



The FBI Oral History Project

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Interview of Former Special Agent of the FBI Kenneth L. Bounds (1951 – 1975) Interviewed by Stanley A. Pimentel On August 23, 2006

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Stanley A. Pimentel: Okay. Today is August 23, 2006. I'm Stanley A. Pimentel and I'm with Kenneth L. Bounds, who is a former Agent and he will give us a little bit of his background. We have both read the Oral History and Legacy Project Copyright Release and Background form and Kenneth has signed it, as well as I, and we will check the recorder here to make sure that we're recording properly. It's now about 1:12 on the 23rd of August and I'm here with Kenneth L. Bounds and we're ready to start the interview.

Kenny, or Ken, if you could give us a little bit of your early background.

Kenneth L. Bounds: Okay. I was born in Kansas City, Missouri, March the 5th, 1925. I just had one brother. I was raised in Kansas City. I played a lot of high school ball and I got a scholarship to the University of Missouri in 1942. I was 17-years-old, starting in college and served about a semester, I quit and joined the Marine Corps when I was 17-years-old. I had to have my folks sign the papers; went into the Marine Corps. I spent about three years in the Marine Corps; got out and went back to the University of Missouri. I played a lot of ball there. I played four years of football and two years of basketball. One year on the track team, and one year on the baseball team. I gave these up after the first year when I came back from the service mainly because there was too much going on. I had a good college career; played in a couple Gator Bowls. I met my wife on a blind date and she was from Jefferson City, Missouri. When I graduated, I coached the last two years at Missouri as assistant coach in football and basketball.

When I thought about the FBI, they were taking guys who didn't have a law degree or an accounting degree. So I made an application and went in and took the oral examination and they thought I was smart enough, I guess, to become an Agent and that's how I got in the FBI.

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Kenneth L. Bounds: I always had thought about the FBI, but never thought I could get in because they were taking lawyers and accountants.

Pimentel: That was in April of 1951?

Bounds: Yes. Right. And my first office in the FBI was in San Diego and I no sooner got to San Diego and I decided it was time to get married. My wife and her mother had to come out to San Diego to get married because I was too new of an Agent and I couldn't go back home for the wedding. So we had a small wedding in La Jolla, California, ...

Pimentel: What's your wife's name?

Bounds: Shirley. Shirley Jean Bedell is her maiden name, and we've been married for 55 years now. We had five children.

In my FBI career, I was in the San Diego Office for a year; then I went to the Los Angeles Office ...

Pimentel: What did you work in San Diego? Primarily.

Bounds: Everything. (chuckling) Just a little bit of everything. One time we had a lot of slot machines on board the sport fishing boats. For a couple of weeks, we got on a different boat every morning and then the last one we had two Agents on every boat and we arrested them all because they had slot machines on them.

Pimentel: (Laughing)

Bounds: (Chuckling) They were all taken before the District Attorney and released on their own recognizance; fined a little bit and that was about it. We confiscated their slot machines. And then I went to Los Angeles and Hollywood was my beat. I've interviewed a couple stars, Charles Laughton. I used to have coffee at Sunset Boulevard and Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin were down on the corner having coffee also. But, after about a year there, there wasn't a lot going on at the time and I quit the Bureau.

Pimentel: Hmm!

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Bounds: And that was after nine months in Los Angeles. I went back to Missouri and a fraternity brother sent me to the University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, to sell life insurance.

Pimentel: Hmm. When did you quit ... when did you quit the Bureau for that temporary ...

Bounds: That was in, I think it was in 1953.

Pimentel: Okay.

Bounds: 1953. And I was out nine months and I found out that I didn't have the ability to sell an intangible subject like life insurance. So, I reapplied to go back in the Bureau and they sent me back to Springfield, Illinois. And we stayed there about eight years.

Pimentel: Did you have to go through Training School again?

Bounds: I had to go back for In-Service. I went back for two weeks. I was there for a short while and they sent me back for two more weeks for Civil Rights. I was in the East St. Louis RA while I was in Springfield. East St. Louis was right across from St. Louis, Missouri ... which was very good work. The best work I had ever had in the bureau.

Pimentel: What kind of cases did you have there?

Bounds: Interstate Transportation of Stolen Property, Stolen Motor Vehicles, many Civil Rights cases, mostly police brutality.

Pimentel: Um-hmm.

Bounds: Yeah. We had an RA of six people. Anyway, I was sent back to the Bureau again for In-Service and I went in to see Mr. Hoover and I told him it was my desire to become a firearms expert, or a Firearms Instructor, because I had spent about three years in the Marine Corps and I could shoot pretty well. I must have impressed him because before I got back, I was sent back from East St. Louis to Springfield as a Supervisor. I stayed there a year and then they sent me back to Washington.

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Bounds: I had three years in firearms training at the Old Academy. I thought I would have three years at the Academy and go home, back to Kansas City, my Office of Preference, but I stayed there and I became a Counselor for a New Agents' Class; then they put me on the Civil Rights Desk for a couple years, when Civil Rights was really bad.

Pimentel: That was what ... the beginning of the Civil Rights ...

Bounds: Yeah.

Pimentel: ... '64 or before that? Do you recall?

Bounds: Let me see. Right around there, 1965. Yeah, down South they had the Freedom Riders, they were going through the South. I went to Jackson, Mississippi, and spent three weeks in Jackson, Mississippi, when the Freedom Riders came through there. Clarence Kelley was the Agent in Charge, came down from Memphis. Clarence and I went to the same high school, but he was way, way before me but I knew him. I was with him for about a week and a half there. We became very good friends.

Pimentel: He was what?

Bounds: He was the Agent in Charge out of Memphis, coming down there in charge of the Freedom Riders investigation. Do you want to know a little funny incident?

Pimentel: Yeah. Yeah.

Bounds: I was on Night Duty there once in ...

Pimentel: Is this in Jackson?

