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Arkansas State Police Project

Interview with

Lynn Davis
18 August 2003

Interviewer: Michael Lindsey

Michael Lindsey: You were living in California [when Herman Lindsey retired as State Police director]. How did you hear about the opening, or how did Governor Rockefeller find you?

Lynn Davis: Bethel Larry and I went to high school together at Texarkana. Bethel had been appointed director of a department in Arkansas. He and I debated together when we were both at Henderson State [College, Arkadelphia, Arkansas]. Lo and behold, my brother Gene who lived in Texarkana happened to see Bethel one day. He said to Bethel, "Lynn wants to come home and if you see any jobs, let him know." In just a matter of weeks, Bethel asked my brother Gene to get in touch with me and ask me to call him [Bethel]. I called him and he asked me if I would like to interview to be the director of the Arkansas State Police. I didn't think I had a chance to be appointed director of the State Police at thirty-three [years old]. I just knew I wouldn't. He said, "Well, Win [Governor Winthrop Rockefeller] wants you to come and meet with him." I told him I would be

glad to come. The next morning Bethel called me and told me that Win wanted me to get on a plane as soon as possible and meet with him. I had been in the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] for six and a half years. The thing that [made me interested in returning to Arkansas] was being in Los Angeles for the last year. I had gone to see [FBI director] Mr. [J. Edgar] Hoover. He had an open door policy and any agent that wanted to see him could do so with ten or twelve hours advance notice. So I called Ms. Gandy and said I wanted to see Mr. Hoover. She set up an appointment the next day. I went to see Mr. Hoover the next day. I told him my mother was sick and I would like to get back to Arkansas. All of the guys that had been in thirty or forty years said if he said he will do what he can, that means he will do it. Well, that is exactly what he said. He said he would do what he could. So I went back to Los Angeles with full knowledge that I would be transferred back to Arkansas. We had two special cases [in Los Angeles], a kidnapping which turned out to be the highest ransom ever paid for the safe return of the victim and two border patrol agents who had been killed by a drug gang. It was an abusive killing where they took aim at them while they were chained to a pot belly stove to see who could get the closest to the head without killing them. They started sending agents in, instead of sending agents out. That made it doubly important to me to get out [while I could]. I went to the ticket counter and there was a ticket waiting for me [from Governor Rockefeller]. The [Governor's] Mansion was being renovated and he had quarters

at the National Life Insurance building, right in front of the Capitol. We had a wonderful steak dinner; it was so tender you could cut it with a knife. It was from the farm [Rockefeller's farm in Conway County]. We hit it off really well. I believe, and he told me, that the one thing that he always wished he could have done was be a special agent in the FBI. He always asked me about stories on the FBI. As a matter of fact, Win Paul, at the age of sixteen had every bit of the State Police uniform, except for the bells and whistles. We hit it off right away. I flew back to Los Angeles and the next morning Tom Isley, who is now chief judge of the Arkansas Supreme Court, called me and said, "Win wants you to resign as soon as you can. How long can you give them?" I said, "Well, at least two weeks." I went down to the special agent in charge and submitted my two weeks' notice. He said that two weeks' notice wouldn't be necessary and to turn my cases over. Of course, it took a while for us to get out of California. The television station interviewed us back in Los Angeles for submission here in Arkansas. I didn't think much about it, but we had sort of discussed the ten-year residency [requirement to be State Police director]. I decided I would get back to Little Rock [and worry about it]. Win Rockefeller gave his salary back and had probably 150 under his employ. Also, I spent four and a half months with the State Police and never drew a nickel from the state of Arkansas. About the time I was settling in, Joe Purcell, who was the Democrat Attorney General, filed a "friendly" visit suit to test whether I met the qualifications to be

