselves as a reactionary law enforcement where we would get a call, we'd respond, we'd ticket; the detectives, we had to look a little deeper into the community. So we set about changing some things. We looked at, we were the original founders of the Washington County Drug Task Force. At that time we were able to get something that was really positive for us. We were able to get the DEA involved with us, and we were having some successes. We started the bicycle squad for our parks and our pathways. Folks were a little concerned about walking the paths, and the safety aspect of it. Your paths are no good if people do not feel safe on them right?

Webb: Right.

Flowers: And we noticed we had a little bit of a traffic issue. We started the motorcycle squad. St. George City had some very smart people working for them when I got there. I'm not going to take credit for all that. They had some great ideas as far as teaming up with the University and Student Housing, looking at some of our apartment complexes where we were going to do there. One of the problems that St. George City had, at the time we had a lot of absentee owners of our apartment complexes. When you're absentee, you're not there every day, things can go down pretty quickly. And it doesn't take long to lose control. I remember kind of a funny story. We were talking about one of our parks, some of the citizens were complaining that the park was unsafe. So we, we took the staff down there. And we're at this park, and we're thinking, okay, what's going on here. The park was in kind of, it wasn't very well taken care of.

Webb: Are you talking about Worthen Park?

Flowers: Yes.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: There were some problems at Worthen Park, and I'd talked to the City Manager about it, and others, and we were talking about it in the Police Department, and we just don't have the guys to come through here every hour. But while we were standing there, we [were] watching something happen. We watched some guys come around a corner, took a beer bottle, smashed it against the bathroom wall. We looked over and saw a mother with her children. She gathered them up and left. And I said, "How in the world can we allow this?" So it's kind of a great example of what you can do in a community when you work with your parks, your citizens, your police department. And it was kind of a tone that we used throughout some of the other aspects of the City. And we realized you do have to make the sacrifices, you do have to get in to

your parks. People want to come to the parks. They want to be safe, and they need to be well maintained. But that can go into apartment complexes, it can go into your, we wanted, another thing, we wanted people to feel safe when they walked in the parking lots of our malls, right. And at Christmas time we used to get a lot of auto burglaries. And Gordon McCracken, and he used to work for the City at the time, came up with the idea of why don't we put guys on bicycles in the parking lots. And we went from having dozens of auto burglaries to having zero in one Christmas season.

Webb: Wow.

Flowers: So it tells you something, right?

Webb: Yeah.

Flowers: So we took that, had a powerful effect on us. And I believe that we live in a great community because of our history and the things that we've done. And safe communities don't just happen overnight, right. They're, you've got to kind of grow them and maintain them.

Webb: Right.

Flowers: It's like a garden.

Webb: Right.

Flowers: You've got to pay a lot of attention.

Webb: Right. Were there any other challenges that you faced as Police Chief, and how did you deal with them?

Flowers: We had a, we had a problem, of course, with drugs. And it's a problem that your children, your grandchildren and their children are going to deal with. We are a country that loves our drugs. But the problem is that there are a lot of things that come with that. And we had methamphetamine labs, and, and it [it's], rural America, it's not just southern Utah. Rural America is kind of a magnet for those because you have large geographic areas, you have law enforcement that is not maybe as complex, and there's not as many, so people feel a little bit safe in growing the meth labs.

Webb: Those are dangerous.

Flowers: Oh, yeah.

Webb: Once a meth lab is in a house, it's really dangerous for future home owners, as well, right?

Flowers: It is dangerous, it has health risks, there's nothing good about that, nothing good. And it brings, you could actually feel it and see it in your community. We were very

successful. As a matter of fact, we were so successful with it, we got recognized by the DEA and asked to go into other rural parts of America to talk about what we did. But we had a very good connection with our businesses. We were, we were a little bit on the edge as far as, you know, searching. I mean we never went over the line, but we did a lot of things with, for instances, we would have businesses call us who would say this person came in and bought this stuff, and then we'd go find their vehicle and stop it. There are those that think, well, that was a little bit strong-handed.

Webb: Oh, my gosh.

Flowers: If you're going to deal with a tiger, you better deal with a tiger. It's not a kitten, right?

Webb: Yeah.