Bounds: In Jackson. And we had a lot of Agents in Birmingham, Alabama, and so one night I was on duty and I got a call from Birmingham. I said, "This is Bounds in Jackson." I heard on the other end, "This is Al from Birmingham." I said, "Al who?" "Al Rosen!"

(Both laughing)

"Yes sir, Mr. Rosen." I had heard a lot of things about him. He and I became very good friends later on.

Bounds: Anyway, from Springfield, I went to the Bureau, became a firearms man, and then from there I went Uptown with Civil Rights. And I was on the Civil Rights Desk for two years ... then I went into the Inspection Squad, called the Goon Squad. I was on that for 13 months and traveled pretty extensively and inspected many FBI offices.

After that they put me on the Bank Robbery Desk. And, while I was on it, that's when James Earl Ray killed Martin Luther King. And he was picked up in London, England. The Director said send two big men over there to pick him up. George Zeiss, who everybody knows, and myself went over there. We had to leave Andrews Air Force Base on a small plane to go up to McGuire, and it was President Johnson's private plane. George Zeiss sat in Lady Byrd's seat and I sat in Johnson's seat and Lady Byrd's seat never got well again. But we went to McGuire Air Force Base, boarded a military dependants' plane and flew to London. The fella who picked us up was my wife's cousin, who I'd only met once before. I didn't know who he was. He was with the Air Force Security, and he knew the Legal Attachés in London real well. He was on his vacation but they asked him if he could go up and pick up Zeiss and Bounds. He did because he knew that I was the husband of his cousin, my wife. Going into London, I said, "I'd like to know who I'm riding with?" He said, "My name's Dick Noble." I said, "You son-of-a-gun." He knew all the time that I knew him.

Pimentel: Did he work at, for the Government?

Bounds: He worked for the Air Force Security.

Pimentel: Uh-huh.

Bounds: And in London we had quite a time. Before we left DeLoach said, "I don't know what you guys are going to do when you get over there but, whatever you do, look at London and have a good time." And we had time on our hands. We didn't do very much for eleven days. We got acquainted with Scotland Yard. We went to the Scotland Yard Murder Squad Conference on a Friday night. Do you want to hear all this?

Pimentel: Yeah. Sure. Sure. Sure.

Bounds: And there was two Legats and another Agent, Gene Martindale, from the Civil Rights Desk in Washington, who was over there also, and George and myself. Each took a 40 ounce quart of Beef Eaters Gin and a 40 ounce quart of Cutty Sark, and went to the Murder Squad Conference. This is sort of funny. And while we were there, it was not a very big crowd, and we're sitting there and here comes the Chief Inspector for the Murder Squad. The English drink scotch or gin ... straight ... no mix, no ice ... nothing ... in pretty large glasses. And after the Chief Inspector read this letter from Hoover thanking them for their cooperation, and so forth, about getting Ray, he said, "I think it's time for a toast." And everybody's glasses were full. He held his hand out and he said, in a very soft voice, "To the Queen." And everybody tipped it up and we along with them, downed the glassful. The party got going real good. If they liked you, you made a speech ... we made our speeches. If they liked the speech, you signed the papers.

Pimentel: Uh-huh.

Bounds: Not papers, but a little book, booklet. Not many signatures in it. I signed right across from King Hussein of Jordan.

Pimentel: Hmm!

Bounds: (Chuckling) I get a lot of play out of that one when I talk about this.

Pimentel: Right. Right.

Bounds: After eleven days, we didn't get him and came home.

Pimentel: What was the reasoning on that?

Bounds: Because people don't realize that Ray was positively identified by fingerprints as having robbed a bank in London.

Pimentel: Oh. Okay.

Bounds: And going back to Ray's bank robbery in London. While on the Bank Robbery Desk ... I had a bank robbery in Alton, Illinois, where two fellows went in to rob a bank and got twenty-six thousand dollars. This is about ten days after James Earl Ray had escaped the Missouri State Penitentiary. Now, we had a pretty good solution rate on bank robberies, over 90 percent, but we could never prove this robbery. I'd say it was Ray and his brother who robbed the bank. It's their hometown and that's where he got the money to buy the white convertible and then he bought the gun down in Birmingham, the gun which killed King.

There's no doubt in my mind that he's the one that killed King, who robbed the bank in Alton, Illinois, and his brother John was with him. I'll tell you a little bit why I say that in just a minute, but he went down there and he shot and killed King. When we couldn't get Ray in London, we went back to DC. When the Bureau went back to pick Ray up, George Zeiss went along with Hal Light, the Assistant Agent in Charge at Quantico ...

Pimentel: Right.

Bounds: ... they sent me to Memphis, Tennessee. In Memphis, I worked with the Sheriff for three days to land him safely there, 'because that's where they were going to land him and turn him over to the local authorities. I worked with the Sheriff for three days ... the morning that Ray was brought in, we had a huge conference outside of this air base, which was about 17 miles outside of town. We had an armada of sheriffs and law enforcement officers from all over the Tennessee and Mississippi and one from Memphis.

We used an armored truck from Memphis and had it leave from the main airport in Memphis. This diverted many news people to the main airport, having them think Ray would be brought in at the main airport.

Pimentel: Okay.

Bounds: That went out at a certain time towards that airport and all the news people went out there. Then they got everybody off the streets around the county jail and they had cameras on the other side, news people.

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Bounds: We put Ray in the armored truck out of Jackson. We landed him at a Naval Air Base, 17 miles out of Jackson. . Well, I'm going ahead of myself. We had our armada of men, we were 17 miles outside of Memphis and we had everybody ... we had police officers at every intersection for 17 miles into Memphis. And we had two school bus, buses in the back of the sheriff's office ... with spotlights. When we came in the armored truck, we had spotlights shining on every news camera across the street from the sheriff's office so they could get a clear picture on the cameras. But on the plane we got ... the sheriff, the chief medical man and I went on the plane that landed in this airstrip that hadn't been used in seven years. And ...