the director. The law said you had to be a resident for ten years preceding your appointment. I had not been a resident for ten years preceding my appointment. The question was—and I never thought we would win it—whether residency as dictated by the law, which meant actual physical presence, or by the voting method, which meant where the heart was [would determine the ten-year residency requirement]. I knew my heart was always in Arkansas. I loved Arkansas and always intended to come back. That was what all the agents normally wanted to do: come back to their home state. In fact, the lower court ruled in our favor. I did some research on it and I think the law [ten-year residency requirement] was originally passed to protect Herman Lindsey. He was the one I replaced. After [WWII], the veterans were coming back and winning everything. Sid McMath won and was on the veterans' ticket. The reason they passed that was to keep the veterans from coming back to take Herman Lindsey's job. Joe Purcell filed the suit and the lower court—the circuit court—found that I met the requirement. Joe Purcell sent an investigator to the state of Wyoming, where I had been assigned before I went to California. [The investigator] was to do a background check and determine my qualifications and my moral convictions. He did a very thorough job. As a matter of fact, I had registered to vote for my friend for sheriff. I had registered there in Green River County, and they made a big deal out of that. They appealed to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court ruled against us. They ruled that it meant actual residence and I think

they were probably right. The director of the State Police should be familiar with the cities, so if someone mentioned Timbo [a small Arkansas town] there should be a reasonable expectation that he would know where it was. The Supreme Court overturned it [the lower court ruling] on December 23. [Previously] my wife and two kids had moved out to the State Police headquarters. The State Police had built a three-bedroom residence beside the headquarters on Roosevelt Road. Herman Lindsey had given it to his maintenance man and the maintenance man furnished him with everything he needed to eat: meat, vegetables, whatever, in exchange for that. I don't know [whether] it was quid pro quo or not. That grated on the troopers. It was a deep-seated dissatisfaction that the maintenance man lived by the State Police headquarters. I gave him notice to move and he did and we moved in there. Instead of building that residence, they should have rebuilt the old State Police headquarters. You could plug up a light bulb and you'd get a short and the thing would go out. An interesting [side note]—one day I was sitting in my office and the phone rang. I started looking around and I opened my desk drawer and there was a red phone in there. I answered it and the person on the other end was dumbfounded. You could tell he had no idea that there had been an administration change. He said, "Colonel!" I said, "Yes, this is Colonel Davis." He hung up. About that same time, all hell broke loose. The air raid siren began going off and the regular phone rang. It was my wife asking what in the world was going on. I told her I didn't know, but

that I would find out. Well, I came to find out that it was the siren that blows every Wednesday at noon in Little Rock. I could hear our little Pekingese [dog] in the background. He was running halfway up one wall and [would] fall down and then run halfway up the other. Christy, our daughter, who was a baby at the time, was crying. I said that if the Supreme Court ruled against us that I would move immediately. Janette Rockefeller called Sue and invited us to come up and stay as long as we needed in one of the guesthouses. We went up there on December 23 and they invited us to have Christmas dinner with them, [but] we couldn't because we went to my family's house in Texarkana. That is the way God intended man to live, like they did on WinRock farms. Senator [J. William] Fulbright once said that is the way God would have us live if we all had money. They had every kind of nut and beer that you could ever want. They had five or six different kinds of cosmetics for the wives. They had a Christmas tree with all the decorations. I mentioned that it sure would be nice to have a fire and the farm manager sent someone over in five minutes. We stayed there about three weeks and enjoyed that. I was barely thirty-four when I was sworn in and I believe at that time—and I think the record still holds—that I was the youngest director of a State Police force anywhere in the country. Doug Harp was two months older than I was [when he was appointed]. I put out a memo—I was not big on memos; I only put out four or five. One said that I expected everyone to enforce the law. That was a big beef by troopers who

would stop someone for speeding and give them a ticket. They [the driver getting the ticket] would say that people were going down to Hot Springs to gamble and said that was against the law [so why don't the State Police enforce that law?] [They could be] going to eight other cities. Many people misconstrue the whole scenario as being just Hot Springs and Little Rock, or just Hot Springs. When we conducted raids, we had them in eight different cities where the Elks Club or the Social Club might have had a table or some machines. I put out the word that they [troopers] were to enforce the law, and that if anyone pulled a badge on them they were to confiscate the badge. There were as many [honorary] badges for majors and captains in the hands of the politicians as there were in the hands of the police. I'll never forget that Tom Isley and I were driving along one day and he asked, "Does that mean I need to give you my badge?" [Laughs] I told him it did. I put out the word that we were going to conduct raids on gambling clubs, especially if that was their sole purpose. Social Clubs with slot machines were secondary. I put out the word to the Ohio Club and others that were operating down there. They were the ones that enjoyed the protection. Orval Faubus, when it came campaign time, would close them down, or they would close voluntarily. The State Police would go down and conduct a raid and seize one machine. They would beat the fool out of the thing and then it would go right back [to casinos]. I baited them. I would call everybody together and say, "Tonight's the night," and they [casinos] would