Flowers: And so we were fairly aggressive, I will admit. But we had great success from it.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: And so.

Webb: Let me ask you, did you have to deal with spring break, the spring break crowds, the teenagers that came down?

Flowers: Yeah. Listen.

Webb: So how did that work?

Flowers: Okay, you know, young people today probably don't remember spring break, right? I loved spring break. I mean we would get twenty, thirty thousand young people walking up and down our street. It was fabulously entertaining, right?

Webb: Yeah.

Flowers: Of course, there was some bad stuff that came with it, and a lot of people didn't like it because, but law enforcement, we actually had a pretty good time with it. I remember we had an officer, we had this crowd, and they were over here on 1000 East. And the crowd was just, it was like a big, giant mosh pit. And so I pulled up, all important, like what is going on? I look over there. There was one of my officers is there moon dancing with a, a disguise on. And he's walking backwards. I mean he's really entertaining. He looks at me, and I look at him. He goes, "Oh." And I thought, okay, I'm just going to walk away. I'm a big bad police officer, but that was funny. And most of the kids that we dealt with just had a wonderful time here.

Webb: Yeah.

Flowers: But it was getting out of hand. We couldn't control it. And then there's always the small element that wants to come in and bully. We had some, we had some unfortunate incidents involving some drugs and young women, and we had, there was just, if people would come in and enjoy the environment for what it is, it's wonderful. But when we had people coming in and starting to bring weapons and things, it was time for us to take a little stronger approach. And basically, the City worked with the Police Department and our hotels, and it went away.

Webb: Because they required, they had to be adults—

Flowers: Yes.

Webb: To rent motel rooms, as I recall.

Flowers: It was amazing to me the parents that would say, "Yeah, it's okay, you can take six or seven of your best friends, and we're going to rent a hotel room for you. We'll see you on Monday." I mean, that would be wonderful for me—

Webb: Yeah.

Flowers: As a youth, but it's not very good for large groups of people to have that kind of freedom.

Webb: Yeah. So what do you feel were your most important accomplishments?

Flowers: With St. George?

Webb: With the St. George Police Department.

Flowers: I'm very proud of my time there. I think we, we built a pretty good springboard. I think the chiefs that came after me have done a great job. St. George City is a great police department—great people, complex mission, can do anything that a major city can do. Well, I consider them a major city for our state. I think they've got wonderful detectives, great programs. I think they are very proactive. Like any law enforcement agency, the public loves you and hates you at the same time, but I think that my, I feel really good about we build a springboard for some things, the task force, some of the enforcement things that they are still in place, the motor squad, the, the care of the community. I mean our parks are wonderful.

Webb: Yes, they are.

Flowers: Our walkways are wonderful. We have a great demographic here. We have this wonderful university that just brings so much diversity and great stuff to the community. And I think people love being here because of what we started a long time ago and created a culture of some positive law enforcement. And I'd like to

prefer it as public safety, not so much law enforcement. But I'm very proud of where they're at and my contribution many years ago to that.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: It's a wonderful experience.

Webb: So why did you leave the St. George Police Department and accept a position as Director of the Utah Public Safety Department in Salt Lake City?

Flowers: Okay. Well, that's a complex question. That came out of nowhere.

Webb: Really.

Flowers: If you remember, we had the Olympics going on at the time, and there was, I was following the newspapers. I was kind of an interesting cat to them. I was [a] public safety guy, but I was from the outside, too. I was a police chief in St. George. And I got a call once, they were having problems getting people to work together.

Webb: In Salt Lake?

Flowers: In Salt Lake.

Webb: For the, the Olympics?

Flowers: Well, you had the Olympics. You had, just, I think when you say the Olympics, folks cannot understand how big that is sometimes. We see the skiers, we see the ice skaters, but the behind the scenes is an enormous effort. And there was some issues involving Utah because we were a small place and this global event, whether we could do it or not, and the getting along, the, is the FBI in charge, the Secret Service in charge, Public Safety? And all the different venues. We were across multiple counties. And there were some problems getting people to work together. And I got a call from the, I knew Governor Leavitt a little bit from his visits down here.

Webb: Mike Leavitt?