Pimentel: Uhmm ... this is an airstrip outside of Memphis?

Bounds: No. This is at the Naval Air Base up there.

Pimentel: Oh. Okay.

Bounds: And it was not used by anybody. And we came in about three o'clock in the morning. I went on the airplane with the sheriff and the medical officer; we took all of Ray's clothes off; photographed him in the nude; gave him new clothes, without any belts or strings. Just a precaution, to be sure if he had nay drugs dried in his clothes. I put a restraining belt on him and I tightened it up and I said, "Is that too tight?" And he said, "No." And then I put his hands in handcuffs and tightened them up ... hooked to the belt ... "Is that too tight?" I said. He said, "That's fine." And those three words, I had to write a page and a half memo. But we took him in and we got him into the sheriff's office.

By the way, my bosses in Washington said, "When you turn him over on the plane, you're through with him." But I was with the sheriff for three days and I told Bob Jenkins, who was the SAC in Memphis, "The sheriff wants me to go all the way into the jail with him and I'm going in as police cooperation." So I did. And we took him all the way in to his cell.

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Bounds: And they were taking pictures and I told the sheriff, "Keep me out of the pictures." He did, but he sent me two pictures with the three of us. And there was one picture on Life Magazine of the sheriff, Ray, and my right hand which made the cover of Life Magazine. But we got him there. I'd been in Memphis. I spent three days there and I went all over the area. And, I go to a lot of high schools and grade schools and talk about it.

Pimentel: Uh huh..

Bounds: It's funny. The kids know all about it.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Bounds: They know all about who James Earl Ray is and, as the third graders would know who Martin Luther is, L-o-o-t-h-e-r. (chuckling)

Pimentel: But, getting back to when you were on the Civil Rights Desk up here at FBIHQ.

Bounds: Right.

Pimentel: ... and then we'll get back to James Earl Ray ...

Bounds: Yeah.

Pimentel: ... but I'd like to see if ... some of the more interesting aspects of while you were working the Civil Rights Desk.

Bounds: Well, when I worked the Civil Rights Desk, we had, of course, we had deadlines. One of the Justice attorneys would call us and give us a case. We'd immediately send a teletype out to the office and that had to be completed within five days, back to us at Headquarters. And, the Civil Rights people at the Justice Department were so snowed under with Civil Rights cases that, after I sent the reports over to them, they would call me up numerous times, "What about this case?" I said, "You've got it." And then I had to get a copy and send it back to them, another copy. This was happening on some cases two or three times. They were so crowded. But the Civil Rights ... all I had were cases on the Civil Rights Desk. All I know is we'd get them; we'd send them to the Agents; they'd complete them quickly, to get them to the Justice Department, and it kept the strain on the Agents. No doubt about it.

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Pimentel: And most of these cases were to do with, with what?

Bounds: All sorts of Civil Rights cases ... Police Brutality ...

Pimentel: A lot of those I imagine?

Bounds: A lot of those. And that was especially down South. When I was on the Civil Rights Desk, the only time I ever went out was when the Freedom Riders came through and I went down to Jackson. We were covering leads all over the place. Leads here, leads there. And we'd cover them, write them up and get them back as soon as possible. But when the Freedom Riders came through, I was at an office building, up on the third floor, and I took 600 feet of movie film of the buses coming in; the people getting out, just to make sure if anything exciting would happen, we'd catch it.

Pimentel: Anything exciting happen?

Bounds: No. It was pretty, pretty organized. And the people were not bothered.

Pimentel: Were you down there for when they kidnapped and killed the three ...

Bounds: No. I wasn't.

Pimentel: Oh. Okay.

Bounds: No. I was at the Bureau, and I went up and I viewed the bodies when they brought them up to the Bureau and ...

Pimentel: They did bring them up to the Bureau?

Bounds: Yes. They had them at the lab.

Pimentel: Oh. Okay.

Bounds: Right. Right. They were pretty well ... you know ... decayed.

Pimentel: Yeah. Decayed, I imagine.

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Bounds: My Civil Rights really is not that much ... just on the desk. It kept us busy. And, if you had the Night Duty ... let me tell ya ... from ten to six in the morning there, or 12 to eight, all these teletypes that came in, you had to duplicate the teletype three or four times and put a little brief note on them, especially for the Director. And those all went up there, every morning to the Director, as well as the Assistant Director. The Director knew what was going on all the time.

Pimentel: Geez.

Bounds: And that was rough. That kept you real busy. Besides the teletypes and notes going on all teletypes, you get calls in from all over the country ...

Pimentel: Right.

Bounds: ... not only on Civil Rights but on all cases.

Pimentel: Most of the cases on Civil Rights that you were supervising at Headquarters, were those primarily more from certain states than other states?

Bounds: Oh, yeah. Well, we had five guys on the Civil Rights Desk and we had special sections of the country. Some sections you had very little, but you have a bigger territory. And, it worked out pretty evenly. And then sometimes, if one guy was so snowed under, we'd take some of his cases also.

Pimentel: Okay.

Bounds: It was kind of a simple thing to do, really. The main thing was getting the information to Justice, to the attorneys over at the Justice Department. And then when you got it over there, they would lose or displace the reports because of the volume.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Bounds: Hundreds of cases.

Pimentel: Yeah. And how many of those, or were many of those prosecuted? Do you recall?

Bounds: I'll tell you what, I can't tell. I know we had many, but I really don't know.

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Pimentel: No. No.

Bounds: The volume was just too big.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Bounds: We'd look at them and see what was going on and everything, and make sure that they were right. And, the Agents did a good job. We, once in a while we'd send a teletype back and say you better do this and better do that. But that's about it, really. It just kept you busy. Busy as hell.

Pimentel: Kenny, any specific case besides the Freedom Riders that ... the three Freedom Riders from New York ...

