



The FBI Oral History Project

An initiative sponsored by
The Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI
and the Former Agents of the FBI Foundation
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Interview of Former Special Agent of the FBI William M. Baker, Interviewed by Michael N. Boone On February 23, 2006

Edited for spelling, repetitions, etc. by Sandra Robinette on April 19, 2006. Final edit with Mr. Baker's corrections was done by Sandra Robinette on May 25, 2006.

Michael Boone: This is Michael N. Boone. I'm interviewing William M. Baker for the Society of Former Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Oral History Program.

Today is February 23rd, 2006. This interview is taking place at Bill Baker's home in Westlake Village, California. This is Tape Number 1, Side A.

Baker: I'm William M. Baker, better known as Bill Baker. And I am going to read the copyright release.

We, the undersigned, convey the rights to the intellectual content of our interview on this date, which is February 23rd, 2006, to the Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI.

This transfer is in exchange for the Society's efforts to preserve the historical legacy of the FBI and its members. We understand that portions of this interview may be deleted for security purposes.

Unless otherwise restricted, we agree that acceptable sections can be published on the World Wide Web and the recordings transferred to an established repository for preservation and research.

And it's signed by both myself, the interviewee, William M. Baker, and...

Boone: And Michael N. Boone.

Baker: *I would like to add the additional restriction that the interviewee request review of any written transcript before web posting or transfer to a repository. Thank you. (Mr. Baker reviewed the materials and returned to the project on 4/11/06).*

Boone: Bill, where were you born?

Baker: I was born in Newark, New Jersey on December 26th, 1939. My father was then a control tower operator at the Newark Airport and he was building up his flight hours, so that he could get a commercial position as an airline pilot, which in fact he did shortly after I was born. And he went with American Airlines as a copilot in 1940.

Boone: Did you grow up mostly in New Jersey?

Baker: No. He immediately was transferred to Philadelphia and then New York. And I grew up on Long Island in New York State.

My father was drafted. It's kind of a funny story. He was drafted and he was at Fort Dix going through infantry training, when he had a good sergeant, who was asking all his recruits, "What did you do before the war, son?" And my father said that he was an airline pilot for American Airlines. And the sergeant immediately said, "What the hell are you doing in the Infantry?" And they transferred him to the Army Air Corps, where he flew during the war.

I spent that period with my mother in an apartment in Queens County, New York, while my father was flying the North Atlantic primarily, ferrying cargo and troops from the United States to England and back.

Boone: Did you want to be a pilot when you were a kid?

Baker: I thought very hard about that, yes. I thought that that would be a great occupation.

Boone: Did you play any sports in high school?

Baker: Oh, yes. Shortly after the war ended, my father was promoted to captain, because he had so much seniority over the other just-hired pilots. The airline industry really took off after World War II ended.

And to my father's luck, he had service dating to 1940 and so he was a senior pilot almost from the beginning.

Baker: We moved out to Massapequa, New York, on the South Shore of Long Island, and I grew up in a great school system, which really put a lot of focus on sports. I ran track. I ran the half mile and the mile and cross-country. And I wrestled. Wrestling was a big sport on Long Island and I enjoyed that. It was you against your opponent and, if you failed, it was all you.

So I enjoyed my high school immensely. I made many friends that I still have to this day. And also did well enough academically, so that I was then accepted at the University of Virginia for my college.

Boone: Majoring in?

Baker: Well, I didn't know exactly. At Virginia in those days, you took two years of liberal arts and then selected a major. And I was attracted to the school because my cousin had attended there. And I went down there for his wedding when I was an impressionable sophomore in high school. And I thought from then on that I would like to go to the University of Virginia as my cousin had.

And I had actually applied at the University of North Carolina, Colgate and Virginia. I was accepted at all three, and my parents said, "Why don't you go off and visit each school?" My father gave me an airline pass and some money.

And my first stop was Charlottesville, Virginia. And I went to my cousin's fraternity and they convinced me that I should spend the weekend there and not go on to North Carolina. I never did look at North Carolina or Colgate. I made up my mind then to go to Virginia.

Boone: And did you continue to play sports in college?

Baker: I did. They had a cross-country run that was open to the whole university and, as a young first year student at Virginia, I entered that and took a second. I came in behind the Virginia high school half-mile champion. He and I later became close friends. And, so I did run.

And then I entered the wrestling intramural tournament and won my weight class at 157 pounds. And then the coach came by and recruited me to go out for the team, which I did.

Baker: So I wrestled for a few years. That was the sport that I did at college level. And the other sports were intramural.

Boone: Upon graduation, what did you go on to do at that time?

Baker: From college?

Boone: Yes.

Baker: During college, I was in the Air Force ROTC program, Reserve Officers Training Corps and upon graduation, I was selected to go to flight school. And that gets back to your question about a pilot. I really did want to be a pilot.

And I subsequently went to flight school with the Air Force. I got a waiver. First, I hadn't taken any piston flying, because I had had a hernia wrestling and that had to be repaired. So I missed the flying part of my Reserve Officer Training Command, but I got a waiver and went there and started out in jets.

And later I was told by my instructor that if they ever needed a kamikaze squad, they would come to me right away, because my takeoffs and air work were fine, but I had trouble with my landing.

And after a few run-ins that way, they asked if I wanted to be a navigator. And my answer was no. And this is something that I used when I later lectured students about let-downs, because I was really disappointed.

And I looked at the list of options open to me and they had Office of Special Investigations, being an investigator for the OSI.

And so I applied for that, which was a three-year obligation as opposed to the five year flight program. And frankly that shaped my whole subsequent career in life, because I enjoyed the Office of Special Investigations very much.

Of historical significance, the OSI was set up by an FBI Agent, who Mr. Hoover allowed to leave, and he was given the rank of Colonel and then Colonel Carroll set up the training program for the OSI. So that New Agents' Class was patterned after the FBI New Agents' Class. And it was a very professional group, both officers and enlisted.

Baker: I spent my three year tour in the Air Force primarily at Westover Air Force Base, after completing training. So I spent the three years at Westover Air Force Base, conducting background investigations, security checks, and doing criminal investigative work for the Air Force. I enjoyed it very much.

And enjoyed the camaraderie of being with other young officers from various colleges who were all assigned to different positions in the Air Force at the time.

I spent a lot of time at Cape Cod in the summer, not too far from Springfield, Massachusetts, where Westover Air Force Base was located. And I also learned to ski during that time frame. And that's something that I've kept up to this day.

Boone: Now, can you tell me how that Air Force experience led you into the FBI?

Baker: Yes. I always enjoyed the investigative work and the report writing came easy because of my background in history, which was my degree at Virginia. I was very used to writing reports and enjoyed it.

I got along very well with my Colonel and had good ratings. And then I did decide I would leave. I thought I wanted a career in marketing, so I actually applied to companies like Proctor and Gamble, Triple M, those types of large companies that had training programs for graduates and I had my Service behind me.

But unbeknownst to me, my Colonel, who liked me obviously, recommended me to the FBI. And I received a telephone call, cold, at my parents' residence, which was in New Jersey at the time and it was the FBI.

And they said they were recruiting. And I told them, "Well, I don't think I would qualify, because I'm not a lawyer." The Agent on the other end of the phone laughed and said, "Well that doesn't matter, neither am I."

I said, "Well, you don't understand, sir, I'm not an accountant either." And he laughed again and said, "Neither am I, son." He said, "That's a bit of a myth."

Baker: And I said, "Well, look, in the Air Force, when I couldn't fly, I didn't want to be in the cockpit." I said, "Can you assure me that I won't be a second-class type of Agent if I don't have that background?" He said, "I certainly can assure you that, there's no restriction. We're interested in you. Why don't you go to the nearest office, that would be New Jersey because I'm calling you from New Jersey?"

I put that into my bonnet and one day I was in New York City and I was with a friend, and I said, "What are all those men doing in suits walking into that building? It looks like this is a residential neighborhood." And my friend said, "Well, it's East 69th Street and that's the FBI Office." And then I said, "Really!" I said, "Look, I need to go in there."

So I went in cold and ended up talking to the applicant Agent, the recruiting Agent in New York, told him the background about that and he laughed at the time.

I later found out that they stole me from the New Jersey office and recruited me in New York and they were very pleased that I walked into their office rather than New Jersey.

At that time it was important to know, I think, for this Oral History, that J. Edgar Hoover was having a feud with Martin Luther King, who had accused Mr. Hoover of staffing southern offices with southern-born Agents. To disprove that, all Agents coming in about that time, 1965, who came in from the New York Office, were sent south.

So my first office of assignment after completing FBI training was Charlotte, North Carolina. I don't know if you want to go into training. It's pretty well covered by many Agents.

Boone: Anything, that stood out during training, any incident or any particular thing?

Baker: Yeah, basically I went thinking Quantico, Virginia, U.S. Marine Corps, I'd better be in the best shape of my life. And I was mildly disappointed to find out that the physical demands were not that strong, at least in my estimation. Because I was very used to running and wrestling.

Baker: And I found out that with my roommates that we would go out after class and before dinner and take long runs just to do the physical work.

I also found out that because of my OSI training and, as I described to you, the OSI training had been set up by an FBI Agent, I found that it was somewhat easier for me. But that was a positive thing.

And the only thing that I hadn't had really much training on was firearms. I found that to be excellent, very strong firearms training at that time in 1965.