Flowers: Mike Leavitt. I got a call one time that said, "Bob Flowers, what would you do if you were in charge of the world?"

Webb: Oh, my gosh.

Flowers: I said, "Oh, my gosh. What a great question." What would you do with this, and what would you do with that?

Webb: Wow.

Flowers: I says, “Well, not being a person that had to do it,” I let it out. I said, “This is the first thing I would do.” I would do this and I would do that, and I would do this and I would do that. I said, “This event is too big for ego. Need to get rid of the egos. It’s going to be a mess.” And so then I said, they said, “Okay, thank you for the input.” Then I get a call about a week later from the Governor’s Chief of Staff. He said, “Bob, Flowers—“

Webb: Who was the Chief of Staff, do you remember?

Flowers: Yeah, I’ll remember it here in just a minute.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: But I get a call from the Chief of Staff. And he says, “Hey, the Governor would like to talk to you again.” And I said, “Okay.” And I was in San Diego at the time at the Chiefs’ Convention. And he said, “But he wants to talk to you in person. He wants you to get on an airplane immediately in Las Vegas.” And I went—

Webb: Oh, my gosh.

Flowers: My ego was just big enough that I think I’m pretty important, right. Ah, man, the Governor’s called me, and he wants to meet and talk with me. And I said, “Okay. I can get on a plane and I’d go flying.” So it’s really a wonderful experience to sit down with just, sitting with the Governor of the land truly asking your opinion.

Webb: Yeah.

Flowers: It’s a unique experience. But when I got there, he says, “So I, we’ve listened to what you said.” And I said, “Okay, okay.” And I go, “What do you think of it?” “Yeah,” he goes, “I want you to do it.” And now I know, there’s no way, no way I’m going to cash that check. And I said, “Naw, I’m not your guy.”

Webb: Wow.

Flowers: But through some conversation later on, I did not want to leave St. George. It’s the best Chief’s job in the State. I’ve always wanted to live here. My life was on track. My family was doing well. I didn’t want to go. And, but, and then he called me and he says, “Listen, you’re going to get a chance to work on the Olympic games. That’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I promise you, you will regret it if you do not take this opportunity.” So I did.

Webb: When did you start?

Flowers: I started in 2000, a year before the Olympics and about six months before 9-11.

Webb: Oh, my gosh.

Flowers: And I remember we were going through this Olympic exercise, and it was just kind of business, going about things. It was just so huge. And then we had 9-11 hit. And that changed everything, everything. It just takes your breath away.

Webb:It does.

Flowers: It takes your breath away. I remember I was teaching a class here at Dixie, the university here, and I brought it up. I said, “Well, you guys all remember where you were at 9-11.” And they were going, “I wasn’t born, Bob.” And I was thinking, wait a minute, that’s right. Some of these students don’t really remember what that was like. And I remember, you know.

Webb:I definitely remember where I was.

Flowers: I remember where I was, and I remember being called in and to go directly to the Governor’s house. And we, there was just, we were all sitting there with blank stares, like what are we doing? And your citizens are looking, what are you going to do, and what does this mean for Utah? And so for a couple of weeks there we were all trying to figure out, and what’s really interesting, we, yeah, I remember the Governor saying, “Everybody relies on the leadership.” But what if you’re the leader, right? I, I have to tell you, I think one of the most unappreciated folks during that time was, frankly, our Governor at the time. What a magnificent individual when it came to leadership there. And I remember talking about whether or not we should even move forward with the Olympic games, and being flown in to have those discussions. And you know, just being a part of that was the most magnificent part of my career. Just that six months to a year watching. You know, when we’re in the United States we’re, sometimes it’s not popular to talk about patriotism and not popular to talk about some of the wonderful things about our country. But when you’re going through something like that and you really do come together as a country and decide, okay, we’re going to go ahead with this global event, what is it that you need? And I remember going in and talking to, Senator Stevens at the time was the head over the appropriations committee, talking about the Olympics and working with, of course, Mitt Romney was just stellar.

Webb:He was the, the head of the—

Flowers: He was the head of Utah Olympics. And you had people like Frazier Bulloch and others, just some of the smartest people you’ll really ever—it was a treat for me. And then to see some of these wonderful experts come in and talk about security and how do you do security and keep our Constitution in place. And how do you make people feel safe in this, when we’re all vulnerable. And then you’ve got this global event. And how do you keep it from becoming a security event and not an event about the athletes. And it was marvelous. Absolutely.