close. I did that two or three times and then they began to stay open [despite calling everybody together]. So I took the head of CID [and] several people that I trusted and we went over. I assigned some undercover troopers to see if they could get in the clubs. They came back and said they couldn't get in because the clubs would only let people in who had a woman with them and could identify themselves, or better yet, were recognized as members. They [casino owners] had closed the things down except for their repeat customers, I suppose. We were sitting at the old Safeway building that had been abandoned on Central Avenue, south of Hot Springs proper. The head of CID said, "Colonel, since we can't get in there, I know where there is a crap game that we can raid." I said to myself, "We are not going back with some crap game under our belt." It was obvious that these folks had been told [about the raid]. [The plan I went with] wasn't a well-thought-out plan. I knew from talking to troopers that when they had conducted raids in the past, they had "wooled" them around by having them come down to testify and then delayed the trial. They would repeat this cycle over and over. I didn't care whether we got people or not; I wanted equipment. I wanted machines. So I got Ken McKee to come down with fifteen marked cars with sirens and red lights on. I had him put someone at parade rest in front of five casinos and at any exit. At any point of egress or ingress I wanted a trooper there. We established a perimeter of defense. I told them to let anybody go. [They could] just walk out, but they couldn't carry any machines or

books or anything. Then I called the prosecuting attorney at about 1:30 a.m. He said, "Oh, yes, Colonel Davis, how are you doing?" I said, "I need to get a search warrant for these five clubs." He said, "Okay, no problem. I will get you one in the morning. I usually get there about nine o'clock." I said, "Well, that is fine, whenever you want to come down. We've got troopers in the front and back of all the clubs." He said, "The hell you say!" I said, "Yes, we have the place surrounded and it doesn't matter when you get here." He said, "I'll be there in five minutes." He got me a search warrant. I didn't know that Arkansas had a provision in the search warrant limitations that it had to be served during daylight hours or it had to mention being served after dark. I don't know what caused him to change his mind, but he came down to me in a run to tell me that he hadn't put in there that it had to be served at night. If he hadn't [said something] all of that [search and seizure] would have been for naught. There were about twenty troopers who always told me they had back trouble from carrying all of those heavy slot machines. They were big things—Indian heads. Back then they were pot metal, none of this video stuff. They were real clunkers. So we got a couple of U-Hauls to carry that stuff off. I was in the Ohio Club and Bud Canada, who was sheriff at that time, came up and said, "Colonel, if I'd have known you were coming over here, you could have called me and I would have helped you." I said, "Well, I just decided to come over on a whim. I thought about calling you, but decided just to come on over." We both

got a laugh out of that, especially the troopers. I went down to the Bridge Street Club and one of the pictures in the [Arkansas] *Gazette* showed me with a tire iron knocking the window in. We were standing around there and it was locked. There was a guy standing in the front area and I asked him if he belonged there [with the club]. He told me he did and I asked him to get me the key so I wouldn't have to break the door down. He said, "Okay, I'll be back in a few minutes." We stood around for a while talking and then I looked around and there was this guy leaning up against a parking meter. That was when I got the tire iron and broke the glass. We got twenty-five slot machines out of those five clubs. We got all sorts of felt crap tables. I had always said that I was going to give everybody [all the troopers] a fresh start. Being a native of Arkansas, I knew how things operated. Many times you did things that were against your beliefs or morality to feed your family. I told them that everybody would have a chance to do what is right from this day forward. We turned these twenty-five machines over to the Hot Springs Police Department. An informant who was a very reputable man called me and said, "Those machines you gave the police department—they said they destroyed them?" I said, "Yes, they made an affidavit saying they destroyed them." He said, "Well, they didn't." I couldn't believe it. He said, "They are at the repair shop." I believe there were two repair shops. They had hoarded parts to those machines for years and years to keep them operating because the FBI usually got on them for shipping stuff in.