Those are my principal observations about the New Agents' Class, which was a very satisfactory experience.

We did laugh though as a class, because we went through the old Marine barracks, the red brick building. There were eight of us, I believe, assigned to a room, four bunk beds.

And at the time we recalled humorously reading where a Federal Judge had found it inhumane to have more than five prisoners to a cell. We knew we were three over that, but we didn't mind at all, because we were looking forward to putting at least five prisoners in a cell after we graduated.

Boone: Well, I had that same configuration, so I have to ask you a question. Did you have any bad snorers among your eight?

Baker: We had a B-52 pilot, Don Bassett by the way, who had a nice career with the FBI, a lot of it in training. But Don was a B-52 pilot and he would have nightmares.

And so we all became his crew during the night when he started speaking about "pull up, pull up." I think I was made copilot and my other bunk member was a gunner. And we used to laugh and get him through his nightmares, and then kid him rather rigorously about it during the day. He tried very hard to get over those nightmares and did.

Boone: So an east coast boy goes to the south. What was that like hitting your first office?

Baker:

Well you know what was good about it, there were about ten bachelor Agents assigned to the Charlotte Division. A very sharp Special Agent in Charge named Murphy, walked out one Monday morning, after we had all spent a weekend in this lovely town of Charlotte and saw the ten of us having too good of a time reliving our weekend.

That week we were sent to ten different Resident Agencies around the state. The ten of us were fanned out. He knew what he had to do and he was smart about it.

And what was cute about it is my roommate, both in training and at Charlotte, was Tom Renaghan, who is a dear friend to this day and made a career of the FBI.

But he called both Tom and I into his office together and he looked at Tom Renaghan and said, "Bill Baker, I'm sending you to Durham." And he looked at me and said, "And Tom Renaghan, I'm sending you to Fayetteville."

We both didn't want to correct him, so we said, "Yes, sir," and left. And Tom looked at me and said, "Who do you think's going where?" And I said, "Tom, I think I won, because when he gets to paper, it's going to be Bill Baker, Durham."

So Tom used to come up whenever he could to get away from the Fort Bragg complex. And I spent my time at Durham, which, as you may know, is the home of Duke and also very close to that school I never visited that I might have attended, the University of North Carolina.

I took an apartment halfway between the two schools and spent my mornings out chasing the Ku Klux Klan and developing informants to go into the Ku Klux Klan. A point of interest there. One of my methods given to me by a wise old Resident Agent was to go to the Selective Service Board and get the names of recently returned veterans who had left the area of the cultural tight south and experienced some years of service in the various military services.

I then would find them and interview them and talk to them about their experiences abroad in the military. Many of them actually by that time were serving in Asia and starting to serve in Vietnam. This was 1966. And I recruited them to go into the Ku Klux Klan.

Baker: We had the largest klavern in America at the time, which consisted of the major tobacco companies, warehouse type employees and, fortunately, they were not a violent group. They were quite large in numbers though.

And I recall an interesting incident. Of course, we developed these sources, placed them in the Klan and into the different klaverns. And gave them taskings, one of which was to report back to us after each meeting.

And there were four of us assigned to the Resident Agency. Two senior Agents, Chuck Miller and Lindian Swaim, and Vick Holdren, a good Agent, a little bit more seasoned than me. I was the junior Agent.

And one time I remember getting back three reports from the three informants that we had in this one klavern. Two of the informants reported that an individual had stood up and said that he was an FBI informant and that he felt very bad about that and wanted to confess to the Klan. And the third report we got back said that nothing out of the ordinary went on at that meeting. Well, we obviously knew which of our three sources had turned and we used that to our advantage.

One of the very fine things we did in my opinion, working with the other Agents from the Secret Service, we heard that the Vice President of the United States at that time, Hubert Humphrey, was coming to the town of Durham to dedicate an all black college or to help re-dedicate it and to honor an all black insurance company in Durham, North Carolina.

Being aware way in advance, we got several of our informants in the state to sponsor a turkey shoot some sixty miles outside of Durham on that day. The FBI put up the prize money for the turkey shoot and we got attendance interest up to raffle tickets and so forth, all sponsored secretly by the FBI.

And then we took the tag numbers of all the individuals on that day. And at that time, I must say that we had on a fugitive level and criminal work, we had outstanding cooperation with law enforcement in the south, but on racial issues...

Boone: By tag numbers, you mean license plates....

Baker: License plate, license plate numbers.

We waited until the last week before giving that to the North Carolina State Police with the idea that these people also would have probably guns and liquor in their cars.

And then we put the pressure on the State Police. We said, "You need to pull over all these cars." What happened is the Klan members got out to the turkey shoot and some realized the Vice President was then coming to town and wanted to come back.

And the State Police worked with us very well in pulling them over and detaining them. Of course, we were very relieved when the Vice President had wheels up and pulled out of North Carolina. We kept some of the bigger drinkers and the more boisterous Klan members out at the raffle and then State Police detained them on the highway.

I also spent a good portion of the afternoons though on the college campuses, the beautiful campuses of Duke University and the University of North Carolina, working at that time very closely with the deans, the deans of students at both institutions, and trying to minimize the effects of the Students for a Democratic Society, known as SDS, which had chapters at both of those universities.

So you might say that my career was pretty much balanced between the hard right, meaning the Ku Klux Klan, the far right, and the far left, being the SDS.

In those days, you spent one year almost to the day, and then I was transferred again to my second office, which was Ocala, Florida. Actually, it was Jacksonville, Florida. I was very happy about that and looked at the beach and thought, "This is going to be nice."

And then the Special Agent in Charge, D.K. Brown, called me into his office and said, "Young man," and he was an old Hoover appointee. He said, "Young man, I don't like to be turned down by the FBI Headquarters." And I had no idea what he was talking about.

He said, "Therefore, I looked at your background and you have previously served successfully in a Resident Agency, have you not?" And I said, "Yes, sir, in Durham."

Baker: He said, "Then you are not staying here in Jacksonville. The Bureau turned down the man that I wanted to send to Ocala, saying he didn't have enough experience in a Resident Agency. You though do. Do you like to hunt, Mr. Baker?" I said, "No sir, I don't hunt." He said, "Hmm, do you play golf?" And I said, "No, I don't." He said, "Good. Then you will work very hard out there. You'll like Ocala."

I had no idea where Ocala was and I got into an old Plymouth that they gave me and drove towards Tampa, until I went around this little square and what was labeled Ocala twice, at which time a police officer pulled me over and said, "You must be the new FBI man coming to town."

Of course, if you remember the cars had whiplash antennas all over and state highway radios and I had called in on the radio to the office. And I said, "Yes, I'm looking for downtown." And he said, "You're in it."

And he sent me to the tallest building, which was a three-story Federal Building, and I took up residence at my second office in Ocala, Florida.

Boone: How many people were in that RA?

Baker: That was a three-man Resident Agency, myself and two other Agents. And the two senior Agents had been there forever. One of them was extremely competent, Ted Tucker.

And Ted and I got along immensely and worked very hard primarily doing fugitive work, chasing fugitives through the orange groves.

But again, as a bachelor, after two years, I went to see the then Special Agent in Charge, who I got along well with. His name was Bob Gebhardt.

And Bob gave me decent advice. He said, "Bill, look, I can't transfer you into Jacksonville. I know you'd like to be at Headquarters, but the FBI Headquarters won't approve a double transfer. They won't approve me pulling you in and sending an Agent from here out. So I'm afraid you're going to have to stay in Ocala for a while longer."

Baker: And I said, “Well, with no disrespect to you, what offices do I have seniority for after three years in the FBI?” And he said, “Only one, New York City.” And that shaped my next request.

I put in for New York City and received my transfer two weeks later. I arrived in New York City, with a tan, during a snowstorm in February.

Boone: I have a question for you. The old myth was, if you said I’m interested in going to New York, even for vacation, you said it at lunch, in the middle of nowhere, your transfer orders were cut within fifteen minutes.

Baker: It was amazing. Truly, I learned that later, when I was on the Transfer Desk as an Agent Supervisor, but I knew that I wanted to get to New York. My father was nearing the end of his career as an airline captain with American. They lived nearby in New Jersey. And I thought it would be nice to be near the family and also to work in a large office and conduct the more complex investigations.

So when I arrived with a tan, of course, the New York Agents, one-half of whom probably had Jacksonville or some other southern office down as where they would liked to have been, took a look at me and said, “What happened? Obviously, you’ve been disciplined here.” And I said, “Oh, no. This is an Office of Preference transfer.”

So they tended to avoid me, wondering what kind of a fool would come in in February and come to New York.

If I could just back up a few months though. One interesting case has just come to my mind that occurred when I was in Ocala, Florida.

I received a communiqué from the FBI and it was one of those Hoover specials, color-coded. You had to run your leads and get back an answer within twenty-four hours.

And it was to track down an unknown subject, forgerer, who was using his good looks and his ability as a magazine salesman to enter women’s apartments, befriend them, and thereafter, whatever type of relationship he was able to maintain with them, stealing their checks and then forging them and cashing them.

Baker: Well, the reason I remember this is it became interesting only later on. But the victim was a young lady who worked for Congress, and she had admitted to the FBI that she had been one of his victims in Washington, D.C. She had been enamored with this young man and, in fact, had taken him into the apartment, where he spent a good deal of time and then he later stole her checks.