Webb:It went off really smooth, didn’t it?

Flowers: Oh, my gosh.

Webb: As far as you were concerned?

Flowers: I'll tell you a funny little story. So did we have threats against the Olympics? Of course we did. Right. And we would come in daily, and we would check these. And I remember we were in closing ceremonies, and I was feeling pretty important and good. I had this great seat, and I'm like nothing has disrupted the games. And we've just, we have 10,000 people working on this, and feeling pretty good. And all of a sudden a door flies open. This guy goes, "Oh, my gosh, we've got an incident." And I'm going, "Oh, no. Closing ceremonies, really?" He goes, "An individual traveling with the Vice-President, his photographer, has been lost in an elevator." And I almost busted out laughing.

Webb: He was lost in that elevator.

Flowers: I looked at everybody in that room, and I looked at them, and I'm going, "That's the emergency? Well, let's go find this individual." We found him. They went into a place they weren't supposed to go. But we got him, we got him to the vehicle, and drove off, and I remember laughing all the way back to the Command Center thinking, "Wow."

Webb: Oh, yeah.

Flowers: That was the emergency.

Webb: That was the emergency.

Flowers: Really. But we had, I remember opening ceremonies and how nervous everybody was and, you know, just the, we had so many volunteers, and how everybody just wanted to do their part. Nobody cared about the other stuff. An amazing experience.

Webb: And I'll bet you had a number of agencies that you worked with, right?

Flowers: Oh, my gosh. I can't even begin to announce, tell you how many Federal. We had a building with Federal agencies on every level. Let alone, we had 29 counties involved and probably 50 of our cities that were all giving resources. Literally we had close to 12,000 people involved in just security.

Webb: Wow.

Flowers: And we had the smartest people from the FBI, the smartest people from the Secret Service, the smartest people from agencies that I never even knew existed. I mean super smart people that, "What can we do to help?" Really. And, you know, it was a pleasure working and serving with those people. It was a true honor, something I'll always remember and be grateful for.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: And so you know, when you talk about why did it go well, it's because we all came together.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: Everybody came together.

Webb: So why did you leave the Utah Public Safety Department?

Flowers: Well, when you're appointed, when you're, I was an appointed position. And those come with terms. And generally the Commissioner will last between 5, 5 and 7 years. And I was coming up on 7½ years. And when a new governor comes in, they want their own guy. They do. And you know that going in. It's not a lifetime appointment. And I was, I was ready to go. You know, when you're Commissioner of Public Safety, you have Driver's License, you have BCI [Bureau of Criminal Identification], you have the Crime Labs, you have the Aero Bureau, you have the Highway Patrol, you have, you have a diversity, a big organization. And it can be a grind. And so I was feeling like it was time for me to move on, and then I get a call. So if you remember Katrina and all that, in Utah one of the really great experiences. We had Governor Huntsman. We brought several hundred people to Utah. Just one day I get a call, we're going to have to make room for, we're going to have to find housing for up to five to six hundred people that were in Katrina. And we're going to fly them in here, and they're going to land. And a lot of the people, when they landed, they didn't even know they were in Utah.

Webb: Oh, that's right.

Flowers: They didn't even know.

Webb: And they were coming from like Mississippi and—

Flowers: Well, they were coming from Louisiana.

Webb: Louisiana.

Flowers: Yeah. And it was really funny because several hours ago they were in water. And some of these folks still had that same clothing on. You could write a book on the stories of these people that landed here. And a lot of folks were African American, and they were kind of concerned. They'd heard the stories, you know, about Utah and let alone how the environment was. So there was a lot of sensitivity towards that. And so we did that, and we did that wildly successful—General Talbot of the National Guard and just the volunteers. We took everybody out to Camp Williams and set them up there. And it was going to be a temporary thing. Well, a lot of folks came here and

they didn't really want to leave. It was, it was heartbreaking, some of the stories that we had there. But anyway, so out of that—

Webb: Did you say they were taken to Camp Williams?

