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Jerry Johnson
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Interviewed by, *Thevi Bory*

How long have you lived in Hillsboro?

"Actually, I lived in Hillsboro in the 60's. Then I went away to college, Oregon State, and then I came back in the early 70's. So, I've been living here since the early 70's."

What do you think is the biggest crime problem in Hillsboro?

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"Well, I think probably the population has just exploded in the Hillsboro area, especially east of Coast Barrack, where the downtown area used to be the center of Hillsboro. I think the population and the growth has just brought, you know, a lot of people into a smaller area and you're going to get a lot more crime because of that."

Why do you think that the population is the biggest problem?

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"Well, I think that, obviously, a lot of people are going to want to get out of the city, and so they sort of look to Hillsboro as sort of a bedroom community. At least that's what it is referred to. It's out of the Portland area. You live in Hillsboro and you might work in Portland. So, a lot of people have moved out here, a lot of industries have located in town, a lot of computer industries have transplanted out here and then because of that, people have looked for housing and build houses and stuff like that. And, you know, then there's the agricultural part of this region which people need to work nursery work, growing different crops, and things like that. There's a lot of work out in this area, and that's why people tend to move out here."

As a Community member, what do you see in law enforcement and if it has changed over the years?

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"Well, I think back in the day, we used to know the name of the police officers. It was a lot smaller and a lot more personal. You knew the names of the of the police in Hillsboro and maybe some of the names of the Washington County deputies, and things like that, on a first name basis. Now, they're so big, the agencies are so big, that you really don't know the individual people that are working there, but it seems like the area has grown, and the police agencies, the crime fighters, or whatever you want to call them, has also grown because then if we have a lot of the election county deputies, we have a lot of city of Hillsboro policeman..."

Do you feel safer now than you did 25 years ago?

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"Oh, good question! Yes, and no. I think about 25 years ago, we're probably a lot more naive and a little bit more innocent about things. You know, we didn't have the

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population and especially the diversity with a lot of different people from different backgrounds coming into the area, and now that's changed. I mean, I think I still feel safe that, you know maybe I, I watch my step a little bit, I make sure that if I get off the transit I'm in the middle of the fairgrounds that I kind of look around, just so I don't set myself up. Because it could be kind of scary in different spots, and you know, you here all kinds of stuff about gang activity and this and that. You just have to be a lot more aware of where you're at, what time it is, and what's going on. I still feel pretty safe, but I think also I understand that there are some desperate people that live in this area who might do some desperate things."

What do you think you're scared of the most?

"Um, let's see. Scared of the most. *Short pause to think* I don't know if I could pin it down, as far as a crime right? *Pauses again, and laughs* Funniest thing happened the other day, this is kind of like a little sideline, but I went to the post office okay? And I had a package to mail, and I was going to buy some stamps and stuff. The guy that drove in next to me was, oh, about my age, or a little older. I'm not quite sixty and he's probably sixty or so. He had this club, you know, that you put on the steering wheel. At the post office! Is this guy paranoid or what? He takes five minutes, and I was in there filling out some paperwork or something, and this guy takes 5-6 minutes to put this yellow club on his steering wheel while he goes into the post office? I mean, I don't quite understand that. I would say that's pretty scared of your car getting stolen? I mean if somebody wants my car, go ahead. I'm not going to stop them. Even if you have a club on your steering wheel, people have their ways of sawing through and pulling it through. I thought that was kind of the epitome of paranoia as far as crime creating things. Um, I don't know what I'm afraid of really. I guess I would be afraid of maybe assault. Someone assaulting me, wanting my money or something like that. I'm not really fearful about anything in particular, but that'd probably be the thing, you know, somebody started to beat me with a baseball bat."

Have you ever been involved in any crime, like a victim, or just seen anything?