The only thing she found to help identify this young unknown subject was some phone numbers that she found on a piece of paper that he left. And one of those numbers was traced to a small town, Wildwood, Florida, which was a railroad town halfway between Ocala and Tampa.

I went to the Chief of Police of that town and said, "Look, this is just a telephone number that I have." And I gave him the background I've just given you and said, "I have no idea in the world why this young criminal would have this number."

And the Chief smiled and said, "Well, if you knew the daughter of the subscriber of this phone number, who happens to be a railroad brakeman for the Florida Southern, you would know why he's interested in this phone number, because she is the most beautiful woman ever born in the State.

Boone: This is Michael N. Boone and I'm continuing the interview of Bill Baker. This is Side B of Tape 1.

Baker: Continuing with my comments about this investigation of the unknown subject, who was befriending women and then stealing their checks.

We pulled up to the house of this brakeman, the Chief of Police, and I, and we noticed outside a rather new car with a Florida license tag 1E on it, which meant that it was a Dade County, Miami rental car.

The Chief and I looked at each other and acknowledged that we might have our unknown subject visiting his true girlfriend. And, in fact, upon going up to the house and looking through the screen door, we noticed a good looking young man and a beautiful young lady sitting on the couch.

And the young man had an ascot on, I recall to this day, which is probably the only ascot in that part of Florida.

Baker: We called him out for questioning and eventually took him to the Chief's office and continued our interrogation of him, looking for identity.

And he provided several different identities and was not being very cooperative about telling us about his forgery experiences, until I asked him if he had seen the movie *Cool Hand Luke*. And he looked a bit puzzled and said, "Why, yes," he had just recently.

And I said, "Well, you may be interested in knowing that the prison is just ten miles up the highway here and that's where you'll be going if we determine that this is a State offense. By that I mean you did not use your proper identity in taking this rental car and the Chief has you on a local charge of that. However, if you so desire, you can give me a signed statement admitting that you befriended a young woman who worked for the Congress, whose name is Mary Jo Kopechne, and that you then stole checks from her, forged them, and cashed them."

Boone: Uh-huh.

Baker: He thought for only about fifteen seconds and elected to go Federal. And I took a lengthy signed statement. We held him on local charges until we could arrest him on the Federal charges. And that was my, I believe, my first commendation letter in the FBI.

But I tell the story because obviously Mary Jo Kopechne became a matter of great interest later, but at the time, it got to Mr. Hoover's attention because she worked for the Kennedy's in the boiler room up on the Hill.

Boone: So you had your first Director's signature, you had Hoover's signature in his special ink?

Baker: In the good ink.

Boone: In the good ink.

Baker: Yes.

Boone: And what else did you work there that we'd know about?

Baker: I think, in Florida, that's primarily the case I wanted to tell, because of its historical significance.

Upon getting to New York though, as in all offices, you have to prove yourself to the veteran cadre of Agents.

I was initially assigned to a Selective Service Squad and then to a, what I called the Junior Fugitive Squad, where we went after deserters and the "76" violators, you know, not the main Unlawful Flight To Avoid Prosecution, that type.

And then I got a break. At that time, 1969, a group called the Black Liberation Army, which was an offshoot of the Black Panthers, was becoming quite active in New York City and elsewhere around the country. And they were, in particular, they were trying to shoot and kill police officers.

And in the 1970s, by the early 70s, they had killed what they liked to refer to in their communiqués as salt and pepper teams of police officers. When they saw a white officer and a black officer working together, the Black Liberation Army, in an effort in their minds to create a revolution, would shoot both of them and then claim responsibility for it.

Well, President Nixon ordered the FBI into this investigation. Normally, it would have been handled by police as a homicide.

And so in the first instance that I'm aware of, of a joint task force in a criminal case, a select group of FBI Agents was formed to work off of the Bank Robbery Squad in the New York FBI Office with a group of detectives from the New York City Police Department, who were on their Major Case Squad.

I was fortunate enough, along with Tom Renaghan, who I had earlier mentioned and who went to New York from Atlanta, his second office, about the same time. We were roommates in New York City again.

And Tom and I were selected to work on that squad, which was a great breakthrough in my FBI career, working against the known cadre of at least forty dedicated revolutionaries, keeping communiqués going with San Francisco, New Orleans, Atlanta, many other offices, and tracking down this group.

Baker: In one case, one of them, one of the members was Andrew Jackson and another was Twyman Myers. A third was a woman, Joanne Chesimard. These all became well known names to the FBI in the early 70s. Myers and Chesimard were placed on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List of fugitives.

And we were fortunate enough to get some good leads. We worked very hard. And we were able to track down Andrew Jackson and, in a major break, broke into his apartment, where we were told by an informant that he was staying, and arrested him and his girlfriend.

He did leap for a gun and we were able to jump on him ahead of time and arrest him without harm and secure the apartment.

But on the way to the Federal House of Detention, I was in the back seat with him in the traditional way that the FBI kept a prisoner in those days, handcuffed and he was sitting in the back seat passenger side. I was sitting behind the driver and then we had an Agent in the front seat passenger and the driver was an Agent.

And Andrew Jackson kept looking at me and at the Agent in the passenger side up front. And finally he said, "I saved your life," looking at me. And I said, "What are you talking about? We just arrested you and got you before you got to your gun. How do you figure you saved my life?"

He said, "Well, I'm about to tell you." He said, "Remember the Bronx bank job about a month ago?" And I said, "Yes, I remember it." He said, "You responded to it, right?" And I said, "Yes, I did." And he said, "And that guy right there, that short guy." And I said, "Yes, we did."

He said, "Well, you and that short guy were interviewing a superintendent in an apartment building following the bank robbery, weren't you?" And at that time the hair on the back of my neck went up and I said, "Yes, I was."

Baker:

He said, "Well, Twyman Myers and I were hiding in another apartment across from you after the bank robbery and Twyman had a fully loaded forty-five and said to me now we can kill some FBI Agents, as well as some cops." And I restrained him, because, I said, "This area is swarming with FBI. We're never going to get out of here if you do it. We'll get another chance to kill us some FBI Agents. You're not gonna do it. Be quiet."

And the other Agent, Bob McCartin, had four children, as I recall, and after we booked Andrew Jackson, we looked at each other and he said, "Bill, I don't often do this. I usually rush home to New Jersey, but would you like to have a drink with me after work?" I said, "I very much would." And that was the incident that I recall quite vividly about our days chasing down...

Later Twyman Myers was killed by the FBI, including Bob McCartin, in a major shootout, but by that time I had been promoted to the Survey and Investigations Staff of the House Appropriations Committee. I had been selected to go down to Washington, D.C. It was 1973 by that time. And Mr. Hoover had died.

And Tom Renaghan, again, and I were selected to go down and work on that committee.

Other cases that I worked in New York. I got a lot of experience doing fugitive work in tough neighborhoods and deep appreciation for that type of criminal investigative work. And a great deal of experience that helped me throughout my career.

One of the major cases, other than the Black Liberation Army, was the case that they subsequently made into a movie, *Dog Day Afternoon*, starring Al Pacino.

And, again, Renaghan and I, we were working on the Bank Robbery Squad together and we were the ones who responded. My partner at the time, our partner, Jim Murphy, was the chauffeur, who shot and killed Sal Naturale, one of the bank robbers in that case.

Baker: And we arrested Wortorwicz, who was the other subject that, again, as the movie pointed out accurately, he wanted money, so that he could have his girlfriend receive a sex change operation. And, of course, the movie that was made had violent crime, sex, all that, and New York involved in it. And that was another kind of major case that I worked on at the time.

The assignment to the House Appropriations Committee Survey and Investigative Staff was a very interesting one. We conducted cost benefit analysis for the House Appropriations Committee. And we were actually on special assignment. We turned in our FBI credentials and were given House Appropriation and Staff credentials and worked on the Hill.

And I met some really fine investigators. And as I said, we conducted surveys and cost benefit analysis. I worked on military base closing investigations and I worked on community mental health efforts to determine their validity and whether they should continue to be funded with seed money.

Some very interesting cases. Worked there for about a year.

And then an Agent, who really was a mentor for me, was Joe Corless. Joe had been the Bank Robbery Supervisor, my supervisor in New York, when I worked the special squad, the Black Liberation Army Squad, and after that worked the Bank Robbery Squad itself. Joe had always ... overseen my career.

And he was then at the FBI. As part of his career development, he left New York and was in the Administrative Division at FBI Headquarters.

And after a year, he called me and he said there was a slot and he thought it would be very good for my career if I would come in and join him in the Administrative Division. And I did so. And that was really the start of my rise from being a street Agent, where I spent my first eight years and, and then moving on into supervisory roles.

I think at this point I would like to make a comment that even today, I wish that all supervisors in the FBI had at least five years of experience as a street level investigator before they were singled out for promotion.

Baker: I know the needs of the Bureau come first, but I found that those eight years on the street always provided me with insight later on, because I had rapport with street Agents. I enjoyed my work with them. And if it had not been for Joe Corless, my Bank Robbery Squad Supervisor, talking me into administrative advancement, I probably would have stayed a street Agent.

At FBI Headquarters, my first assignment was in an administrative file section. It wasn't too very exciting, updating the briefing section of every Agent's file.