Flowers: Yeah, they went to Camp Williams.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: That's where, they landed at Salt Lake Airport #2 some—and then they, we transported people to Camp Williams and gave them military housing. And then we had to figure out what next. You know, you're going to be here for a couple of weeks? Is this meant to be temporary? You had to get people out of this horrible environment they were in. And so I wrote a paper on that, and I, we talked about the experiences. And so I got a call, out of Katrina came this national thought about what's the role of FEMA. And I wrote a paper on it. And—

Webb: Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Flowers: Federal Emergency Management Agency. The thing that people don't understand about FEMA is they're not, they're a finance agency. They're not a rescue agency. They pay for stuff. Don't—

Webb: That's interesting.

Flowers: Well, the big thing, where was FEMA, and where was—FEMA pays, FEMA is only as good as the local response. And this is kind of controversial, but one of the reasons why some of the things failed in parts of the country is because the local government was overwhelmed. Right. FEMA just, a FEMA guy that runs it, lands there, and he needs a table and a place to write checks. That's all they do. They don't own fire trucks or any of that kind of thing. I think that was kind of a thought that people didn't understand. FEMA pays for things. So they asked me and another guy who was a State guy, used to come into FEMA and maybe give them some thoughts. Well, I had a lot of ideas. They didn't like any of them. And so at that time there was a luncheon, and they were changing political parties, and I knew again, as a political appointee, that you just access your office. They don't have to ask you to leave. You're just done, and you know that. And so I went to FEMA. I was there just a short time. I thought it was going to be longer, but it turned out not to be so. And—

Webb: You were based in Salt Lake?

Flowers: No, I lived in Denver at the time.

Webb: Oh, you lived in Denver. Oh.

Flowers: I went, I went a lot from Denver to Washington, DC, but I had Region 8, which is all the western states, all except California. And so I was moving around a lot. You know, I dealt with a lot of flooding, fires was big.

Webb: My gosh.

Flowers: It, it, it, again, pretty amazing things.

Webb: Yeah.

Flowers: And when that came over, I was kind of thinking, okay, what do I do now? I was, I had, I had gone back and got my graduate degree, and I thought I'm going to go work for Dixie State University.

Webb: Where did you get your graduate degree?

Flowers: I went to Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey.

Webb: In Monterey, California?

Flowers: Yeah, yeah.

Webb: And you got a Master's degree in what, law enforcement, or—

Flowers: No, it, it was a brand, it was a brand new degree. Of course, you know, NPS is a military place. And it was a brand new degree. It was, they were talking about, it's called, they've changed the name a couple of times, but Security Studies.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: And it's about bringing security, federal, businesses. A big part of security is, you know, business continuity, and the study of that new area, bringing it all together. And it was being driven by Homeland Security. So I, I applied, was accepted to the program. There were 13 of us, and we were the very first civilians to graduate from the military school, which was kind of weird.

Webb: Oh my gosh.

Flowers: Because all the military guys looked at us like "What are you guys doing on this campus? You know, like we were infidels. But we went there, and for a couple of years we put together some things, and my area was creating trusted intelligence-gathering infrastructure within states, that you could put your information in and it was safe and how you use that information. It was, one of the criticisms that came out of 9-11 was the stove piping of information between all agencies. And we had the problem locally, sharing information with local counties, how does Hurricane and St. George share information on the things that—and how do you let people into

your data bases and all that. So it's very complex and hard to do. And there's law that guides some of that.

Webb:Right.

Flowers: So there was some, some stuff on that. So anyway, I got through the program and thought I would come down here.

Webb:Okay, so, so then you accepted a position as police chief with the Santa Clara, was it the Santa Clara-Ivins Police Department?

Flowers: At that time it was only the Ivins Police Department.

Webb:It was just the Ivins Police Department, then. Okay. And so how did that come about?

Flowers: Well, that was—

Webb:And what, what is it that appealed to you about that position?

Flowers: I was—

Webb:Was it kind of like coming home again?

Flowers: Yeah. And I was going to retire. I was kind of done with public service, I think. I was [it] really had been my whole professional career, and I was thinking about something different. I got a call that—

Webb:A little less stressful, maybe, or not?