Bounds: You know, I can't, I can't ...

Pimentel: ... did you have a case that you recall that Hoover was very interested in? Or anything like that?

Bounds: He was interested in all of them, but I can't recall too many of them, really. Of course, the Civil Rights people who are dead that, something like that, the national news that really gets ... gets to you quick. But we were so busy. President Johnson would call over here to our desk and if you picked up the phone and you got him (both laughing) you had a memo you had to write.

Pimentel: Of course, yeah.

Bounds: Yeah.

Pimentel: Did that happen to you ...

Bounds: Never. I missed him a couple times. I'd reach for the phone and someone would beat me to it.

Pimentel: He would be asking about a specific case?

Bounds: Yeah. He'd ask about a specific case. Civil Rights Freedom Riders was one of the specific cases. The Freedom Riders and anything that had national prominence.

Pimentel: Yeah.

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Bounds: Of course, everything that King did ...

Pimentel: Right.

Bounds: ... they followed him all the time.

Pimentel: Yeah. Yeah.

Bounds: But I'd handled some and I can't remember anything anymore.

Pimentel: Kind of water over the ...

Bounds: It's water over the bridge.

Pimentel: ...over the bridge. Yeah.

Bounds: Civil Rights ... I don't have a lot to say about that, really.

Pimentel: Now, of course, you were on the Civil Rights Desk when, when Martin Luther King was assassinated? April 4, 1968.

Bounds: No. I was on the Bank Robbery Desk.

Pimentel: Oh. Okay. Yeah.

Bounds: Yeah. I was on the Bank Robbery Desk ...

Pimentel: When that happened?

Bounds: Yeah.

Pimentel: Okay. And so you and George Zeiss were sent over ...

Bounds: We were sent over to bring Ray back to Memphis ...

Pimentel: ... the first time because they thought that, or ...

Bounds: ... that we were going to get him right away.

Pimentel: ... that you were going to get him right away. Okay.

Bounds: Oh, by the way, I meant to tell you, Ray was brought back and put in jail. About a year later ...

Pimentel: Okay.

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Bounds: A year later, his brother, John, was caught robbing another bank. And actually he was the one with Ray, who robbed the bank in Alton ...as I see it. Can't prove it.

Pimentel: Right.

Bounds: ... where they got the money from the Alton bank robbery. Ray was a con man to begin with and, I'm sure of the 26 thousand dollars out of that bank, he got most of it.

Pimentel: Um-huh. Was the brother ever implicated in the assassination?

Bounds: No. No. Not a bit. Not a bit.

Pimentel: Nothing ever ...

Bounds: Out of the interviews in the Missouri State Penitentiary, the Agents who did it: Ray hated Blacks and he didn't like King because he was getting all this publicity and he really hated King. He didn't like him at all.

Pimentel: It was just this, this hatred?

Bounds: Hatred. Right. Yeah.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Bounds: And ... to my way of thinking, he's the only guy that did it. And he was almost caught also, after he shot King. I've been all over the area. Ray shot out of a window with a 30-06, and about 200 feet away. He was standing in a bathtub.

Pimentel: Um-hmm.

Bounds: ... about 83 yards ... it was something like that. I had it down once.

Pimentel: And were you involved in that investigation?

Bounds: No I was not involved in that investigation. I was sent to London and also to Memphis to handle the safe return of Ray to the sheriff. But while I was there, I wanted to know everything about the case.

Pimentel: Yeah. Okay.

- Bounds: I looked the territory over very well. I saw how Ray almost was caught and ... I put it on the blackboard how he was almost caught in my lectures on this case. All I had to do is, really, work with the Sheriff, who was quite a guy.
- Pimentel: Who was that Sheriff? Do you recall his name?
- Bounds: Yeah ... I got it in a book, William H. Morris, Jr. Bill was his first name. And I got a very nice letter from the head medical guy, Dr. McCarthy Demere of Memphis, who went on board the airplane with us. He wrote me a beautiful letter.
- But I sort of organized ... after he was caught and brought back to Memphis, I talked to 500 police officers for his safe return to the Memphis jail. Told them how we wanted him to be brought safely to jail and we got him in there. In the County jail where we were to take Ray, we put mesh around a light bulb which was exposed to keep him from trying to electrocute himself.
- Pimentel: Right.
- Bounds: He was in his jail cell all by himself. He had his own TV outside of the cell but he was all by himself. He admitted in Court that he did kill King. But then he got an attorney and he reversed his decision as not killing King.
- Pimentel: Did he tell you?
- Bounds: No. He told somebody else. Not me.
- Pimentel: Yeah. He didn't tell George Zeiss and Hal Light on the way back?
- Bounds: No. He didn't talk to them at all. Didn't talk ... didn't, didn't say one thing ... Just stuff like I want to go to the bathroom or something like that. Never ate a thing on the plane back. And they were on a plane used only for Generals.
- Pimentel: Right. Right. Yeah.
- Bounds: But, George was fun to be with, in London for 11 days, I'll tell ya that.
- Pimentel: I'm sure. I'm sure. (Both laughing)

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Pimentel: You were on the Bank Robbery Squad. Any other, besides the James Earl Ray situation, was there any other case of merit, in national interest, let's say, while you were on the Bank Robbery Squad?

Bounds: No. No. Well, I was on one where in a little town in Missouri ... oh, I had couple cases that I worked...

Pimentel: Uh-huh.

Bounds: ... in Missouri, this subject and his brother would set a bomb off in the City Hall, then rob the bank and take off. And then these two brothers, they did this and they went to their grandparents house and killed their grandparents, wrapped them up in plastic, put them in a trailer ... a fold down trailer ... took it up to Connecticut, where they had a piece of property. They were going to build a garage so they built a big hole in the ground, rolled that trailer down underneath it, put a concrete top on it, and build a garage. Our investigation led to that.

Pimentel: Geez.