But then I received a change in assignment and was assigned to the Transfer Desk. That's all transfers, both undercover and the specials, Bureau specials, as well as Office of Preference and new Agent assignments.

So it was interesting work and, at that time, the Administrative Division of the FBI was a critical division for those interested in career development. You got a lot of good personnel work behind you.

Boone: So you have kind of a claim to fame re: the Transfer Desk, don't you?

Baker: Yes. I was telling you earlier, before we recorded, when I heard when you came into the FBI, that you might say that I was the initiator for the infamous 10/1/69 Program.

And what that meant was, when I was working on the Transfer Desk, I was told by my superiors that I had to staff up the large ten offices, the "top ten" as we called it, New York being the office with the most Special Agents assigned. And then Washington Field, then Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, and so on.

Boone: That's because New York couldn't count on people such as yourself.

Baker: That's right.

Boone: To voluntarily transfer.

Baker: There weren't enough fools like myself who volunteered to go to New York. And it took transfers there against the will of many of them, and to get them up to staff, because there was such a heavy workload there.

And so when I looked at this large class of new Agents that we had taken in in 1969, I came up with the idea that many of them had not been in one of the ten largest offices and were moving to their second office. They should receive a transfer to one of the ten largest.

And in that way, my superiors bought off on my recommendation and we started transferring Agents, perhaps like yourself, from very nice offices, like Jacksonville, Florida or San Diego, California, and sent them to one of the larger offices. It was not a popular program by any means, but it did meet the needs of the Bureau.

Boone: So how long were you at the Transfer Unit back there, before you moved to another unit?

Baker: Well actually I became the Unit Chief and then was in charge of all transfers. Bob Cahill retired. He had had the job. I became the Unit Chief and then went on the Inspection Staff as an Inspector's Aide.

And in 1978, I was transferred out as Assistant Special Agent in Charge to the Portland Division in Oregon. So I stayed at Headquarters from about '74 to '78.

Boone: Now did you have a guru back there that was helping your career along?

Baker: Well really the only guru that I had was Joe Corless, who was a terrific supervisor in the field. And, then he was the one who got me to Headquarters.

But after that, it was pretty much whatever I did right myself or did wrong, and I was able to do most things right. And so I was picked to go out to Portland as Assistant in Charge.

Boone: But while you were up in, before you went up to Portland, what Directors had you served under at the Bureau?

Baker: That's a good question. First, well at the Bureau, would have been, L. Patrick Gray, I missed him. He had gone because of Watergate. I was in the Survey Staff then.

And then Ruckelshaus had it for a very brief period and he was not fully confirmed, neither was Gray, of course.

And then Kelley, Clarence Kelley had it until 1978, I believe, when Judge Webster took over. And so from '78, really it was Judge Webster. I had my first experiences working for him then and came to his attention when I was Unit Chief on the Transfer Desk and we had some important specials. And I actually had occasion to brief him a couple times.

Also, I remember one occasion where Strom Thurmond, the very influential Senator from South Carolina, was demanding that a female Agent be transferred closer to her husband's work assignment from Norfolk to Richmond. And I did the research on that case and confirmed that there were four more Agents ahead of her in serious need for hardship reasons and that it would be inappropriate to transfer her.

The Director sent several notes down asking for further explanation. And then finally called me into his office because he wanted to do the right thing on this case.

And when he heard me out and I stood firm, he said, "And if I ordered you to transfer her," and I said, "Well, then I would have to do it, wouldn't I, sir, but I would not recommend that." And he said, "Nor would I." He said, "I wanted to see how firm you would be. I appreciate your analysis. Thank you." And he turned down the transfer.

I thought that was, in my opinion, the right thing for him to have done and I think that perhaps it made a small impression on him.

But anyway, I was picked shortly after that to go out as Assistant Special Agent in Charge in Portland. That's the number two position for anyone outside of the FBI listening to this.

Boone: Now you were not at Headquarters under J. Edgar Hoover, but you were under several other Directors. Did you notice a change of the feel of the Bureau once Hoover had died and other Directors took over?

Baker: I'll be very candid with you. I did not want and I turned down administrative advancement while Mr. Hoover was alive. I was single. I had read stories about the actions he took against clerical employees for having fiancés spend the night and so forth. And quite honestly, I was in no position to want to become high profile at that time. I didn't want my personal life looked at and I was very happy being in the field. And it really wasn't until his death that I accepted the idea of transfers up the ranks.

But I did notice and, and mostly it was listening to other supervisors talk about how Clarence Kelley, when he was Director, started some fine initiatives, such as the quality over quantity concept, such as the admission of female Agents, which was started under him.

These were important, these were important initiatives to help the FBI evolve into staying a modern investigative agency. The quality over quantity concept was really good, because I can recall having had up to seventy deserter cases myself at one time, hardly being able to keep them all posted and work, and realizing that it wasn't the most critical work that this nation was faced with.

So the idea of moving from how many stolen automobiles did you recover to the ability to penetrate groups, such as organized crime. That clearly started more after Mr. Hoover's death.

I think the complex white collar crime cases already had started, but they clearly were accelerated. The idea of having multiple Agents assigned to one case was rather new. And again, I think all of that was a positive way for the FBI to meet more modern demands.

Boone: Did you notice politics were playing a role after Hoover died? Now arguably, Hoover created an agency that would be free from politics, but everyone knows that certainly at some point the White Houses and the various Administrations became very involved in the Bureau.

How was that prior to your going out to, was it Portland?

Baker: Yes. Honestly, I didn't have that high level exposure prior to going out. I did see some of it when I worked on the Hill Staff and was providing reports to Jimmy Whitten, who then was the Congressman for Mississippi, heading up the House Appropriations Committee. I saw how our reports were handled and I marveled at it. I had always, when before listening to these Congressmen grill their witnesses, I always marveled at their broad comprehension of the issue.

But it was my experience on the Staff, that provided the answer to that. Not only did we give our reports to the Congress, but we provided ten questions that were appropriate to ask of the witnesses, who might come before them. And, the answers to those questions!

Boone: Made them look pretty smart, huh?

Baker: So it made the Congressmen look very smart, as they asked their insightful questions. But that's life and I had no problem with that. It was part of my job to conduct the investigation and then devise the questions and the answers and provide that.

Boone: So you began your, go out to the field, back to the Bureau, out to the field, back to the Bureau.

Baker: Exactly. And in those days, that's exactly what it was. You went on as an aide on the Inspection Staff. And I had some very fine experiences moving around the country, conducting inspections, internal inspections of FBI Offices as an aide.

And then went out to Portland as Assistant in Charge and also, because it was a small office, I had a squad there. I had the White Collar Crime Squad and, in addition, I had my Assistant Special Agent in Charge responsibilities. And I enjoyed very much my assignment as Assistant there.

Boone: It's pretty far west for you now for an east coast boy.

Baker:

It's a long drive across the country during a fuel shortage, as I remember. But I made it. And then, once again, Joe Corless popped up, as Joe was serving in Los Angeles as the number one Assistant in Charge. They had several because it was a large office and that was the way it was organized then. Several Assistant Special Agents in Charge and one Agent in Charge, a Special Agent in Charge.

Joe was the number one, Senior, they called it, Assistant Special Agent in Charge and was named to have his own field division.

And he told Ed Best, who was then the Special Agent in Charge in Los Angeles, that Ed should ask for me to come down and be the Senior Agent in Charge.

Well, somehow all that worked. Judge Webster was Director then and he ordered me from Portland in 1980 to be the Senior Assistant in Charge. And I worked with Ed Best in the Los Angeles Office in the pre-Olympic buildup to 1984.

I stayed in that office for two full years and, in 1982, after completing a short tour as an Inspector, while serving in Los Angeles, but going on the road as an Inspector, I completed that and was named to go back to Portland as the Special Agent in Charge.

And actually I had requested that, which really was fortuitous for me, because I was able to go back, run an office I had already known, and on a personal level, I moved back into my house, which I had been unable to sell.

I had a townhouse or a condominium. So I moved back in and then spent two more years as Agent in Charge in Portland until 1984.

And Portland at that time was an overflow office for a great number of California fugitives. Bank robberies were high, that was very high on the list of crimes in the state. Their own prison system, the State prison, was overloaded and they would release prisoners early, who would then go and commit more crime, many of them Federal.

So it was a busy medium-sized office. There were some fine Agents and we did some good work.

Baker: And also at that time, if you recall, skyjacking was a phenomena, where different people of political bent or unstable minds would skyjack a commercial airliner.

And I noticed when I went back as the Special Agent in Charge, when I pulled our files up there, I noticed that we had not had a workout at the airport in quite a number of years in the Portland Division. So I called the Chief, Ron Still, and the Sheriff, and we got United Airlines to cooperate and they donated airplanes for our use. We used our SWAT teams, Special Weapons And Tactics Team, of the FBI. And we had an exercise at the airport.

Just two weeks later, we had a real skyjacking and everyone marveled that we all knew where to sit, we all knew what we were doing, and it worked out flawlessly and we resolved it by having the skyjacker give up at the airport.

About a year and a half after that, into my tenure, there was a more serious skyjacking, you know, that was where we had the D.B. Cooper case too, you might remember. The money was found when I was there, but not D.B. Cooper, who remains either dead or somewhere today, probably dead.