Flowers: You know, that's a really, people think smaller agencies are less stressful. No, they're not. They're more stressful. Everything's personal. Gosh. It was easier to be Commissioner of Public Safety than it was to be the Chief of Ivins.

Webb:Okay.

Flowers: It really is because you don't have a staff of a hundred, right. There's you. You empty your own trash.

Webb:Right.

Flowers: You know. So I had the opportunity to come down here, and it was mainly about coming to southern Utah to retire and to live and to do something meaningful. It worked out wonderfully well.

Webb:Who interviewed you? Who asked you to come down?

Flowers: Judy Gubler.

Webb:She's—

Flowers: You'll remember she was the City Manager.

Webb:Okay.

Flowers: It was a little bit like why do you want to come here, you know. You've got this big thing, da-da-da. I think, you don't get it. I mean living here is wonderful. And I thought, well, I'm going to come down here, and I'm going to do some things, do some personal things, have some fun. And so I came down. And you know, really, when you live in the community, in a small community and you work in law enforcement, it's not just law enforcement, it's helping people in crises, helping people through tough times. It's very personal. I enjoyed that. And then we combined with Santa Clara because—

Webb:How many police officers did you have at the time?

Flowers: Seven.

Webb:And then when you combined, how many were there?

Flowers: We went, when we combined, Santa Clara had six. So we went to thirteen.

Webb:Okay.

Flowers: And both cities recognized we couldn't do it alone any more. It's too complex, too expensive.

Webb:So what experiences stand out with your job as Santa Clara-Ivins Police Chief? And you're still doing it.

Flowers: It's the same thing. It's helping people. You know, you get a lot of personal satisfaction out of some major cases where you really do, can see where you're affecting your community. Santa Clara and Ivins and including St. George are really safe communities. It has a lot to do with the demographics. You have, you know, when I was teaching over here we used to talk about the causes of crime, you know. There's the demographic things, there's the economic thing, there's the employment thing. There are just so many variables—drugs and everything that drugs bring with them. When you live in a small community, you have those same things, right? But it's personal. You know, you can see where you're actually helping people with their families in crisis. You, you're providing not just the law enforcement aspect of it, but the service to your community.

Webb:Okay. So—

Flowers: And that appealed to me.

Webb: What are, what have been some of the most challenging aspects of your job as Police Chief, and how did you respond to that?

Flowers: I think, of course, trying, I think one of my biggest challenges is keeping morale high of your police officers.

Webb: Say that again.

Flowers: Keeping the morale high of your police officers, having them still believe in the cause, believe that what you do is important. Don't let what you see in the press go to your value of a person. That's been really, that's been a real challenge for me, you know. Everything you do is, I mean you can have a police officer do something somewhere in twenty states over that's really stupid, and then everybody's judging your department on that behavior of that officer. The, the, just the whole evaluation of law enforcement in general, it's really hard on your folks that are doing a really important thing, a really good, meaningful thing.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: That's been probably one of my biggest challenges.

Webb: Okay. You got to work with Ken Campbell, right?

Flowers: I loved Ken Campbell.

Webb: Tell us a little bit about Ken because—

Flowers: Ken Campbell was the long-time, he was the marshal, he had been the sheriff in Washington County, and then he was the marshal in Santa Clara, a wonderful human being, a wonderful human being. Knew everybody in town. He was the guy that would say, "Come sit in my car and talk to me. I'm not going to write you a citation, but you're going to have to come mow that guy's lawn. You know, it was kind of country law enforcement at its best. But a wonderful gentleman and left a really great legacy.

Webb: Yeah.

Flowers: I always liked Kenny a lot. We miss him. We miss him.

Webb: Yeah. Okay. What is there about the job that keeps you going?

Flowers: I think it's the importance, you know, when you're trying to figure out what you want to do with your life you got to make sure you find value inside, I think. Law

enforcement can do that for you if you can take out the chatter and really understand the person you're talking to. Most people never run into law enforcement ever. But when they finally call you, it's the worst day in their life. You know, they've had stuff stolen, there's been violence in their family, something awful has happened. You can come, and you can make it better for them. May not, may not make it go away, but when you can see that and, you know, I had somebody call me here recently that I've dealt with over 18 years ago, and they called me and said, "I just want to, I think about what happened there." I just want you to know that our officers have that kind of stuff happen to them. That's what I like about what we do, and when I tell people in the Police Academy, it's not about the uniform, the ticket writing, the ego stuff. It's about when people call you they need something from you. You better be prepared for your job or you find something else.