Bounds: And I was on the phone all the time, while officers tore the garage down and went under the concrete and got the bodies.

Pimentel: Talk about sick people, huh. Incredible.

Pimentel: Do you recall the name of the case?

Bounds: No, I don't. Also, they were arrested and they were going to have a jailbreak with their wife outside in a car to drive away. And they almost did it, but they didn't make it and they also caught the girl outside.

Pimentel: How about when you were on the Bank Robbery Desk at Headquarters, besides the James Earl Ray matter ...

Bounds: I, I can tell you about one bank robbery that I'm sorry to hear about. Every morning we'd get our teletypes in with the bank robberies ...

Pimentel: Right.

Bounds: ... One in Los Angeles, a former Agent and he was from New York and was working in Springfield, Illinois, he didn't like the Bureau that much; he didn't like being in the farmland. Springfield office has much farmland. He wanted to go back to the big city. He quit. He was married ... went to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, got a job there ... kept it for about a year. He left his wife and four boys, and he was living out of a car. His name was O'Roarke.

Pimentel: Jerry O'Roarke.

Bounds: Jerry O'Roarke. He went and robbed a bank for six hundred dollars, in Los Angeles. They caught him in a drugstore. I don't know where or what happened ... I have no idea what happened to him.

Pimentel: That's amazing.

Bounds: One guy went to a little bank in Jacksonville, Illinois. Old men were running the bank. Subject into this bank, walked up to the tellers, had a gun out, "Give me your money." Teller looked at him, "Forget it. I'm not going to give you anything.

He goes to the next teller who says, "You don't scare me with that gun." The old man, who was the president of the bank, saw him, picked up a shotgun. Here the subject sees this old man with a shotgun coming and he ran for the door. The door opened inward and he was trying to push it out. A shot rang out and it broke the glass out past him on, on the door, he slipped through the glass opening, went out, went around the corner, down the street, and the old man was after him with the shotgun. And he got in the car ... there was a little snow on the ground. He was backin' it. The old man leveled the gun, the bullet hit a steel lamp post, ricocheted off into a hotel and the fella got away. He went outside of town about five miles, passed a little town and he got stuck in the snow, and he walked back to the garage and that's where we caught him. In the garage.

But there's so many cases. One in San Francisco. A fella robs a bank, runs out, gets into a cab and the guard's right behind him; and the guard's right on top of the cab and the guy in the cab puts his gun up to the guard and the guard shoots him. Kills him. Subject had a toy gun in his hand.

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Pimentel: Yeah. You were a firearms instructor, you said?

Bounds: I was. I came back here as a firearms instructor. I trained the first Black Agent. An All-American from Notre Dame named Aubrey Lewis.

Pimentel: The first Black Agent?

Bounds: First Black Agent. Well, they had Black Agents. Hoover had made a couple of Black Agents in his office but Lewis was the first one to go through New Agents' training at the Academy.

Pimentel: Right.

Bounds: Yeah. And the second guy was a guy named Joe Crawford. He has since died and also Lewis died. Joe Crawford's son now works at the FBI Academy. He's not an Agent but he runs all the tours at the Academy.

Pimentel: So you were assigned to Quantico at the time when you were a firearms instructor?

Bounds: Yes, from 1962 to 1965.

Pimentel: What year? Do you recall? After the BR Squad?

Bounds: Oh geez ... my last three years in the Bureau, I was assigned at the new FBI Academy, in the Physical Training from 1972 to 1975.

Pimentel: Okay.

Bounds: And I quit there on a Friday and I started at the Greenbrier on the following Monday. Greenbrier is a famous resort in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. I was chief of Security.

Pimentel: Uh-huh.

Bounds: That's where they had the Underground... Where the Congress and the President would go in case of a nuclear attack.

Pimentel: Right.

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Bounds: It's since been found out about. It's not there anymore. But the Greenbrier still runs tours through there. And they charge the people thirty dollars for that.

Pimentel: In fact, there was an article not too long ago in the newspaper about ...

Bounds: Right. Right. And the guy who did run it, was Fritz Bugas, he was the man in charge. Fritz was my neighbor in Springfield, Virginia. Here's something about him. He had three brothers who were FBI Agents. One of them was the most successful ex-Agent from the Bureau. And he became the Vice-President of Ford Motor Company. His name was John Bugas.

Pimentel: Hmm!

Bounds: Quite a guy. And his other two brothers were Agents too. And he was my friend. Fritz Bugas's kids and my kids grew up together, just like brothers and sisters. He went down to the Greenbrier to take charge after the previous person died. Fritz was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army and they appointed him. He told me about the opening down there, so I applied for the job and got it.

Pimentel: And you were doing what there?

Bounds: I was the Chief of Security for the Greenbrier.

Pimentel: That was in 1975?

Bounds: Seventy-five, yeah. I stayed there five years, until 1980.

Pimentel: Okay.

Bounds: Never sold my house here in Springfield and I went right back to it. And I've volunteered ever since then. I'm one of the first holders of the Humanitarian Award, given to six Agents each year by the Society of Former Agents. I'm very proud of that Award.

Pimentel: And you were volunteering with the Park?

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Bounds: Yep. I worked with the Park Authority of Fairfax County. I worked with the County Aquatics. I handle the people who are handicapped in the water. And I became one of the top volunteers in '91, in Virginia. One girl was 34-years-old; she'd been shot in the neck in a family argument in West Virginia, and she was paralyzed from the neck down. She could move her hands pretty good but not her legs or her body. She was married.

I had her in the water three to four times a week and I would grab a hold of her and move her legs and body. In a year and a half, doctors came to look at her, they were surprised. She could walk 180 yards in the water.

Pimentel: No kidding.

Bounds: Now, now she drives her own van.

Pimentel: (laughing)

Bounds: But she's in a wheelchair most of the time, but she has her own van.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Bounds: That's one of the greatest things I ever did in my life.