But we had a more serious skyjacking, where the individual took a plane, Northwest Airlines out of Seattle, and diverted it to Portland. We responded. The SWAT team was there. I was there. Again, the usual players, the Chief, the Fire Department, the Sheriff.

And the subject claimed he had a bomb and he separated the first class passengers and children and put the women and children in the first class with himself. The pilot, as I recall, was a Vietnam veteran and he demanded FBI interference. We were on the ground.

And so we worked out at the end of the runway with another plane, a similar plane, and devised a way where we could, worked it out so that we could get our SWAT team under the cockpit without being visible and did just that.

Boone: This is Michael N. Boone doing an interview of William M. Baker on February 23rd, 2006. This is Tape Number 2, Side A.

Baker: My SWAT team had worked out on the similar plane and found that they could, using a human pyramid, enter the cockpit through the cockpit window - with the pilot and copilot's cooperation. Realizing we weren't getting anywhere negotiating with this guy, the pilot said he was apparently getting more violent in his claims to wanting to blow up the plane with these women and children around him.

So we got Ken Lovin and Paul Hudson. Ken Lovin was the Supervisor of the Bank Robbery/Fugitive Squad, the Criminal Squad, and Paul Hudson was a very experienced Agent.

And the two of them entered the cockpit. The flight attendant had gotten the attention of the subject and they were able to open the cockpit door and confront the subject, which they did. And they yelled, "FBI, freeze," but the subject went for this paraphernalia that he had wrapped around him. And so Ken Lovin shot him and killed him.

I got onto the plane, stepped over the dead skyjacker, determined no one else had been injured, the Agents weren't injured, no passengers had been injured.

And as I got off the plane, one of the Agents whispered to me that the CNN cameras were running, and they were monitoring everything. So I immediately held an impromptu press conference and announced that the skyjacking had been terminated. The FBI intervened with the captain's consent and that we confronted the subject, who failed to respond appropriately and he was shot and killed.

What I found out later on from the Deputy FBI Director was that Judge Webster was watching that news release with him, and said, "I like the way Baker handled that press conference."

About two weeks later, I received a telephone call from Lee Caldwell, advising me that I was being promoted to FBI Headquarters.

I just put a preliminary down payment on a ski lodge out at Sun River, Oregon. I was loving being back in Portland. And like many, I believe, Agents under transfer, I said, "But Lee, I really am quite happy here."

Baker: And he said, "Bill, I served in the Portland Division too and I know how nice it is, but you're coming back. And let me put it to you clearly, you're coming back whether you want to or not and you're right now coming back to a very important position." I said, "What is that?" He said, "You'll learn when you get back here."

"But if you put this off and try to fight it, you'll still be coming back, but not to that important position, so it should make your decision easy." I said, "Yes, sir, I'm coming back right away."

And what I found out is that Roger Young was retiring from being Assistant Director of Office of Congressional and Public Affairs and Webster asked me to come back and take over that position as an Assistant Director. So, it was quite a promotion.

Not one that I asked for, but one that I really believe helped expand me and helped me better serve the FBI for the rest of my career.

Boone: Now how long had you been in Portland this time?

Baker: Two years.

Boone: Two years...

Baker: So two years as ASAC, two years in LA as ASAC, and two years in Portland as Special Agent in Charge.

Boone: So back to D.C. and you go house hunting back there.

Baker: Yeah, but, you know, I had worked for some good people in the FBI. Ed Best was a good Special Agent in Charge in Los Angeles and I enjoyed that work. And I especially enjoyed my own office.

Boone: What did you, what did you think of Ed as an administrator?

Baker: I thought Ed was Machiavellian in his ability to create an aura about himself and he was...

Boone: Good word.

Baker: ...he was quite competent and we became close friends. I enjoyed working for him. I, I know that he was under pressure because Chief Darryl Gates, the strong Chief of Police, was suspicious that Ed had been sent out to look into perceived corruption in the L.A. Police Department. And Ed always had a tough time in his relations with the Chief. We had better relations with the Sheriff.

But what I found out was that I could get along quite well, as we were planning for the Olympics, with some of the senior command at the L.A.P.D., very professional, people like Commander Morrison, who headed up the pre-Olympic planning, very competent people.

And we did a lot of planning for the Olympics before I went back to Portland in late 1982.

Boone: And then you go ahead and take this voluntary/mandatory transfer to the Bureau.

Baker: Well put.

Boone: And what did you find when you got back there and they told you what it was?

Baker: Well, I arrived at a difficult time for Director Webster. His wife of many, many years, thirty years or more, had passed away because of cancer.

So it was a very difficult time in 1984 for him and, therefore, for me, because what I found out was this position was one that he had molded, the position of Congressional and Public Affairs, was one where you became very close with Judge Webster.

By that, I mean I was responsible for working up all of the briefings for him when he went up to the Hill to testify. And I was responsible for all of the news media contact between FBI Headquarters, the Director, and the media, the news media.

Baker: So that it was a very demanding job for me, but one that I think I had, without knowing it, developed attributes along the way that helped. That was, again, I was a decent report writer, I could help look at briefing papers before we briefed the Judge, and we were able to select a very elite staff of people who worked on the congressional side to brief the Director and maintain liaison with the Hill.

And what we did, we picked Special Agents who had a lot of field experience and uniquely also had law degrees. And I put it in that order.

The Hill was very snobby at the time. The staff assistants on the Hill were often from Ivy League colleges. They wanted to put in their tour as administrative assistants to Congressmen and Senators, serve on the staff, and then move on.

And what we found out was they had more respect for us. We had one Agent who was a Yale law graduate. Others had gone to fine law schools. And all of them had good distinguished careers as FBI Agents.

Well, they were the cadre who worked up the briefing papers and allowed the Director to give what I thought were probably his greatest legacy to the FBI, and that was to restore the luster that was clearly enjoyed when Mr. Hoover demanded recognition and received it on the Hill.

In my estimation, Judge Webster earned that reputation back after the problems of the Watergate and the problems confronted by L. Patrick Gray, the accusations made against the FBI by the Church Committee, prior to Webster being named Director.

Senator Church on the Hill had conducted a scathing inquiry into the FBI's activities. And I think Judge Webster was able to add integrity back into our motto, the FBI motto of "Fidelity, Integrity and Bravery..."

Boone: That's correct.

Baker: ...Fidelity, Bravery, and Integrity", in the right order. And he certainly was able through his own reputation and his own earnestness to testify and bring back that confidence that was so necessary.

Baker: And I felt in my own small way, serving, as head of congressional and media relations, that I assisted him in doing that, because I was able to brief the press. I always maintained and had our press office know my thoughts and that was that the FBI never mislead the press, never tell them a lie, never use subterfuge, always have your credibility, because you can only lose it once.

And we were able to do that and at the same time, I said, "I won't allow you to be bullied into giving out information that we shouldn't be giving out and, therefore, I'll support you when you deal with the media and can't tell them."

But I think my field experience greatly helped me in that job, because I understood the street Agent, the brick Agent. And when problems did come up that the press was interested in, I was able to have very good rapport with the Criminal Division and the Intelligence Division in the FBI, where I would go down and be fully briefed before or separately from the Judge. And then go back and help him formulate a response, whether it be to Congress or to the press.

And you may recall in those years from your own experience, 1985 was the year of the spy, and we had many high-profile espionage cases come to light during that time frame.

And I spent a lot of time with the Judge testifying in closed session on the Hill and talking to the press about what we could talk about.

Boone: Let me ask you a couple of questions. Returning for just a moment to going to Congress. Let's say on Appropriations and Budget. Now one of the things that Webster and his prior Directors had, had to overcome, was the animosity Hoover built up over the years with the Congress.

And Hoover got pretty much the budget that he wanted and he always gave some back, that was his thing. And they were just lying in wait for the next Directors to come along to cut the Bureau's budget. Now how did you deal with that? And tell me about that.

Baker: Well that's a good observation. Amazingly, during Webster's time, we were able to take an FBI budget to over a billion dollars for the first time. And he was able to do that, even while we were conducting intense investigations of Congress.

Baker:

And I refer to ABSCAM, which is a well-known undercover operation that started out as a property crimes case, but quickly developed into a bribery case involving ultimately several members of Congress, who were outed and ousted from their positions for taking bribes from our undercover Agent, who posed as a very wealthy Arab financier.

But Webster was able to do it by being extremely well prepared. Everybody that I associated with respected the man. He could zero in on you with cold blue eyes and demanding questions. I think the fact that he had been a prosecutor, a District Judge, and then a Federal Judge, gave him some of that ability to use that laser beam to get to the issue.

And I noticed, because I sat on the Senior Executive Board because of my position, along with other Assistant Directors. I noticed that if someone were unprepared, Director Webster was quite capable of throwing body blows through his questioning rather, not physically, but we likened it to a prize fight. When he had you on the ropes, you better watch out, because he wouldn't finish till the referee pulled him off. And he was tough.

And I think that helped him, because word quickly got around that you can't fudge with the Director. You better be well prepared, you'd better say when you don't know something and don't try to walk your way through it, because he would accept 'I don't know,' but he would not accept being buffaloed.

So, I think he was very well briefed. He had a very good retention of that. He used his briefing books, and he was as candid as he could be with Congress and they liked that.