Webb: Okay. What other civic or religious organizations do you participate in, if any?

Flowers: I—

Webb: Or other outside interests or hobbies?

Flowers: For hobbies, well, I used to be very involved in the Chamber of Commerce and some things like that. I'm, I'm actually struggling with that a little bit. I've been super involved with retirement associations and things. But as I'm 70 years old now, and you know, when you get to a certain age, your priorities change. I thought I would probably have retired ten years ago. But what's kept me going has been the enjoyment of the job, right. But as far, I want to, I want to do some other things.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: You know.

Webb: So where and when were you born?

Flowers: Wow.

Webb: We're going to—

Flowers: You can't ask those questions any more. You can't ask somebody where. I was born in a place called Hemet, California. We lived in a place called Elsinore.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: And I was born in 1955.

Webb: Okay. Who else was in your family?

Flowers: I had a brother and two sisters, and they still, I have a sister that lives in Salt Lake and I have a brother that lives in Oregon and a sister that lives in Huntington Beach.

Webb: Okay. So tell us about your grammar school and your high school years, anything stand out there?

Flowers: Wow. I remember in elementary school being hit with a jump rope by a girl because I was flirting with her. I remember that. It crushed me. I'm still crushed by that. But I remember I grew up in southern California. I, I, when you grew up in the 70s down there, Vietnam War was going on, and I lived near a military base.

Webb: What military base?

Flowers: March Air Force Base.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers At that time it was one of the SAC [Strategic Air Command] where they were doing a lot of bombing in Vietnam, and they'd fly right out of California. And I remember having friends, you know, when you're a young man and a war is going on and at that time there was the draft, and you start thinking, man, I'm going to get sent to war. I'm going to southeast Asia to do something, and it frightens you a little bit.

Webb: Were you worried that you were going to be drafted?

Flowers: I, I, okay, I wasn't very smart. I was worried about being drafted, but what I did know the draft had ended the year before. But I was not savvy to that. And so I thought, well, I was not a very good high school student, to be honest with you. I was athletic, but not academic, didn't put much effort into it. And so when I was getting ready to get out of high school, I knew that I was going to have to do something else. But at my high school we were consumed a little bit with that. We had, I remember having young men who would come, they would come get them out of school, and you'd never see them again. And you'd find out later, years on, that their father was killed in Vietnam or something like that. And some of our, some of our guys when I was just a young freshman in high school, some of our seniors were getting drafted, and they'd come back and visit the school in their uniforms. That's what that was like.

Webb: That's tough.

Flowers: It was, it was, well, you know, where did you go to school?

Webb: Here, here at Dixie High School. And yeah. We were on the tail end, you know, we were on the tail end of the Vietnam war. So we never really had to think too much. We did have to register for the draft.

Flowers: Yes, yes.

Webb: Which I did. So, and I'm sure you did, as well.

Flowers: Yeah, we, I had to register. And I remember we had gas rationing a little bit there at the time.

Webb: Around 1979?

Flowers: Yeah. In California at the time, you know, you still were dealing with drought, and then the gas rationing actually started in 1974.

Webb: Okay. Earlier.

Flowers: We could only get [gas] every other day. You could only buy so much. So I kind of giggle.

Webb: I know. So education-wise, did you attend a college or university, and what was your major and minor, if any?

Flowers: Well, I, I started at Brigham Young, switched, and I graduated from the University of Utah. And I did attend Weber State a little bit. It was just depending where I was assigned.

Webb: And your bachelor's degree?

Flowers: Was in Political Science from the University of Utah.

Webb: Did you have a minor?

Flowers: No.

Webb: Okay. Tell me about your college years if anything stands out.

Flowers: I was not, I was a non-traditional student at the time. I was working full time, had a young family, so I generally took most of my classes after hours. Occasionally I'd have to attend a class on campus, but I was very nontraditional. To me, college was just something I needed to do.