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"Boy! I haven't seen a whole lot out there. I've been involved in a car accident where somebody who wasn't licensed or insured was driving a car and had hit us in Hillsboro. I was kind of lucky that my whole family was there and nobody was seriously hurt, but it was still a traumatic thing. I think somebody stole something out of our outdoor freezer, something about I don't know how many years ago, but nothing too directly like that. You know, you here about some people losing things out of their garages, but they've left them open for long periods at a time. Somebody comes by in a bike and grabs something, or somebody walks by, grabs a bike out of a garage and takes off. I haven't had anything like that happen to me either. I mean, not too many personal experiences unfortunately, I'm sorry. "

Do you have a specific moment that made you really proud, or disappointed in the law enforcement?

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"Like in the city of Hillsboro? Hmm.. I think when we had our car accident, they were there within minutes. I think they responded, police, fireman, rescue ambulance. They were there really quick. I thought that was a pretty neat deal that they could respond that fast, especially in an emergency and stuff. I don't know if I'd had, or seen any situations where the police have been really inappropriate responding to a situation. I've had policeman coming into our house a few times, questioning us about something that might have happened in the neighborhood, something that we may have seen or haven't seen, and they were being really courteous and kind and seemed to treat everybody with respect."

Can you give examples of what they've asked you before, or what you have seen?

" I think a couple times, police have come and investigated a burglary in the area or something, and they've just come in and asked us: have you'd heard anything, seen anything unusual, have you seen any cars or people that you normally don't see in the neighborhood and stuff like that are some of the basic things they've asked us. Also, just some specific things that happened in the burglary or something."

What do you think about the use of drugs and alcohol today?

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"Well, Alcohol is socially acceptable, so we seem to, well, its probably one of the most abused drugs that we have. But that's sort of changed in that back in the day, 60's 70's or so, people drove when they were pretty well drunk, and it was a lot more acceptable than it is now. Although people still do it now, I think people are a lot more cautious and don't do it as often, you know, drink and drive. At least, I've seen a big difference in that. I've got a lot of mixed feelings about marijuana use. Should it be as criminalized as it is, or should it be decriminalized? Is that really that big of a problem? I don't know. But the big thing now is the meth. use, you didn't here about it twenty-five years ago. Now, it's almost like you see something everyday. So, that's a big change from about 20-25 years, is the meth. It's amazing what people will put into their body just to feel better about things, even cleansers and battery stuff. It's kind of like a battle that's always going to be fought. Substance abuse, people will abuse pretty much anything. The height thing is that, how much of a criminal will do you put on it, or is it some kind of a disease situation? Are there more drugs in the Hillsboro area than about 25 years ago? Absolutely, because there's a lot more people. People are going to use substances, especially if they're not happy about themselves, their situations, their jobs, their families. Tough Deal."

I've been told that you've been working with children for a while now.

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"Yeah, actually in the 70's I started at the Washington county Juvenile department. I worked in the jail, believe it or not. We actually held juveniles, people in between the ages of 13,14 and 17 in jail, downtown in the 3rd floor of the courthouse. I worked in the jail for about 3-4 years and then we moved to a sheltered facility, which was not a lot in that situation. I started an educational program for juveniles who had to stay somewhere besides their home, to be evaluated to see what we needed to do with them. So I worked for about 10 years for the juvenile department as a counselor,

teacher, and I went back to school and got a teaching certificate in special ed. Then I got involved in the public schools. I worked in an alternative high school in Hillsboro. So, I've kind of done a lot of different things, kind of related to juvenile children."

With all these children that you've been working in, what do you say is the problem that they face with the most?

"Common denominator? Yeah, probably the family. The family is so important and a lot of people used to have kids because it's just the thing to do. It's what's expected, but you don't have to get a license, you don't have to show up that you are confident in being a parent and just get to have kids and expect you to raise them. Usually kids in that lifestyle just has difficulties now, and that's pretty tough family situation. Parenting is not an easy job, and some just don't know what to do. It's a very hard thing to do."

When you're dealing with these children, trying to help them out, and they're telling you their situations, how do you feel about it?

"Well, you feel pretty sad and depressed about. It's like, I didn't choose my parents, you didn't choose your parents and so you just don't get that choice. And it's really hard for you. Parents should somehow have more training or some idea of what they're doing with kids. I mean it's a real sad situation but you have to deal with the students the situation at hand. Maybe it's the only parents they may have, they may have one parent, they may have two parents, or they may not even have their biological parents. A lot of times, life isn't fair. It's not fair that I have two parents and you have one, or if you have two and I only have one. It's a real sad situation because a lot of the students I deal with in their situation, it's not even their fault, but now they have to deal with it."