When we seized them, the CID people marked the date and their initials on them. I went over and we pulled the same deal. Got the search warrant and went to the shops and lo and behold, there were the slot machines. Twenty-three of the slot machines had no maltreatment whatsoever. One had been beaten up and one had a few marks on it. That made the news. One radio announcer over in Hot Springs had the audacity to ask, “How did you all manufacture all of that”—like we had done this. I told them to come and look at the CID agents’ initials and date on the inside of the machines. Then another informant called me. I had informants running out my ears [and] telling me everything. This informant said he stood by when they brought some of these machines out to a gravel pit east of Hot Springs. He said a black guy driving a pickup truck took them out there and they dumped them out the back. He said one of the police officers had a sledgehammer and he would stand at the machine and [act, with much exaggeration, as if he were destroying the machine, when in fact he wasn’t hurting it at all]. Another officer told him he didn’t know how to break up a slot machine and took the sledgehammer and started beating the fool out of it. One of the detectives or assistant chiefs in the police department told another officer, “Go get that sledgehammer away from that crazy fool. He is going to tear it up.” The city policeman said, “How am I going to do it [without raising any suspicions]?” He said, “Tell him that is your sledgehammer and you’ve got an emergency and you’ve got to get it back.” Sure enough, he got the sled-

gehammer and threw it in the back of the car and took off. The man who brought out the machines put them back in the truck and left. Once we found the machines over there and developed that information, it was bad news. The city council said they were going to subpoena me to come over and testify. They didn't believe that this had happened. I told them there wasn't any need to subpoena me; I would come over anytime, day or night. I told them to give me an hour's notice and I would be there. I went over and they asked me how I knew [about the incident]. They knew I wasn't going to burn my informant. I believe that if you had the meeting minutes, this would be fairly verbatim. I said, "I will not only give you the name of the guy that drove the pickup truck, but give me fifteen minutes and I will have him here." That was stunning news [to them]. I told the major to go get him. He got him and I asked him if he remembered driving a pickup truck with slot machines out to a gravel pit east of Hot Springs. It got dead silent and everybody was wondering what he was going to say. He finally said that he did. I was looking at the councilmen and they didn't try to give him any signals. I asked him what happened afterward. He said he loaded up the machines and took them down to the repair shop. I asked him if all of the machines were down there, and he said yes. I asked him if there were any destroyed and he said that one had been beaten pretty badly. We took the machines out—stupid of me—to where the police department usually "destroyed" these machines. The police told me that this gravel pit was where they

destroyed confiscated items. I got a bulldozer and diesel fuel and dug a hole. We put those machines in the hole and ran the bulldozer over them. Then we poured diesel fuel on them and made a trail back a couple hundred yards from it. At that time, [television stations] used these big box-like cameras and the cameraman kept leaning over the fire. I warned him that when that thing [diesel fuel soaked machines] went up, it would [really create a big explosion]. He would back up for a little while, but would keep scooting closer. I told him that on the count of three I was going to light a match. I lit the match and it [ran up the trail of diesel fuel and exploded when it reached the machines doused in diesel fuel]. He said, "Goddamn!" [Laughs] and the camera was rocking. It [was] almost knocked out of his hand. After they burned, we took the bulldozer and covered them over. In the bottom of the gravel pit there will be all of this metal and one day archaeologists will be digging and find that and wonder what the hell went on. In fact, George Fisher drew a cartoon depicting this. At the same time we did that, we raided in eight other cities and got some sort of gambling paraphernalia, whether it was slot machines or tables or whatever. The next engagement came when some of my trusted lieutenants told me there were bookmaking operations in Pulaski County. Of course, there were in every county, but Pulaski County especially. We got a search warrant for these eleven bookie establishments. It came time for the trial and, historically, all of the gambling trials had been assigned to Judge Kirby. These eleven people had been arrested 118 times

and in 112 of those arrests they were fined just \$50 and their charges were reduced to a misdemeanor. I got a call from the prosecuting attorney when the cases came before the Grand Jury. Normally, the prosecuting attorney decides whether to prosecute the case or not. In my opinion, if they don't want to prosecute, they can take it before the Grand Jury. They called a grand jury and the prosecuting attorney said he would issue a subpoena for me. I told him I would be there at any time and just to let me know. He said we would just issue a subpoena. I told him that was fine if he wanted to make me look like I was being uncooperative. I went before the Grand Jury and at that time the procedure was for the judge to appoint three people who then picked the jurors. [Therefore,] the judge controlled the Grand Jury. It was like "Ned and the Primer." The prosecuting attorney asked me, "Colonel, we want to know who your informant is." This was the only reason they called me before the Grand Jury. About two weeks before they called me before the Grand Jury, an informant told me that they were going to do this. If I named my informant I was dead, and if I didn't, dire consequences were going to take place. My informant was part and parcel of the whole conspiracy. The foreman of the Grand Jury said [in a stilted monotone that implies one is reading from notes], "We must know the name of your informant." The prosecutor said, "That is right, Colonel. We must know the name of your informant." Then the foreman jumped in and said [in stilted voice], "If he will not give the name of the informant, then let us take him before the judge.

