

Fell's Point Out of Time



Officer Starr Interview, January 20, 2004

Kraig Greff, Interviewer. Jacquie Greff, camera.

[Kraig]

I'm not going to get too, ah, ask any questions that get very specific. I'm not going to try to go to different places, I know you can't as a cop probably talk about it. General things, I want police perspective, all the things that go on down here. First thing is: Tell us a little bit how long you've been a cop here in Fells Point, and your duties as a patrolman.

[Starr]

Sure, I'd love to. I've been a police officer for twenty-nine years. I am the senior-most foot officer in Baltimore City Police Department. That means I've walked foot longer than anybody else. I've walked foot sixteen-seventeen years in the Fells Point area. I hold the position of being an elected official on the Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge 3. I'm a grievance rep for the city of Baltimore Police Department. I represent the officers, the rank and file. And that's about it, yeah.

[Kraig]

And you've been basically walking the streets of Fells Point longer than...

[Starr]

...anybody else

[Kraig]

Can you describe... I'm trying to make these questions so they don't get out of hand here.

[Starr]

Alright.

[Kraig]

I guess the first question is: With all the gentrification that is taking place, you've seen changes in Fells Point over the years, have you seen a change in crime in the area? The money is coming in, oh look, it's wonderful. Is it really wonderful, or is there still a lot of problems?

[Starr]

No, a lot of it is...

[Kraig]

You know where I'm going with this.

[Starr]

A lot of it is kinda like what I call stupid crime, you know, I mean crimes of opportunity. When you leave certain things that are totally visible in a vehicle, you know, then you have to expect them to be stolen. OK? We don't have any people really kind of doing any major crimes in this area. A lot of it is petty. We had a short run, thank goodness, a very short run... there were some bad things happening to our store owners out here. OK? And it took us a while to find out who it was, and once we found out, we've got some excellent detectives in the district, and we got warrants for the people, and they are now in jail awaiting trial, I believe, in February. So, but that was a short, short span, OK? It was not all over the place. It was in a business area. And, with the exception of that, we really don't have any major crime. We have a lot of malicious destructions that happen on the weekend when the kids come down, and that's basically what I call my bewitching hour, between 1:30 and 2:30 Friday and Saturday night. OK? That's just nuisances, you know, breaking things, throwing things around, but crime is really low in this particular area.

[Kraig]

How does it relate to the entire city? Is it one of the lowest?

[Starr]

It's maybe not one of the lowest, but it's one of the lowest in this district, the Southeast District. It is really very, very, very low.

[Kraig]

Give me some interesting things... over a twenty-nine year span, you've had to have, you've seen a lot of stuff. You've seen it from a perspective no one else has. Relate some of that stuff. I've only got an hour, and there's so many things I want to ask you...

[Jacquie]

Maybe some changes and stuff.

[Kraig]

Neat things you've seen, things that you went "I can't believe this is..."

[Starr]

Well I've really had a ball serving the people, OK, in the city. I mean I really have. It's been a labor of love out here. Things in the particular area here I have seen people grow up, get married, and have babies, you know. And they take their kids and say, "That's Officer Starr. He was out here when I was out here." You know, that really makes me feel good, and that something that just... The whole area with people acknowledging who I am and what I am. I have seen this area come from really a rundown type of area to \$400,000 homes. Ten years you would have asked me, though, I'd say it never would have flown here. Now it's flying all over around here. We have a lot of homes. These small little lots that they'll take down a house that is just not, you know, qualified for human

occupancy, and they'll put in one, two, maybe even three houses out there, little apartment houses, and they... with a very, very high rent. The caliber of people has certainly gone up here, the residents and the home owners, the stores.

[Kraig]

Talk about the caliber of people a little bit. That's one of the things about the documentary, it talks about different changes from artisan community to now you're talking of Struever coming with about multi-million dollar things going all over the place, the Whole Foods, the Whole Paycheck as I call it, down the street. What have you seen change?

[Starr]

We've seen people come in from this area that weren't here before, OK, move into this area. And we've had different food stores, liquor establishments, a different type of liquor in some of these stores. I'm talking about the liquor stores, not the bars, OK? You know, people have kind of demanded higher caliber items around here. And, you know, it just wasn't here a number of years ago. The city is attempting to make the square look as neat and as clean as possible. They've put pots up. They've taken out a lot of the benches and things like that. It's, you know, really a very, very conducive area. People really like this area. It keeps expanding out and out and out.

[Kraig]

Go back to interesting stories. Twenty-nine years, any particular things come to mind?

[Starr]

You know, have I delivered babies? Two and a half. Somebody wants to know how you deliver half a baby? The paramedics came and finished the rest of it.

[01:06:20:01]

The fact that, you know, as far as anything else in my lifetime here, ah, yes, I've had a big experience during one of the snowstorms, I think in '79. That was when police couldn't get out. We were snowed in, OK. It was at Old Town Mall, which was one of my many foot posts out here. I was the only officer. I had walked from where I did live to there. The police were not able to get there. And I was the only officer out. I had no radio. I had my call box key. I called in to the district and I said, "Everything's fine. I'm out here." The news media, then, started picking up, "Don't call the police. They can't get to you." And it's that time when people started realizing there was no police out on the street, because wherever they were, they were just stuck in their cars. And, they started rioting Old Town Wharves ... the Old Town Mall. They would take the car to the back of the stores and hook up a chain and pull the gate off and go in and loot the stores. And I was going from the four to the five-hundred block trying to stop that, and received a medal for it.

[Kraig]

Congratulations!