What kinds of crimes have they actually committed?

"Just about anything. You know, we used to lock kids up for being runaways, for breaking curfews, and stuff like that. Unfortunately, kids can commit some of the most horrific and vicious crimes that adults do. I've have murderers and burglars, and all kinds of crimes that kids committed. When they were lock up in juvenile detention and when they were in shelter care, we had a big thing about crime. Before Measure 11, which happened about 10 or 15 years ago maybe, you can go to jail for 84 months or 7 seven years for crimes against people. It's automatic too, and a lot of juveniles don't understand that if they go and assault somebody and it's serious, they could end up in jail/prison for up to 7 years. The voters pass Measure 11 because they were sick and tired of reading, hearing, and experiencing about these crimes that juveniles did that got away with it that got a slap on the wrist because they are under 18. But now when you're 13 or 14 and you commit a serious crime, you can be locked up like up to 84 months. A lot of time, people want to appeal Measure 11 because they think it's too harsh and too slick and juveniles shouldn't be locked up for so long. Although some of the crimes they do, I don't know if you just noticed in the papers but there was a drive-by shooting near the Glencoe area a few months or a month ago, but they had convicted one kid and he's

III C
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going to be locked up in jail for a while because that's a really serious crime. But yeah, juveniles can commit several types of crimes, unfortunately, up to date, and probably these are the kids that are charged with some serious stuff. "

How do you feel about Measure 11?

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"Well, yeah that's a tough one. I think it's actually needed because I worked in the juvenile system for 20 years and it just seems like kids get way too many chances. If they were 15, 16, or 14, that they may have held them until they're 18. It seems like if you're 15, 16 or 17, maybe 14, you know what you should and shouldn't be doing. You shouldn't be trying to kill somebody, and you shouldn't be assaulting people, etcetera etcetera. I mean it's pretty strict. I don't know if it's really, you'd have to look at the statistics for crimes per capita according to population to see if crime has increased or not. I think I've sort of in favor of Measure 11. I'm a strange person because I'm also kind of in favor of the death penalty, which a lot of people aren't, but if it's proven beyond a reasonable doubt then someone could get executed. That's a good one, that's a good reason to be not in favor of the death penalty too."

How would you compare the different kinds of crimes that young people are involved in over time?

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"I think it's a little bit more serious now, but that's always what old people always say. You know, 'things were always more safer and better when we were growing up' and all that baloney *starts to laugh*. You know when you read about 4 or 5 kids at Glencoe that all of a sudden get upset, they steal some guns and do a drive-by, you kind of wonder where things are headed. 20-25 years ago, there's probably like one person doing something, but now you see groups of 4 or 5 people doing a drive-by or something like that. You know, it seems like things are a bit more serious than they used to be, like how guns are more accepted now than they were before, or should I say, they're easier to obtain. People are quicker to maybe go get a gun, but maybe that's not true. It just seems like now there's just a lot more diverse population in this area than it used to. Some of the problems that we're dealing with now are probably a result of people relocating here. Some might used to live in L.A., but they come here because they want to get out of L.A. and they want to get away from the things around them. Now they're coming to Hillsboro and they're bringing different things with them."

And do you think this has affect you in any way?

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" Oh yeah! I think you have to be a lot more careful in the world, and it's a shame too because what if you're trying to be friendly to somebody, and then they get the wrong idea, or the take advantage of that. It's not like I don't realize that that's the way the world works. You just have to be a little bit more cautious. The world is not what you see it. I don't know how old you are, maybe 16, 17, or 18, but maybe you don't feel that way because you haven't experienced anything else and it's kind of hard. Yeah, it's a little different. Times change, so you just got to be a little more cautious."

How often do you see crime occurring around you?