Another thing, an interesting observation I had, many of my friends at the time said to me, colleagues from the FBI, "Why does he prefer being called Judge? We don't think that's right. Why doesn't he call himself Director?"

And I once asked him that and he said, "Well, Bill, you've been up with me on the Hill." And he said, "You watch the next time that I go in there and Senator Specter or Senator Boren or Senator Cohen wants to question me. And they sit you on a chair below them and they sit up there as your judge and you're the witness."

Baker: And he said, "I had a lot of experience in court and it doesn't hurt for them to call me Judge when I'm sitting there. And frankly, I see no need. I know I'm the Director. They know I'm the Director."

"But when they call me Judge, I consider that my becoming more equal with them for the testimony. And I think I get more respect sometimes." And that's the closest I heard from him on his definition why he didn't fight being called Judge.

I think the other reason is, he deeply appreciated the fact that he was. It's kind of like a former Marine. You don't mind being associated with something you have a lot of affection for. And so that kind of addressed that topic.

Boone: One of the very difficult things that both of you had to deal with and you for him, since you were his primary briefer, was when you're dealing with Congress, the secrecy issues that surrounded both our work and subsequently the CIA work after that. How did you deal with those? And you had to make a decision between, at what point you had to give something up versus something you wanted from them versus give them the information.

Baker: Well, we had, in the briefing books, we had classified information, we had information on ongoing investigations that couldn't be disclosed, and we would compartment the book into segments.

And so that if in open session, such as an Appropriations hearing, the questions got to where they crossed over into that area, it was my job and others, who were called with me to be his backups, if he needed it, to let him know that we were getting into a gray area.

To his great credit, I very seldom had to tap him. He didn't like to be tapped on the shoulder and he didn't need it very often at all or, or didn't hardly ever need it.

But that was the safeguard. And then if the question, if the questioner, the Congressman or the Senator, was persistent, Judge Webster would say, 'I would need to go into closed session to give you the appropriate reply.'

Baker: Sometimes they were eligible to do that, but other times they were not. It was the Senate and House Intelligence Committee and the Senate and House Judiciary Committee that we could go into closed session on. And then we would brief the appropriate Congressmen.

So the Congressmen didn't like it if they were going to be kind of outed as having asked the question, where they couldn't get the answer themselves. If they weren't on that committee and they didn't want to go there. And that was usually the way it was controlled.

Otherwise, he was as candid and forthright as he could be in his responses and they appreciated that.

Boone: What level were the Congress personnel briefed to? Were they really top secret?

Baker: Yes. And when you went, for instance, say the, the House and Senate Intelligence Committee, they were briefed to whatever level, I mean, "Keyhole," you know the various briefings.

There were leaks and we investigated leaks, including in our major cases. ABSCAM had leaks. BRILAB, another important undercover case, had leaks. And, we had to look into that and conduct our own investigation.

Very easy to conduct an investigation. Very hard to solve a leak case with the multiple distributions and the various levels of briefings that were going on.

Boone: Webster had a reputation in the field of not being as Agent friendly as say prior Directors. What was your experience in that regard?

Baker: Well that goes along with the ... what I eluded to about Judge and Director.

His strength was to select through the Senior Career Board what I consider to be a very competent group of senior personnel. He visited most of the field offices during his tenure. He always was present, if unfortunately there was a death of an Agent based on field operations.

Baker: And I can recall, for instance, he was being honored at the University of Virginia and he was kind enough to ask me to go with him. As I mentioned his wife had died.

And it was a formal black tie dinner in Mr. Jefferson's dining room at Monticello in the evening and then the next day he was going to receive one of the two awards given each year. They give an award in architecture, the Jefferson Award, and an award in law. And he had been nominated to receive that law award. They don't give honorary degrees there.

And, I was touched by his including me, because I had attended the University of Virginia and, in fact, the then President of the University of Virginia, Edgar Shannon, had been my first year English teacher. And he had been appropriately briefed. Of course I knew who he was. But he came up to me and singled me out by name and said, "It's good to have you back," and it made me feel very good.

The point is, during the dinner the night before, we received word of the infamous shootout in Miami, which took the lives of two Agents and, and wounded many more, four or five I think total.

We immediately stopped the ceremony and we went down in a Bureau aircraft. Joe Corless again was the Agent in Charge at the time. And Webster and I spent two days there.

And I can recall, at the hospital, holding the hand of one of the Agents, Gordon McGinley, a seriously wounded Agent. And Gordy opened his eyes and looked up at me and he smiled and he said, "Well, I thought it would be my wife holding my hand, but you're okay, Bill." He spoke. That was the first time he'd come to. The doctors said that the reason that he survived was he was a very muscular Agent because took several slugs.

But Webster was always present. We then went up to West Virginia, where we were at the service for the other Agent who was killed in that shootout. Agent Dove.

So always on the scene, but yes, there was that comment. And because of, I think, my ability to keep tuned into what the field was saying, I occasionally would breach the subject with the Judge and very delicately, as you might imagine.

Baker: For one thing, a couple Congressmen would always say to him, "You are the cork keeping the evil vapor of the FBI contained."

And on one occasion, he kind of got short with me when I said, "Judge, next time someone says that, why you don't tell him that there is no poisonous vapor in the bottle," you know. "And it's nice that they think you're the cork, but it's the whole institution." And, he said, "I'll take that under advice." And, you know, moved on. I didn't think it was right for him to just say thank you when someone said that to him.

But to others who made the comment you referred to, I said, "Look," and some Special Agents in Charge would mention it too to me. And I said, "Look, it's your job to get out and have liaison with the Chief of Police and Sheriff. And the Director is extremely good at having very good relations on Congress and with the press in Washington, where it counts.

"He's shaping the image at that senior level. You go out and shape it at your level." That's as close as I came to addressing it.

Boone: Did you feel much of a, of a White House influence, attempted influence over the Bureau, in particular Webster.

Baker: You know, after Watergate, the direct approach, for instance, used by Presidents like Johnson, where he would deal with Deke DeLoach, 'cause he didn't like to personally deal with Hoover. And Deke DeLoach as the Dep, number two guy, was a go-between.

What existed by the time that Judge Webster became Director was using the Attorney General route and he had Levi and Griffin Bell as Attorney General and then Ed Meese. And he primarily would go through Justice.

He didn't demand. He did have direct contact. I know he did with Reagan. But he didn't abuse it nor did he encourage it. He liked having the filter of the Attorney General and would address the White House directly when it was required.

So I think that was the way...I'll give you one example though of a person who has great public relations ability today and that's Rudolph Giuliani, who was then the U.S. Attorney in the Southern District of New York.

Baker: The FBI had been working the Mafia Commission case and the five New York families for five years. Giuliani came in, very competent, very aggressive, and we had a very good working relationship, but no shy person about publicity for himself.

I had a telephone call from my friend, Tom Sheer, who was Assistant Director in Charge of the New York Office. He had also worked with me on the bank robbery area years before.

Tom said, "Bill, we're about to lose all of our publicity and it's got the FBI rankled here. Giuliani's going to hold this big announcement and we're going to be like second fiddle and is there anything you can do?" I said, "Well, let me think about it."

So I briefed the Director and I said, "Judge, I think you should be in New York for the announcement." He said, "Bill, I'm busy. Tom Sheer can handle that." I said, "Judge, this is a high visibility case. I think you and the Attorney General should go."

So we got Meese and Webster, we flew up. Before that, I said, "Tom, tell Giuliani that his great work has attracted both the Director and the Attorney General and they're both coming to the conference."

And then I said, "If my memory's correct, the U.S. Attorney's Press Office there is small." And I could almost hear him smiling on the phone. I said, "Offer him, because of the fact that now we have the Attorney General and the Director coming, as well as him and you, offer him the FBI Press Office," which is huge in the New York Office there, "and while you're doing that, find the biggest FBI seal you can and put it on the podium." Which he did.

So every talking head during that conference was speaking out over a big FBI symbol, whether it was Attorney General Meese, U.S. Attorney Giuliani, the Director, or Tom, but they were all speaking over the FBI, so everyone watching that show was watching the FBI seal. And I think that's how we got back some of the attention we needed.

I would try to do that type of thing where I could to keep the FBI's profile front and center.

Boone: Well, while you were back there in this particular session as Assistant Director, was COINTELPRO coming about?

Baker: Yes.

Boone: What can you tell me about the effect it had on you and the Director?

Baker: Interestingly, I believe there were some sixty-nine Agents being looked at for black bag jobs, as was the expression in those days. Illegal break-ins might be what anyone listening to this would read into it.

Boone: You might also tell us what COINTELPRO stood for or what that means.

Baker: Well, you might be able to better help me with some of these. Counterintelligence

Boone: Program.

Baker: Program.

Boone: Basically warrantless searches.

Baker: Yeah.

Boone: Black bag jobs.

Baker: Yeah. And, alleged wiretaps, illegal, illegal by the critics' standards.

In any case, Webster was confronted with the investigation that actually had been conducted at the Department of Justice. The FBI couldn't even conduct its own. This was prior to him taking over during Clarence Kelley's term.

So the Justice Department conducted an inquiry and then Webster took over and the Hill grilled him. And to his credit, using the lawyer staff around him, he narrowed it down to five Agents, that he took administrative action against from the sixty-nine Agents initially identified.

And he was able to do that and, and get back control of the administrative handling of the matter, when it had already been given away to Justice, so he took it back and came up with his administrative findings.