The judge will make him tell.” [Laughs] It was that bad. The prosecutor said, “Colonel, I am just going to have to take you before the judge to order you to tell us your informant.” I said, “Surely you have got enough evidence [in] bookmaking slips, the telephone bank [and] employees. You have enough to make a good case from a law enforcement standpoint without knowing the name of the informant. The only thing the name of an informant will do if he is not reliable is for the search warrant.” He took me over before Judge Kirby anyway. Judge Kirby said, “The prosecutor tells me that you won’t tell him the name of your informant.” I said, “That is right, Judge. I think he has enough evidence to convict without the name of the informant.” He never did repeat the question, and that was a mistake. He never did ask me for the name of my informant. He just asked me if I would tell him [the prosecutor the name of my informant] and I said that I wouldn’t [tell him]. The research showed that only in Ohio and Louisiana had a police officer been asked who his informant was. In Ohio it was some esoteric thing. It had never been brought up here in Arkansas. [The] Supreme Court said that it is normally not even a point of contention. The judge said that he was going to hold me in contempt, of course, and lock me up until I told them the name. I said, “Judge, I am not going to tell until hell freezes over.” The judge said, “Bailiff, come get the colonel and put him in jail until he [tells the court the name of the informant].” [The bailiff and I] were walking down the alley and the bailiff said, “Colonel, you know I don’t

agree with this. I am not part of that.” I told him I knew that. We went up the steps to the jail and the sheriff was there. We were there for about five minutes when the press descended on the place. One of the television people asked the sheriff if he would take me back outside and then bring me back in the jail holding my arm. The sheriff said, “Yeah, I’ll do it. Is it okay with you, Lynn?” I said, “Sheriff, if you want to, be my guest, but I believe you should think very hard and serious to see if you want to be seen taking the director of the Arkansas State Police up the jailhouse steps to lock him up.” He said [to the reporter], “No, I can’t do that. Get out of here.” He told me he wasn’t going to lock the [jail cell] door and he wasn’t going to put me in with the other prisoners. I told him to treat me exactly like the other prisoners. I told him I wasn’t afraid of going into the holding cell with any other prisoners. I didn’t want any special treatment. I wanted the whole state of Arkansas and the whole United States to know the situation we were in here. I didn’t want people to say it was just a sham because I got special treatment and it was all a setup. He put me in a cell down by the kitchen. In that same cell was a crap table [laughs]. It was there as evidence from one time or another, or they might have been playing on it; who knows? There was also a barrel of flour and mice would run in and grab some flour and run out. They served good soul food. That was back when they had the pea farm out on the Arkansas River. That is where vagrants went. If you didn’t have gainful employment or sufficient means to support yourself, you were

sent there and you raised peas and corn to feed the prisoners. I hadn't gotten a good night's sleep in the six weeks since I had been sworn in. I was thinking that I was finally going to get a good night's sleep because I was in a jail cell and nobody was going to wake me up. I sent the major out to my house to get some sheets to sleep on. My wife, being the frugal and straight-forward thinking person she was, decided to send the sheets that her mother had sent us when we got married. They were pink sheets [laughs]. I was asleep at about 1:30 in the morning and I heard somebody whispering my name. [It was a deputy.] I asked what he wanted and he told me that *The New York Times* was on the phone and wanted to talk with me. I told him to tell them that I would talk with them tomorrow, but the deputy said they were insistent, so I went and answered the pay phone and did an interview. While I was there I heard this lady cussing up a storm. She was saying, "You SOB's [sons of bitches] are going to eat all of this cake and Colonel Davis won't get a bite of it!" They told her they wouldn't and that I would get it. Then she turned around and saw that I was standing there on the phone and she said, "There he is!" I told her it was okay to give them the cake. The Ministerial Alliance came down. I think there were eight or nine preachers that came down. Irwin McDonald, who was head of the Baptist Association, came down and prayed on the courthouse steps. As a matter of fact, later when I ran for Secretary of State, they [Ministerial Alliance] endorsed me. [It] was the only time they ever endorsed a political candidate. Truckers that