Webb: What were you doing job-wise?

Flowers: I was working, I was working as a law enforcement guy.

Webb: Oh, okay.

Flowers: And I was, I was adjusting, I was working graveyards, going to school during the day, and just had a goal. University, I felt at the time, was kind of the key to my future. It's

a key to, you know, I knew that if you were going to promote, if you were going to do other things, if you were going to go on and do some of the things that were required, like I really did have intentions of maybe intending law school. But I needed to sharpen up myself academically, and so I took the LSAT twice and did really well the second time. But by then I was far enough into my career I wasn't going to change.

Webb: Okay.

Flowers: So—

Webb: So describe how you met and married your spouse.

Flowers: Well, we met, her brother was my friend, and we played a lot of ball together, and I thought his sister was cute. And it was just kind of not, it was just kind of the traditional kind of thing. You know, I've got a couple of kids, and they're doing really well. They went to Pine View High School. I've got a son that is right now Deputy Director, one of the Deputy Directors of NCIS, and he worked in counter-terrorism for a while. He worked over in Israel. And I got a daughter that's a Vice-Principal in Oklahoma.

Webb: In Oklahoma.

Flowers: Yeah, so you know.

Webb: Do you have any grandchildren?

Flowers: Yeah, I do. I've got nine.

Webb: You've got nine grandchildren?

Flowers: Yeah. I've got a grandson—

Webb: That's awesome.

Flowers: Eighteen years old.

Webb: Okay. So describe any important aspects of family life and raising your children. Anything that stands out there.

Flowers: Well, like any parent, I wrestled with my, I think, for me, I have wonderful children, adds value to my life, never any problem to me. We spent a lot of time together, a lot of time.

Webb: That's great.

Flowers: I cut them a lot of slack.

Webb: So never a difficulty of balancing your law enforcement career with your family life?

Flowers: Once or twice my children would have comments made to them. I remember I was walking down the hallway at Pine View, and I was going to do a presentation, and I was walking with my daughter, and I was walking by this group of kids, and some kid made a pig noise when I walked by. And I stopped, and I called him out. The principal was looking at me, and my son is looking at me. You know, it wasn't difficult, it wasn't difficult. I didn't really have any problems with it.

Webb: Okay. So as you look back over your life, what would you like to be remembered for?

Flowers: I'd like to be, I, I think, I want to be remembered, I think by my children, as a great guy. I, I, you know, good father; as my colleagues, honorable.

Webb: Great.

Flowers: A guy that they enjoyed being around. I don't have any big aspirations there on anything, just that "He was good, I enjoyed working with him."

Webb: Is there anything else that I haven't asked you that you feel is important to tell?

Flowers: So when you were a reporter, we worked together. How was that?

Webb: I loved working with you. You were always professional, and you were always available. You always made time to, you know, to be like an interview or whatever.

Flowers: Yeah.

Webb: You were always there and you always had a positive—

Flowers: Well.

Webb: You always had a positive presence there with the Police Department. And it was refreshing, especially under some other circumstances that occurred at the Police Department that I had to cover [before Flowers' and before Police Chief John Pollei's administrations].

Flowers: Yeah. Well, you know, I always, as a law enforcement executive when you're dealing with the press, the truth is the truth. Just give the truth. People will forgive a lot of things, but they will not forgive dishonesty or trying to hide something. Give the truth. If you did something inappropriate, or an officer did something inappropriate, just tell people right, and it'll go away.

Webb: I've always felt you were very professional and forthcoming and truthful with everything that you did. So—

Flowers: Well.

Webb: And I appreciated the opportunity that I had to work with you as a reporter for the Spectrum newspaper at the time.

Flowers: Well, you always know a good reporter will find out if you're not telling the truth. You always worried me because you were always very detailed.

Webb: That's true, I was.

Flowers: Yes, you were, almost annoyingly so sometimes.

Webb: He knows, sometimes, I was. Well, we want to thank Chief Flowers for taking the time to, with, from his busy schedule to work with us and to be here for this oral history interview. And we wish him the best as he continues his duties there—

Flowers: Thank you.

Webb: And in the community. And until next time, I'm Loren Webb. Thank you so much for joining us.