Pimentel: Right. A nice story. Yeah. So you were down there with Jim Gump?

Bounds: Oh yeah. Yes. Right. Gump is one great guy and a real good friend. And, John Murphy. And Bill Stallnaker and myself.

I was Bill Stallnaker's counselor as a New Agent. He handled the pool at the Academy. We had a good time there. We trained the first thirty-three female Agents in the gym. Which was nice.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Bounds: And some of the females were better than the men. (laughing)

Pimentel: Yeah. Right.

Bounds: Especially in running.

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Pimentel: Right. (laughing) But you were not a firearms instructor in the old Academy, were you?

Bounds: Yes.

Pimentel: You were?

Bounds: I was in the old Academy. Yeah. The ranges were still out on the Marine Base, where they built the new Academy.

Pimentel: Right. The ranges were there. Yeah. Yeah.

Bounds: When I went through New Agents', they had the ranges right there on the base. But this was still on the base but about ten miles out.

Pimentel: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Bounds: You became a bus driver to take ...

Pimentel: Right. Right. I recall that you used to have to hop on the bus and go out to the ranges.

Bounds: Right. Three years there and then I had about three years at the new Academy. Three years as Firearms from 1962 to 1965. And I was at the New Academy from 1972 to 1975.

Pimentel: Okay. Okay.

Bounds: In all, I've had a great career. I've really enjoyed it; a lot of great fellas. We have a Quantico Ex-Agents' Chapter. I did belong to the Washington Chapter but I was playing a lot of golf and they had their meetings on Thursday and we had a seniors golf group at the Springfield Golf and Country Club on Thursdays.

Pimentel: Right.

Bounds: I played golf a lot. I picked it up at the Greenbrier.

Pimentel: Are you still playing golf?

Bounds: No. I quit. I have both knees replaced and three hips, and I'm having the fourth hip coming up.

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Pimentel: Oh my gosh.

Bounds: I've got arthritis real bad.

Pimentel: Getting back to James Earl Ray ...

Bounds: Right.

Pimentel: Any, any funny stories? You spent a little time with him.

Bounds: Not a lot of time for it, really. Not too many stories. I've made up a lot of good stories (laughing). In fact, when you talk with the third graders, a lot of time you talk about James Earl Ray and they know all about him ...

Pimentel: Uh-huh.

Bounds: ... and then they want to know about Agents. I tell all the little girls they could become Agents also. I said they all did a good job. But they want to know about guns. And I told these little kids, I used to tell them if a bad guy had a gun on me and he's within my reach, I could take that gun away from him before he could shoot me. And one little girl put her hand up in the air and she says, "Man, that's really fast for an old man."

(Both laughing)

Pimentel: That's when you have to qualify it and say, "Well, I was younger."

Bounds: Did you hear about the Agent that lost his badge and credentials in a little Mississippi River?

Pimentel: No.

Bounds: I did!

I was in a boating accident and I had my badge hooked to my credentials in the glove compartment on the boat. I was with several of my fraternity brothers in the evening, in the middle of the Mississippi River, between St. Louis and East St. Louis, Illinois. We'd been water-skiing and I had my credentials, my badge hooked to my credentials, in the glove compartment. I wasn't driving but two boats came together and our boat hit the side of another. The other boat went down.

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Bounds: We were all in lifejackets. My boat had the nose up and I was looking for my badge. I go under water ... it's gone. And that's how I lost my badge and credentials. I had to write a nice memo on that. Had to work down East St. Louis for a couple weeks with a badge, using the ASAC's, the Assistant Agent in Charge's badge, Bill Hines. (Both laughing)

Pimentel: Did you ever find the badge or the creds ...

Bounds: No. Never did.

Pimentel: So they're still down there in the muddy Mississippi?

Bounds: Somebody may find them millions of years later.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Bounds: Another thing, I was working the Labor cases. I was with a guy named Charlie Moore, who came to the Bureau, and everybody knows Charlie Moore. We worked all day. I got a brand new Ford, about 800 miles on it, and it was assigned to Charlie Shepherd, who used to be a firearms guy. But he was working in Springfield, but we took his car and we were working cases up in Peoria, Illinois. And Charlie lived in Peoria.

Bounds: He says, "Take my car." Jack Reed was up there, who became Agent in Charge, ASAC in Savannah, Oklahoma City, Chicago. Became an SAC, went to Butte, went to El Paso, went to Sacramento, Seattle, back to Sacramento. Jack was known very well in the Bureau. I was driving and he was riding on my side. They had a big fire in Pekin, Illinois ... American Distillery. That's nothing but booze ... it was a big fire.

Jack and I were going to go to our hotel to sleep and he says, "Look, they got that fire down there." We had dinner at Charlie Moore's house. "I know the fire chief, I was just down there today, it's kinda late, let's go down and see if we can help him." So we go down, we drive down there, and the chief says, "Yes, take all these guys." They didn't have enough cars to take the fellas to the fire. We piled this brand new Ford, loaded it up with guys. I had the red light on. We drop 'em off at the fire, where you could really feel the fire, drive back, with the siren on and a guy giving me a light to go ahead.

Bounds: We hit an intersection and the guy said he didn't see us and he hit us on the left side of the front of the car which drove me into the curbing. The right front hits the curb, swings the back of the car into the curb and we would have tilted over but it hit a telephone pole. Jack Reed's forehead shattered the front window and he had a hell of a cut on his face and he was thrown out of the car. I ended up holding onto the steering wheel, which was all bent up, not a scratch on me. I got out, walked over to Jack. He's on his back, had his hands over his face, and he was bleeding. I take my shirt off, I take my T-shirt, plant it on his head and I said, "Jack, can you hear me?" He said, "Yeah, but what a hell of a memo this is going to be." (Both laughing)

Bounds: I got a small letter which said: "In the future when you're going to fires, notify your ASAC."

Pimentel: Notify the ASAC.