were passing through Arkansas would stop at weigh stations and leave notes of encouragement. The FBI agents I worked with sent me a telegram telling me to “give ‘em hell and to stick with my guns.” Win Rockefeller and Tom Isley were going to Fort Smith when they got the news that I was arrested. Instead of landing at Fort Smith, they turned around and headed to Little Rock. They held a press conference on the courthouse steps, but didn’t say anything by design. The next day they took the case to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court still didn’t decide if I had to tell the prosecutor the name of my informant. They overturned the contempt of court charge because the judge never asked me directly to name my informant. That disappointed me [that it got overturned on a technicality instead of merit]. Shortly after we conducted the raids in Hot Springs, a big friend of the State Police called me and asked to have lunch. We went over to Hank’s Doghouse and he ordered me the biggest steak. He told me that the Hot Springs [gambling] operation was unbelievable in the amount of money it made for the area and the number of people it supported. It took him about fifteen minutes to make the approach, saying things like, “I bet it would be worth a lot of money to get those machines back.” I would make an offhanded comment asking him how much he thought they would be willing to pay, and he would say, “Oh, no, no, I am not talking about paying, I am just thinking out loud.” I said, “I wonder if they would pay \$100,000?” The expression on his face said that they would [laughs]. I just dropped the subject and went on

eating. He could tell that I was just funning with him. I could tell from the expression on his face that it was worth \$100,000 to operate and [by doing so, I believe] I would be State Police director forever. The gist of the whole thing was that I knew I wasn't going to survive one way or the other, either because of the residency or otherwise. There was supposedly a contract out on me from Chicago. I sent word to the people in Hot Springs that if anything happened to me or Win Rockefeller [there would be revenge]. Believe it or not—and I didn't agree with it—[Win Rockefeller] had hired three people to do that person in. There was a reward for the one that got him. This particular person sent word back that I had nothing to fear from him. After that, I became director of the governor's commission on crime. Then I ran for Secretary of State. I almost won and I didn't even know how to take shorthand. I was an advisor to Win on reorganizing security agencies like the National Guard, State Police, ABC [Alcoholic Beverage Control Board], and a few others. He then asked me if I would like to become U.S. Marshal for the eastern district of Arkansas. At that time there were only eighty-eight subdivisions of the Marshal's Service. I told him yes and Richard Nixon appointed me. I served for five years. I was an inspector with the Marshal's Service. I went around the country inspecting other Marshals' offices. While I was there I went to law school and got my law degree when I was forty-two [years old]. I have been practicing law for twenty-eight years now.

Right after I left the State Police, I got a call from Win Rockefeller. He

had appointed Tom Merton as the progressive director of the state penitentiary. He called and used a couple of expletives and said, "That crazy Tom Merton has dug up bodies down there at the state pen!" I asked him where he got bodies, but the governor didn't know. They had [news] cameramen down there taking pictures of bones he found in sacks in front of the prison. The governor asked me to go down and find out what was going on. I told him I didn't have any jurisdiction and would be nothing more than an interested observer. So he gave me an executive order that empowered me to take over the prison, if necessary. I went down and talked to Tom. Tom told me he found all these bodies out in a field. I asked him how he knew where to look. He told me the guy's name [who gave him the information]. He was an inmate. I asked to talk with him. He was back in isolation. He was a really old black man—must have been eighty. He could barely hold up his head. I asked Tom if I could interview him alone and he said he didn't mind. I asked him [the inmate] how many bodies were out there. He said, "Thousands." I said, "You don't think there are more?" He said, "Yes, there are many thousands out there." I knew that there had been people killed down there, thrown in the river or buried. It was back when they used the strap and the telephone [as punishment devices]. I asked him who they were. He said they shot some and cut limbs off—all kinds of weird claims. He said they did it right out in front of the prison. I asked him how they got away with it and he told me because they did it at night. During the prison