"That's the thing, I still don't see a lot of crime. Oh, once in a while you think maybe somebody is shoplifting, but are they really? Once in a while, maybe you'll see a neighbor or somebody down the street will lose something, or get their things stolen, or get something ripped off. As far as seeing things, I still don't see a lot of actual crimes taking place. I mean, that's the good news. Maybe I've just got my head buried in the sand or something. You hear about it. You hear about somebody getting assaulted on the max, or somebody losing something. That's the thing, when I was growing up, I didn't see a lot of crimes and I still hardly ever witness any crime. Maybe that's good, or maybe I should just look out the windows.

Do you think there's a specific ethnic group that is involved in more crimes than others?

"That's a hard one because a lot of people, if they're looking through the paper, they might say 'Oh, it looks like the Hispanic population is doing all the crimes in Hillsboro and no one else is.' I don't know, it's sort of relative and I don't know for sure and maybe you guys have better statistics. You certainly read about it and the media is supposed to report things clearly and non-biased and all that stuff. There's just a lot more people whom, whether they're White, or Asian, Hispanic, or Black, you don't know because there's just a lot more people here. It certainly makes sense that different groups have different people committing crimes. I don't think there's any specific ethnic group, because I don't have any statistics that are saying a certain ethnic group is raising the crime rate."

What is your relationship to crime and law enforcement in Hillsboro?

"I've lived here so I guess I'm a community member, and then I've been working with the juvenile department for ten years, and I've been in education for another twenty something years. I've dealt with many people, pretty much my whole career, whether juvenile department, or the school district. I've also coached with Hillsboro for a lot of years."

Do you think that Measure 11 is preventing kids from doing certain crimes or even lessening the number of children attending alternative schools?

"Well, I wish more young people knew about Measure 11, but I don't think they do. So, I don't think it's a huge deterrent to crime, unless they start to get themselves into trouble, and then they become involved with the juvenile department, then I think sometimes the juvenile department counselor will talk to them about Measure 11. And if they get convicted of a serious crime even though they're under the age of 18, they could be put away for seven years or so. I think more young people should know about Measure 11 and maybe they wouldn't do some of the things that they do."

So nowadays, how does the school district deal with these troubled children?

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"The school district is supposed to provide an education for children who gets in trouble with the law and cannot attend school. So actually, the school district hires a part time teacher at Harkin's house. I don't know if you've ever heard of Harkin's house, but it's the juvenile shelter care facility. Kids, who are in trouble with the law, have to go there and be evaluated to see where they'll go. The Hillsboro School District also provides a teacher at the jail, the Washington County Jail, so they do have some attempt to provide an education for the kids who get into trouble. I don't know if there's enough that we do as a school district, but there are some things that we do. Home instruction is another thing perhaps."

What else do you think we should do?

"That's a good question. Well, it's a hard question because sometimes when somebody gets into trouble with the law, the states tends to take over. If the state takes over, then they're expected to sort of provide educational services, but I think by now the school district is probably doing about as much as they're required to do. I don't know if there's really anything more. The hard part is when kids do get locked up, most of them don't have a diploma or GED and there are the efforts of helping kids get their diploma or GEDS when they're in jail. I know the teacher at the jail and she's a good worker, although I think she's just a part time worker. I think that they should hire a couple more of the full time teachers to work with kids that commit crime or locked up or under house arrest."

Most of these crimes that you usually hear about, are they victimless crimes or do they involve other people?

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"That's the big difference now. If it's a victimless crime, then the punishment is obviously a lot less severe. I would hope that kids or young people are committing a lot more victimless crimes like shoplifting rather than crimes against other people because that's the serious stuff, and that's the Measure 11 stuff. The problem is that the culture up above comes down causes how drugs and how to behave and how to act and how to treat people. Some people's answers are just to shoot somebody. Sometimes you let people believe that they should be a copy cat and copy other's behaviors. I'll admit that most of the crimes are still victimless, but there are still quite a few juveniles that commit crimes against others that are much more serious."

Do you think the media has anything to do with this?