Boone: This is Side B, Tape 2 of the Bill Baker interview.

Baker: The example I gave was just, I think, a clear one of how Webster could see the big picture and he gained control for the FBI of how to handle serious administrative matters internally.

And I might add that under previous Directors, there seemed to be a method of brushing it under the carpet, if there were some allegations.

I think what Webster demonstrated and got him more credibility with oversight and the public is that, in fact, the FBI could deal with serious internal administrative and even criminal problems,

The Office of Professional Responsibility was developed within the FBI. And, under Webster, most of the Bureau internal problems were handled by our side of the house, but it was coordinated with the Justice Department.

So that's my take on that part of Webster's tenure.

Boone: You handled the confirmation hearings for Webster to the Director, as Director of CIA.

Baker: I did.

Boone: And you want to tell me what that entailed?

Baker: Yes, it was at a time when Iran-Contra had just broken more or less and become very much a media circus spectacle.

Then President, Reagan, knew that Judge Webster was coming up to the end of his mandatory ten year tenure as FBI Director. He was in his ninth year.

And he contacted Judge Webster to see if he would be willing to go over to the Agency and become the Director of Central Intelligence to follow Bill Casey, who had just died. Bob Gates was filling in as an able interim DCI, but Reagan wanted Webster to go through the confirmation process.

Baker: So I coordinated with CIA, their Congressional Affairs, and I, of course, ran the Bureau's side of it. And we got him through the Senate Intelligence Committee and then to the full floor of the Senate for confirmation, which is the process for a position like that.

A lot of detail went into looking at various contacts that FBI Agents or Supervisors had had with people like Ollie North and a lot of vetting of that contact was carried on to assure that Webster was not tarnished by any of Iran-Contra, since he was being asked to go over and fix it. We were able to do a thorough job. I worked very closely with the Hill staff to get him thoroughly briefed.

I can recall one briefing, however, when the details of his entire tenure were so thick, that the briefing book stood higher than any New York telephone directory.

And the Director, it was late in the day, he was tired and became a little cross with me and said, "Now, darn it, this briefing book is entirely too thick. What do you expect me to do, to remember this entire book for tomorrow's hearing?"

"A briefing book is supposed to be that - brief. Now I want tomorrow to start off and I want to have a briefing book with succinct points. Is that clear?"

And I said, "Yes, sir. It's very clear." And the whole table was filled with his senior staff from all over the FBI, you know, the head of the Criminal Division, the head of the Intelligence Division, you name it.

So he left the room and they just shook their heads at me and said, "Bill, you've got a tough job for tomorrow."

What I did was I had that staff I told you about of very competent Agent lawyers. I said, "Okay, it's time for a little humor. I want about a five-page summary, meaning really a table of contents and a few executive summaries in one book, to just gloss over all of the stuff that's going to be raised tomorrow. And then I'll keep a second book at the foot of my desk or his desk, 'cause it's at the briefing room."

Baker: So that's exactly how we started out. And I handed him this thin book and he looked at me and kind of smiled. And then looked at the details and said, "Now, where are the details?" And I said, picking up thick book, "Well, sir, I didn't want to trouble you with this." It got the whole room laughing and it broke the ice, and we were able to move forward.

He was finally confirmed ninety-nine to one, with the only dissenting Senator being Senator Harry Reid, who is still in the Senate from Nevada. I don't want to go into why, but we were doing an awful lot of organized crime investigations in the State of Nevada. And I don't know whether Reid thought the FBI was overstepping its role there or not, but he was the only Senator to vote against the Judge.

So Director Webster, FBI Director, was confirmed to become the Director of Central Intelligence. And the President of the United States, President Reagan, asked him to come up to meet with the President and the press.

Boone: Let me ask you one quick thing that, that I think would be helpful for the listener here is, Casey was no longer the Director...

Baker: Correct.

Boone: ...and, the CIA under Casey had come under tremendous accusation and fire and Webster was being brought in why?

Baker: Again, to fix it.

Boone: Reputation.

Baker: Reputation for integrity and, and credibility and those two words. And, his proven leadership while at the FBI.

So he was looked at by the President as the person to come in, who, and as you know, the President, Reagan, was very close to Bill Casey. But he wanted to bring someone in who could bring back, raise the morale internally, and increase the respect for the agency. Many perceived that some of that was lost by Iran-Contra.

Boone: Well you say raise the morale and yet he is bringing in an FBI that, the enemy of the CIA, and so that had, he's on the double-edge sword here now when he, when he steps in.

Baker: Well, let me just say not the enemy of the CIA. An agency often at loggerheads perhaps.

But that was one of the things that he worked on and I did too. I might add that it was on the way to President Reagan's office, he asked me to go along with him in his car. He was quite pleased with the way the confirmation was handled at the Senate.

And he asked me then, he said, "I want you to consider something. I want you to go home tonight and think very hard, but I really would like to have you come over with me, to come over from the FBI."

"I can detail you over or whatever, but you think about it. I want you to be at the Agency with me."

So I did think about it. And I decided that I would have more credibility if I was not detailed. And so I actually submitted a resignation from the FBI and was hired by the CIA and became their Director of Public Affairs and I was an advisor to the Director.

And we kept a close relationship his entire tenure, well while I was with him at CIA.

But at the President's office, I had never been in the Oval Office. I had been up on briefings to various wings, and certainly in the old Executive Office Building a lot, but I had never had occasion to be in the Oval Office.

And as we kept getting closer and closer to the Oval Office, I finally said to the Director, "Well, you go ahead on in there and meet the President, sir. I'll wait out here."

And a Secret Service Agent who knew me was in charge of the detail and he pushed me into the room and said, "Baker, this is an experience you should take."

: And so I walked into the room behind the Judge, who pretty much forgot about me at that point. Now everyone knows the Judge. So I'm looking at President Reagan, who is sitting behind his desk, and then on a couch nearby was the Vice President, Bush, and Howard Baker, the Chief of Staff.

Baker: Well, these two people certainly also knew Judge Webster, but no one in the room but Judge Webster had any idea who I was. And so to avoid a very embarrassing moment, it looked like the President was about to stand up and was about to say, "I'm the President, who are you?"

And I quickly said, "Mr. President, I am here with Director Webster," who quickly turned and picked up on my presence and then introduced me not only to the President, but to the Vice President, at which time Howard Baker broke the ice. He said, "Bill Baker is that?" And I said, "Yes, sir, Mr. Baker." And he said, "Where is your kin from?" and I said, "Kentucky." And he said, "We're probably related. You come over here and sit next to me." And that's what I did.

We went through the interview and then met with the press. And incredibly, their first question of the President was, "Why are some of your senior staff calling your wife the 'dragon lady'?"

And I could see that President Reagan was very much put off by this question. And he immediately responded, "I am here today to introduce to you the next Director of Central Intelligence, who was just confirmed at the Senate. And I am here to talk about that and I would respect it if you would confine your questions, at least for now, to this area."

Afterwards, he said to the Judge and myself that the entire relationship between the senior media in Washington had changed after Nixon's Watergate and he, President Reagan, never thought that it would get back to the level of civility that had existed prior to that.

Boone: Now when you went over to the CIA and resigned your FBI position, that carried just a little bit of risk with it. What kind of position did that place you in?

Good question. It did have risks to it, because without going into great detail, I had to go through the entire hiring process that anyone had to go through who was to become employed by CIA. And it involved polygraphs. I'll leave it at that.

Baker: But my concern was, I didn't want to be caught in a never, neverland, where for some reason something in my background or whatever would preclude me from being successfully hired by the Agency, whereas I had already resigned from the FBI.

I did have over twenty years investigative experience at the time, but I was not age fifty, which was the earliest age you could retire. You had to have at least twenty years of service at age fifty. Well, actually I would have had twenty-five.

There was a certain risk, but I'll tell you what, the opportunity was worth that risk and the two years I spent there were dynamic years. A very crucial time. And we worked very hard to let the Agency show itself as the professional agency that it was.

Boone: Now you had an extraordinary opportunity, as did Judge Webster, to see the other major agency from the inside from two different perspectives. And, what can you tell us about that?

Baker: Again, I want to focus my comments on the FBI side, because separately, the CIA has its own vetting process for interviews, such as this.

But I can say that the FBI's mission statement was clear. Our job was to uphold the laws of the United States and to prosecute those who violate the laws of the United States.

The Central Intelligence on the other hand in many cases had to do its job by breaking the laws of foreign countries in order to gather some of their intelligence.

I'll leave it at that as far as comparisons, because the Special Agent and the case officer are, are both fascinating jobs and one of the functions that I did serve while there was to brief outgoing Chiefs of Stations.

And I later did this when I returned to the FBI, so that they would know the real responsibilities of the FBI Legal Attaché, of the FBI Agents that they as CIA officers might come in contact with around the world.

Baker: And I think there was probably at that point the best working relationship between the CIA and the FBI that had existed, because of the fact that Webster was not going to tolerate lack of sharing of crucial information.

One very vivid example of that, that occurred while I was at the CIA, was the downing of Pan American Flight 103. And I had been married for a little over, oh, about a year and a half by then. And the Terrorism Unit knew at the Agency, knew that my wife, Robin, was a flight attendant for Pan American.