Anyway , I'm trying to think if there's anything else on the James Earl Ray caper. In London for eleven days ...

Bounds: Eleven days. Well, it was eleven days of a holiday.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Bounds: On, on Uncle Sam.

Pimentel: Yeah. Yeah. With George Zeiss.

Bounds: With George Zeiss.

Pimentel: Big George. Right.

Bounds: And I have never laughed so much in my whole entire life.

Pimentel: Okay.

Bounds: We went to the Legat ... I cooked my specialty for him and his wife. Tacos.

Pimentel: What was the Legat's name? Do you recall?

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Bounds: Geez ... he's dead now. Two of 'em. He'd bought a pecan plantation in New Mexico, or someplace.

Pimentel: Right. Yeah. No problem. But, so then George and Hal Light brought Ray back eventually.

Bounds: Right. And I went to work with the Sheriff down there in Memphis.

Pimentel: Right. Yeah. Okay.

Bounds: I had the better deal.

Pimentel: You did. I think so.

Bounds: Light thought he was going to see London and he landed 70 miles outside of London and stayed there about three or four hours and came back without seeing London.

Pimentel: And turned around ...

Bounds: ... they brought him over to them, and they came right back.

Pimentel: Um-hmm. Amazing. And, you don't recall any other specific Civil Rights case?

Bounds: No, I really don't. I worked on some but I don't remember them, it was just part of the job.

Pimentel: Yeah. Yeah.

Bounds: You worked, worried about the paper.

Pimentel: Right.

Bounds: And we had a lot of paper. Especially ...

Pimentel: And so these all had to come from the Justice Department for us to investigate ...

Bounds: Yeah. Yeah. Right.

Pimentel: ... and then everything would go back to the Justice Department.

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Bounds: Of course, we picked a lot of them up ourselves ...

Pimentel: Right.

Bounds: ... out in the field. But I wasn't in the field.

Pimentel: Right.

Bounds: Hey when I was in Civil Rights down in East St. Louis and there wasn't that many, as it was, it was just Police Brutality.

Pimentel: Right. Right.

Bounds: Which I won't tell you too many about those. Blacks beating the Blacks really. That's what it amounted to.

Pimentel: Yes.

Bounds: Because East St. Louis is about 98 percent Black.

Pimentel: Right. Yeah.

Bounds: But great work. Great work.

Pimentel: Okay. Because one of the funnier cases I ever had was involving two females, two white females, over in St. Thomas, the U.S. Virgin Islands who filed a Police Brutality case against a Black police officer. Now, talk about a wild case. That was a strange case.

Bounds: Yeah?

Pimentel: Very strange. Anyway. I don't think it ever got anywhere because, first of all, the two females were just drunk as skunks, and that was a long time ... Any memorable event in the Bureau you want to record for posterity here?

Bounds: Well, I was a counselor for New Agents' ... a great class. I have a whole complete book on that. I was a pretty loose counselor, you might say. In fact, do you remember Si Tullai?

Well, Tullai was in charge of the New Agents. And one time he was there and some New Agents came up and he asked me, "Ken, where are the FD-302s?" I said, "What in the hell is that?" (laughing)

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Bounds: Si Tullai goes, “Ahhh, that’s Bounds again” (laughing). But I was also the only counselor, who trained his class in Firearms.

Pimentel: Hmm!

Bounds: I got to train them in Firearms. Which was kinda nice.

Pimentel: Uh-huh.

Bounds: And usually the New Agents, when they graduated, they’d have a big dinner; invite the Assistant Director, this guy, that guy, that guy. I told my fellas, “Look, this takes a lot of money. You guys don’t have that money.” And they really didn’t. And I said, “If you want to have a party, come to my house. You can invite anybody you want to, but come to my house.”

“And it won’t cost you anything. You can bring the booze, I’ll furnish the food.” And they wanted only two other guys to come there, George Zeiss and Loy Wagner, who was a firearms man ... and myself. And they came to my house, here in Springfield, and we had a great time.

Pimentel: Uh-huh.

Bounds: And at the very end, they gave me a huge big box. And my wife was right there too. I opened the box up, paper was in it, you know, it was rolled up paper, and here I come across one silk stocking. “Honey, this has got to be yours.”

Pimentel: (laughing)

Bounds: Another silk stocking, “This has got to be yours.” A bra! A pair of panties ... and at the very bottom was a Combat Magnum. (laughing) A Smith and Wesson Combat Magnum. And we had one more trip down to Quantico. We went down there, I took the New Agents’ gun, sighted it in, and I shot a Possible for them for the very first time ... in front of my class. *(A Possible is a score of 100 on a special course. Very few Agents are ever proficient enough to score a Possible.)*

Pimentel: You shot a possible? Incredible.

Bounds: Yeah. With that gun ... for the very first time.

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Pimentel: How many Possibles did you shoot over the years?

Bounds: Oh, I don't know.

Pimentel: A few?

Bounds: A few. A few.

Pimentel: Yeah. Your name is on the board?
(The Board is at the FBI Academy and lists the name of those who achieve Possibles.)

Bounds: I'm on the board. The board is real long now.

Pimentel: Oh yeah.

Bounds: I'm 220.

Pimentel: That's incredible.

Bounds: We used to be able to conduct tours down at Quantico because they used nothing but Quantico retired Agents. And I've conducted many tours, and now since they've closed it up ...

Pimentel: Nine – 11. Yeah.

Bounds: ... we have to fight to get in there!

Pimentel: I know. You can't even get in there.

Bounds: It's terrible! Especially for guys, we've saved a lot of Agent hours by conducting tours.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Bounds: And I've had a lot of good tours. I had a lot of good tours up in Washington. They'd call me for ... I had Jersey Joe Walcott. I had the Howard ... big Howard, the guy who played with the Senators.

Pimentel: Oh yeah. Frank Howard.