"Yeah, the media is held responsible for a lot of things. The media brings people the stories, and the stories that catch your attention are the very sensational ones. People put them in magazines and newspapers and on the news. I remember a incident about two rappers, 50 Cent and what was the other one? But anyway, two groups were shooting at one another and then a week later the shook hands and made up or something. People kind of idolize some of those celebrities and they'll do some of the same dumb things that some of their idols do. The media is there to report it, and put it on the paper and the news and the internet."

Sometimes do you think the stories are so over exaggerated that -

"Yeah I think it's an easy excuse to blame the media. You know, you can blame the media for, you know, hopefully there's not going to be another school shooting like there's been in the past, like the one in Colorado and in those other places. Some people blame the media because they still talk about Columbine High School. There's an anniversary or something coming up, 5, 7, or 10 years or something. But some people blame the media just because they mention that, and you can't do that. The media does sensationalize some stuff, but the media isn't responsible for another school's shooting. The media, they get blamed for a lot of things."

Could you describe Hillsboro in the 1980's to the respect of crime compare to now?

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"In the 1980's, we have the Hillsboro High School, and Glencoe was just opening. We had no other high schools so we had just the beginning of two high schools. The best that I could describe it is that we didn't have anywhere near the people that we have now. I look at the population signs and I see over 80,000 people living in Hillsboro. You know, back in the early 60's to 70's, it used only be around 10 - 12,000 people. My reaction is just like 'Where did all these people come from and why are they coming into this area?' Just look at that fact. The statistics may say that crimes are basically the same, but some of the new crimes are caused, obviously, because of the high technology available. Now we have a lot more fraud in computers and stuff like that. It seems like people are taking advantage of different crimes because of new technology that we didn't have. I mean, what is a computer 20-25 years ago? It used to be a big huge that that literally took up half a room, and now it's just a little PC thing. Now we have computer problems, we have fraud, id theft, just all kinds of people scamming to get your information. I get stuff on my computer, and I'm on eBay, which is an auction site, but those people that make it look like they are eBay and they want to get all your credit card information saying 'We've lost it' or 'We need to update your profile.' They were trying to steal my information by using some company. So, one of the biggest thing is all of the new technology. It's like downloading music. We didn't even know what it was 20-25 years ago, and now, I don't even know much about it, but there's this whole thing about Napster and all this stuff, and people were getting charged with downloading music for free, and they were getting fined, and I don't know if they were getting taken to jail. There are all kinds of technology that didn't exist 20-25 years ago because our world is rapidly moving into different stuff. It's what you grew up with, so it's probably nothing special, but none of this existed before. "

Do you think it is easier for children to access drugs and alcohol now?

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"Yeah, it seems like it. It just seems like it's a lot more available than it used to be. It seemed like it was a lot harder to get, back in the day. It's kind of weird, but now, some kids get high with their parents even, just because it's so readily available. I've run across situations where that's happened, working with certain families and kids in school and stuff like that. Which is, wow, a whole different world. I would say, because of my age, I think it's a lot more available than it used to be and it seems like it's a little bit more acceptable in some area to try things that could do this and do that. Way back in

the day, it may be okay to drink, but you couldn't try pot. So, drinking was okay, but pot was sort of a no no. Anything above that is really way out there. Now it seems like it's a little bit more acceptable to try this and that etcetera. Things are just a lot more accessible."

Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?

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"Well, crime in Hillsboro, that's a huge topic. You know, you wouldn't want to live in an area that has a lot of crimes, its just not good for anybody's health. People will move out of those areas really fast. It's pretty important to have pretty good law enforcement, but are they just going out and shooting people? Portland, unfortunately, has a real bad reputation because we had so many police shootings in Portland in the last few years, that it seems like those guys are just oomph. You know, they'll shoot and then ask questions later. We don't have that bad reputation in Hillsboro, and that's probably a good thing. *Laughs* you wouldn't want to live around here if you had law enforcement that goes around shooting people. But I think you need strong law enforcement and you need to stay on top on what's going on, whether is gang activity or burglary or car theft or whatever. So I think that's the real plus for this area. I think we have pretty good law enforcement in this area. I think that it is a deterrent to crime. I think that's how I'd finish up. I'm just pretty happy to live in Hillsboro. "

Thank you. Thank you very much. *shakes hands*