They immediately came to my office and let me know that Pan American 103 had gone down. And they asked if I knew where my wife was. Well, I said, "She's in Europe. Where did this flight go down?" And, of course, it was over Lockerbie, Scotland.

My wife, with the good head on her shoulders that she has, quickly made a rare call to me at the office at CIA and, let me know that she was on the continent and was well. But I appreciated the quick notification the Agency gave me.

Now after two years at the Agency, I was approached by Floyd Clarke, the Deputy Director of the FBI at the time. And he asked whether I would consider coming back to the FBI. And Floyd and I were good friends. And I said, "Floyd, I'm comfortable here. I want to do what's right. What do you have in mind?"

And he said, "Bill, I have in mind the job I just vacated and that is the head of the Criminal Division. I can't think of anyone I'd rather have there than you and Director Sessions agrees that this would be a good position for you."

I said, "Well, I'd have to clear that with Director Webster." And he said, "Director Sessions has already spoken to Director Webster, even to see whether we can ask you."

And so I then requested from Floyd Clarke time to go see the Director myself and to talk it over with Robin.

I did that. Director Webster said, "Look, Bill, you've been very helpful to me here. You've been here over two years with me. But that position to you, knowing your career, would be like offering me a Supreme Court position. And I encourage you to go back and lead that division."

Baker: And so I did. And he replaced me with another FBI Agent, interestingly, Jim Greenleaf, who took my position as Director of Public Affairs at Central Intelligence. And I went back to the FBI, took over the Criminal Division and was, therefore, responsible for all worldwide criminal investigations. And at that time, that included counterterrorism.

Boone: You mentioned something I want to jump on before I forget about it. Judge Webster was reputedly interested in, or a hopeful on the Supreme Court nomination. Did you experience that? Did he ever mention that?

Baker: I talked to him about it and in his open moments, he said that certainly a position like that would be an incredible way to serve his country, but that he thought that his exposure at FBI and certainly at CIA, placed him in a position where he had been involved in so many sensitive investigations and cases that were brought before the Supreme Court, that he didn't know how viable his candidacy really would be.

So I think, he was a realist about it. Certainly, I think anyone who serves as a Federal Judge would think that that would be a culmination, an incredible way to serve, but I think he saw the reality of it also.

Another point, in fact, was he was in his mid-fifties when he took over the FBI and, in '78, and so he...

Boone: Ten years at the FBI...

Baker: Yes.

Boone: ...and several years at the CIA.

Baker: It gets you out of that age category. Our President wants to put someone in who can represent for twenty years say, not ten.

Boone: And carry on his agenda for a while.

Baker: Right, exactly.

Boone: Well you were back at Headquarters now as head of the Criminal Division. What, what are some of the more memorable investigations that you found yourself running?

Baker: Well, the first thing I had to do was do some restaffing. Tony Daniels, a very able Deputy there, had the Organized Crime Division. And, certainly he had been a candidate to be the next Assistant Director of the Criminal Division. And Tony and I were close, personal friends, as well as colleagues and rivals for positions.

Tony went down to head up the FBI Training Academy as Assistant Director. And we brought in Ken Walton and Bob Bryant was there as a Deputy. I had three Deputies. And then we broke it up Organized Crime and Drugs; and then we had Violent Crimes and other criminal work and Counterterrorism; and then White Collar Crime as the main three areas.

So those three Deputies ran very important programs for me and reported...

Boone: What year is this now?

Baker: This is 1989.

Boone: Okay.

Baker: I was at the Agency from '87 through '89. And this was mid '89.

And there was a lot going on in the FBI at the time. We did have, as I mentioned, the downing of Pan Am 103, a huge case.

And I used the contacts that I had had with the Agency's Counterterrorist Unit. And we set up two timelines, chronologies, to solve the case. We had a criminal investigative timeline and an intelligence timeline, and not in all cases could the information be easily exchanged between the two.

We had lawyers who would work through that fuzzy area, but the overall objective was met, in that we were able to use much of the raw intelligence investigation to augment our criminal investigation.

And on the day of my retirement from the FBI, Attorney General then Bill Barr announced the indictment brought down against the two Libyan intelligence agents who were responsible for putting the bomb on on the island of Malta.

Baker: Other cases certainly were important. The Gotti case was the Godfather case and the Mafia. And we had a lot of undercover work that was brought to my attention.

One of my toughest assignments was saying no, as you might imagine, because I had a hundred million dollars say for a budget for undercover operations and certain ones were very dramatic and took a large amount of budget dollars.

And I would always be looking at how can we maximize our efforts here and maybe if I say no to this case, we can make ten other cases somewhere else.

Boone: Now use of your resources clearly was an issue. Had you seen a shift in priorities? I know between White Collar Crime, Terrorism, and the old school Criminal stuff, things were shifting.

Baker: Very dramatically. White Collar Crime was consuming the greatest number of man-hours, followed by Organized Crime and drug-related investigations. And the bank robbery cases that I had nurtured my career on were getting less attention.

And interestingly, at the time of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August of 1990, terrorism was perhaps the lowest number of man-hours being utilized under my supervision.

And that quickly turned around, so much so that by the time the U.S. entered an active war to drive the Iraqis out in January of 1991, it was taking most of my personal attention. Lots of briefings.

I sat on the National Security Council's Counterterrorism Subcommittee. I worked again closely with the CIA, people I knew, but also now with Department of Defense, the Pentagon, and we had a group, that to my knowledge never had a leak come out of the sensitive information that we discussed up at one of the White House offices.

Boone: Were you getting much contact from the Attorney General's office or the White House at that time?

Baker: Yes. Let me say this. Attorney General Thornburgh was there when I returned to the FBI from CIA. And he subsequently retired.

Baker: And Bill Barr was the Deputy and Bill was put in position where he could be considered favorably among others for the full position of Attorney General.

Additionally, there was George Terwilliger, who was another key person at Justice, and Bob Mueller was the person I worked most closely with, because I was Assistant Director of the Criminal Division at FBI. He was the Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division-Justice. And we worked very closely.

In fact, in my entire career, I had never seen a closer working relationship than the top echelon of the Justice working along with the FBI.

They put a lot of weight on working closely with Floyd Clarke and myself and my division and it did somewhat irritate Director Sessions, who was, to put it politely, slightly out of favor as far as direct line contact at that time.

My reporting lines at the FBI, in part at my request, was that I would report directly to Floyd Clarke and then the Director, of course. And at some times, I found getting Director Sessions' full attention was challenging. Especially after I had worked under the precise questioning and the in-depth probing that Director Webster conducted.

So all of us had to change our style a little bit and keep the Director, of course, informed. But it was a challenge. I think I'll leave it at that.

The relationship with Bill Barr though, as Attorney General, was made very strong be...just before he was named, because of a prison takeover, where we used the hostage rescue team.

It was Talladega, Alabama, and we sent in the hostage rescue team. Bill and I and Floyd sat in the command center at FBI Headquarters. He came over as Deputy Attorney General, Acting Attorney General, and looked at all of us.

And when it was time to send the team in at about two-thirty in the morning, he gave the green light. We had a direct hookup with our Hostage Rescue Team.

Baker: And they blew the front door of the prison. They had been operating and practicing at a closed prison nearby to get the right type of explosive.

And in a very, very professional effort, the hostage rescue team rescued the ten hostages, mostly who were prison employees, some female. And no prisoner was seriously hurt. Two were hurt in a minor way by the explosion and none of the Hostage Rescue Team was injured.

So it was a very successful and high visibility raid. And in great part, as Bill Barr later told me, that cleared the way for him to become Attorney General.

So we did have a close relationship and, of course, we still had Director Webster at CIA and that helped keep relations strong between those two important agencies.

So I was fortunate to be able to culminate my career in a position that was mouthwatering, to say the least.

In order to deal with the huge volume of cases and be proficient, I used a filtering system from the Deputy reporting to me and Section Chiefs.

But because we had so many programs, I had two Special Assistants, both of whom worked for me when I was in Congressional Affairs earlier, J.D. Huntley and Bill Schmidt. Both lawyers, both fine Agents.

And they would help me filter through the great volume of information.

We had briefing books for me on my desk of all undercover operations, all sensitive operations, all matters that I had to keep my fingers on.

And together we would often sit at the end of day and discuss sensitive issues, the three of us, my assistants and myself, often joined by my Deputies. And often they were the ones that helped me when I had to say no to certain requests that were made of me and for various reasons I had to do that.

Boone: Bill, you had a unique position working so close to the Directors and having the span that covers a lot of Bureau history, what do you see as any changes that took place in the Bureau over your career?

Baker: One of the great strengths of the FBI certainly built in by Director Hoover, who was there for so many years, was the FBI's ability to evolve and meet the investigative demands that were *currently* required of it.

And by that, I don't want to go trace all of the history. But I want to say that the FBI was quite capable, because of its trained investigators, to move from quantity to quality, to move to major impact White Collar Crime cases, major disrupting cases against organized crime, contribute to the drug fight, and also to work Counterterrorism cases and intelligence issues. An incredible demand and a real tribute to the strength of the FBI street Agent.

And an increasing role for analysts. One of the things I saw at the CIA was where analysts could really help. They built in that experience and added an extra dimension necessary as you explored criminal enterprises as opposed to the individual criminal.

Boone: Bill, I want to thank you very much for taking the time to give this wonderful review of your career and all this great inside information.

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