riots, twenty or so people were never accounted for. The major in charge of the prison said that a lady kept a scrapbook that showed what had actually happened to these twenty people. Some were shot in a bank robbery in Texas; some were hung in Colorado. All of them met untimely ends. He also told me that she had a copy of a Corps of Engineers map that showed a cemetery right where they [the bodies] were found. There was a black church shown on the map. It was too neat [orderly] for them to have been just done away with. They [prison workers] used the strap, which was a wide leather belt with a handle on it. They used the Tucker Telephone. It was a hand-cranked telephone. They would hook the wires from the telephone to the testicles of the prisoner. They would call it “making a telephone call.” They would wind up the magneto and it would drive the prisoners crazy. We found the Tucker Telephone. Tom Isley has the strap that he got from down there. We transferred the prison from the trustee system. It was a system where inmates oversaw other inmates. It used to be that there were only a few free world people down there. The rest of them [prison workers] were trustees. These trustees were feared and hated by the inmates. Civil rights were unknown in the prison system. These are the guys who “made the telephone calls” and used the strap. Whenever they changed over from the trustee system, the trustees started escaping because they knew they were going to be killed [by the other prisoners]. So they were bugging out wholesale. I went down on one of the escapees. I was absolutely flabbergasted. There was

an old tin shack out in the middle of the cotton field with smoke coming out from the chimney and a woman on the porch. This was where the trustee lived with his woman. He would have the inmates do his work for them. They raised their food, fruit, and milk cows. I guess if you are going to live in a prison, living in those old shacks wasn't so bad.

ML: What were your impressions of the state representatives from Garland County? It seems [as if] after the raids an "us against them" sort of situation developed between them and the State Police. Tell me about your impressions of Bynum Hurst and others.

LD: I am bound by what I can prove, but it was generally well-known that anybody that was an elected representative from Hot Springs at that time was part and parcel of the whole thing [gambling] or they wouldn't have been elected. Q. Bynum was a smart guy. Bud Canada, who was later elected representative, was sheriff down there. The police department was corrupt; there is no doubt about that. It was politics as usual and it went all the way to the State Capitol.

ML: As an outsider coming in, how do you think the state troopers perceived you?

LD: Nobody ever came to me and said they didn't like me. I got the impression that they did like me for several reasons. One, I took the house back that was meant for the director. Two, I [looked out] for them and told them that they wouldn't have to put up with the crap of everyone having an honorary badge. I wore the [State Police] uniform. I was the first director to wear the uniform that I know of. I had an open-door policy. I didn't play the political game and that became known pretty fast. I had a handful of people who said they had not been pro-

moted because of politics. I found a couple of cases where that was true, but more times than not it wasn't true. For example, one guy came in and said he had not been promoted even though he was qualified. I asked to see his gun and a shell. It had corrosion on it and his gun was dirty. I told him I would take it under advisement, but I recommended that he clean his gun and uniform. The Lynn Davis story was the number one Associated Press story in Arkansas in 1967. The second was the election of the first Republican governor in modern history. The press was for me. It seemed like the people were for me. I thought the troopers always backed me up. As a matter of fact, the Texarkana Gazette ran a front-page article saying that the State Police had taken troopers off the highway to do this [raiding clubs]. They said that because of this, Arkansas was having record highway deaths. Well, believe it or not, but in 1967 we were the only state to have a reduction in highway deaths. What they wrote was a complete fabrication. While everyone else was setting records in highway deaths, we had a reduction. It was simply because troopers were out there doing what they were paid to do. In four and a half months, I think we did more for the image of law enforcement [in Arkansas] than ever before. I was raised in Texarkana and I knew that everyone laughed about Orval Faubus knocking off a slot machine. Win Rockefeller might not get credit for all that he did, but he did many, many great things for the state of Arkansas. Another interesting [side note]—[there] was a chemist that worked at the Pine Bluff arsenal came by the headquarters one day and said he wanted to help open up a crime laboratory. His company offered to provide free access to their lab space. Come to find out, he became the chemist who tested

horses at the track. He knew every horse that was doped down there [at Oak-lawn]. One day when I was Marshal, I saw the same guy after he got arrested for making methamphetamines. He had gotten into the drug business.

[End of Interview]

[Edited by Rebecca Willhite]

[JD]