Bounds: Frank Howard. And, quite a few of the guys, which was a lot of fun. I had a chance to sign with the Yankees ... in high school.

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Pimentel: (chuckling)

Bounds: And I played ball against Yogi Berra ... in American Legion ... but they weren't paying any money. Yogi Berra hit a home run against us for the State Championship in 1942.

Pimentel: Right.

Bounds: And I also jumped center against George Miken. (Both laughing)

Pimentel: Yeah. So ...

Bounds: My wife says I look short and stocky (laughing).

Pimentel: Anything else?

Bounds: All I know is that the, the Bureau is a great organization and I hope the new Agents have the esprit de corps that we had.

Pimentel: I hope so. I hope so.

Bounds: I think they're getting good people.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Bounds: I don't think I could make it this day and age.

Pimentel: I don't think I could either.

Bounds: You could if you were that young, but youngsters anymore know, I think, a lot more than we ever did.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Bounds: My grandkids taught me how to run the computer.

Our Quantico group is ... all the older guys ... Jim Gump is in a bad way. He's had a couple strokes and he can still talk. He talks very slowly.

Pimentel: Right.

Bounds: Takes him a while to get started.

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Pimentel: And Jim Cotter?

Bounds: Every time, at Quantico, when a new class would come in for National Academy, I would specifically go in there and sit to listen to Jim Cotter talk. He is so good.

Pimentel: He is. Yes, he is.

Bounds: And he would talk about the Quantico Chapter. He never was president, but he ran that place. He was wonderful. He was wonderful. I was the second president of the Quantico Chapter. Jack Kirsch was the first and I was the second. But it's a good, good Chapter.

Pimentel: It is.

Bounds: Good Chapter.

Pimentel: A very good Chapter.

Bounds: We're the only Chapter that let the wives vote also.

Pimentel: Right.

Bounds: Jim Cotter never did like that.

Pimentel: No.

Bounds: But we did it.

Pimentel: Exactly.

Bounds: Great, great friends in the Bureau. Great friends. In fact, I get calls from them all the time, throughout the Country. And I think it's wonderful.

Pimentel: Getting back to the Civil Rights era again. Of course, this was all something brand new, I guess, when you came in. My guess it was the Civil Rights Act of 1964, was that the one that kind of got the Bureau a lot more involved?

Bounds: I think it did. I think it did. Yeah.

Pimentel: ... LBJ signed into law.

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Bounds: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Pimentel: Where the, for example, restaurants and hotels and no discrimination could be made.

Bounds: I trained the first Blacks in the Bureau that came in also. Well, I told you that already. Yeah.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Bounds: Aubrey Lewis was the first.

Pimentel: There was also Jim Jones ...

Bounds: And Joe Crawford. Crawford. His son is now running the tours at the FBI Academy. He never became an Agent but he's a great kid. Boy, what a nice guy.

Pimentel: And also there were a couple of Black Agents, the first Black Agents that I worked with. They came down to St. Croix where the killing of the seven or the eight people down there on the golf course.

Bounds: Okay. Yeah.

Pimentel: Back in, I believe it was 1971.

Bounds: Was it Glover? He became an Assistant Director.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Bounds: There's another guy I can't remember. There was quite a few.

Pimentel: Uh-huh.

Bounds: We also had ... gosh, the guy who played with the Boston Celtics come through. Big, tall guy. He went to Seattle. I can't remember his name. I also played on the FBI basketball team. I was 45 and everyone else was 22. (Both laughing)

Bounds: That's why I've got two knees replaced and three hips.

Pimentel: Right. That's right. Anyway. What I'm going to do with this is I send this to Sandy Robinette ...

Bounds: Oh yeah. Yeah. I know Sandy.

Pimentel: ... and she farms it out to somebody to be transcribed. Once it's transcribed, she will send the transcription to you. You can add, delete, correct, or whatever.

Bounds: Okay. Yeah. Sure.

Pimentel: And then you would ship it back to her and this is all paid for by the, we get a little budget, the ex-Agents Society has allowed us so much money for this type of thing.

Bounds: Yeah.

Pimentel: So. And once you approve it, then it goes to the Bureau for approval at the Bureau, the pre-publication Unit.

Bounds: Yeah. Yeah.

Pimentel: And then the tapes and everything ... Sandy gets all of this and she's kind of keeping it as a repository.

Bounds: She's something else. She's just like her husband.

Pimentel: She's a good lady.

Bounds: Just like her husband.

Pimentel: Yes. Ken, thank you so much for taking the time to regale us with your stories. And if you think of anything just give me a holler.

Bounds: I will. I will.

Pimentel: It's now 2:15 on the afternoon of August 23rd, 2006, and this interview is terminated.

* * * * *

Pimentel: I would like to add a note. This is Stan Pimentel and it's two days later. I just got off the phone with Ken Bounds because after the interview on Wednesday, as I was going out I noticed a picture of him with James Earl Ray. So he allowed me to take that picture to have some copies made for the Oral History Project.

Pimentel:

He identified the individuals on that photograph which was taken on July 19, 1968, after refreshing his memory from the book that was written about this event. The book that he refers to is An American Death: A True Story of the Assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the author is Gerold Frank. Ken Bounds name is mentioned therein, as well as George Zeiss and, and, of course, photographs of them appear in there. He also noted that the identity of the other individual on James Earl Ray's right is the Sheriff of Shelby County, at that time, William or Bill Morris, Jr.

I also asked Ken about the alleged, or the bank robbery charges that apparently had been brought upon Ray while he was residing in London, England. And apparently that was the reason why Ken and George Zeiss could not bring James Earl Ray back the first time, because there was a bank robbery charge against Ray in London. And it took several months for the British Government to decide to hand him over to the American authorities, the FBI specifically, because of the notoriety of the case. And that was several months after the initial attempt to retrieve him from England.

Anyway, that's about all for this addendum and thank you very kindly. That's the end of this tape.

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