[Starr]

Thank you. And I was written up in Time Magazine. I had a write-up with my name and everything else about what I did... There's just a lot of little things that come up that just...

[Kraig]

Any particular Friday/Saturday events that happened? Looking for just...

[Starr]

Yeah, I know what you're looking for. Friday and Saturday nights, it's the crowd on a Friday and Saturday night, now that a certain club is out of town, has been much, much, much, much more quiet, and I think the residents are, you know, a lot happier. Like we said, we have had urban surfers, where these kids would jump from car to car to car, do all kind of damages. We've had had numerous, numerous fights out there. All that is really diminished now.

[Kraig]

Do you see the people coming in to Fells Point to do that type of stuff usually from outside? Not so much the residents, but people from other...

[Starr]

What they will so very frequently say to me is, "Well, I'm from Towson." And I said, "Well, what does that mean? Does that mean that you can do this in Towson, and if you can, please go back out there and do it. You can't do it in my city." So, very few of the people that are here on Friday and Saturday night are from this area. It's mostly the college kids.

[Kraig]

Does anything out there scare you, as a cop, after all this experience?

[Starr]

No. That's not machismo or anything like that, but... Yeah, I've never been scared. I've been very, very comfortable out here, OK. I mean, I know what to go into harm's way and what to back away from harm's way. My biggest weapon is my mouth. I can usually talk to most of the people. I have a WONDERFUL group of officers at Southeast District, that all I have to do is get on that radio and request a back-up unit, and they are here real fast for me. I rarely, rarely ever do that, but they are here, and most of the time, it kind of handles itself. You just talk somebody down and said, "Think about some of the things you're doing, and tomorrow morning you might be real, real sorry, and maybe you want to go home for a couple of hours and sober up, and then come on back tomorrow night." And I always tell 'em, I always tell 'em I'll buy 'em the first beer. And I have had two or three people come back up to me and said, "You said if I came back next week, you'd buy me the first beer." And I said, "It's on me."

[01:10:20:13]

[Kraig]

OK, so another quick thing, these are just things I see in the area and want to talk to an officer about 'cause you get everybody else's perspective. You're really the guy out there dealing with it day to

day, the homeless people, the panhandlers... Are they panhandlers? I see a big distinction between the homeless, the actual homeless, and people panhandling for anything that will help that little drug habit.

[Starr]

Legally, you can panhandle. There is no law against panhandling in this city, OK? We've tried to get something enacted. We've tried to get no panhandling zones. Just to no avail at this point. As far as the differences, yes. My panhandlers are a little on the shady side, OK? Not all of them, but some of them are, you know, very, very shady. My homeless people are truly, truly homeless, OK? And, they need a place to sleep at night. They are sleeping out here. They do not like to go to the shelters. They don't like to go to the mission, because it's a set pattern. They have to be in bed, they have to get up, they have to eat at a certain time, and they are all kicked out at about 6 o'clock in the morning. And so many of them just like to stay out here on the street. But, you know, if we can keep them in a particular area away from some of the homeowners, and I do try to get them out off cold weather like that. We have operation Blue Code, and we send people to the missions if they are willing to go.

[Kraig]

So you do keep kind of a tab on a lot of those people and make sure they're not...

[Starr]

Oh, yeah. And we know their names. I know their names. I know who they are.

[Kraig]

Does anybody out there right now present a real problem?

[Starr]

No. Cold weather, a lot of them just go somewhere. They will try to get somewhere. Most of these people, who are the panhandlers live up in the projects, so that's where they are usually now. The homeless people, again, are homeless and have no place to really go.

[Kraig]

I just wanted to make that big distinction. What else?

[Jacquie]

Maybe you could get him to describe the area around Fells Point and how they interact from a police standpoint. You just mentioned the projects, and that made me think of that.

[01:12:36:29]

[Starr]

Most of the time when we have a problem down in Fells Point, the suspect usually goes back to his area, and his area is Perkins Projects. And, you know, from that... Eastern Avenue is my dividing line, and Perkins Projects starts about a block away. So, you know, they can come down here, do

something, and then within a matter of minutes, I mean literally minutes, they could be on any of the little side streets, little side alleys, not the main corridors, and be right back in their house by the time we get the call. So, we're looking for somebody, and if we don't get the call right away, that's usually exactly where we head. They have officers working those Perkins Projects waiting for us to give a description out, because they can usually see them coming over. But if we don't get the information fast enough, these people are home by the time we respond to the original call.

[Kraig]

OK, what else?

[Jacquie]

Can you talk to upper Fells Point versus the historic district?

[Starr]

And when you say upper...?

[Jacquie]

Well, north of Eastern, out of your area.

[Starr]

Out of my area. I just don't want to make the... I mean, I'll gladly... On the other side of Eastern Avenue, going north from Eastern and Broadway, that area has now been dominated by the Hispanic people.

[Kraig]

Do you see that as a plus?

[Starr]

I don't have much problem with them coming down south on the south side of Eastern Avenue. There are problems up there, OK. They are on the other side of the street. Now, when I started, that used to be the Lumbee Indians area up there, with the American Indian home they had up there, which since then those group of people have moved out, and the Hispanics have definitely taken over that Broadway corridor.

[Kraig]

I've got so many questions, but they're ones that he can't answer.

[Jacquie]

Are there any interesting busts or crimes that you've solved that you could talk a little bit about?

[Starr]

Well, in a uniformed patrol, it's difficult. You really don't get involved with crime. The uniformed officer does the preliminary. He gets the call, responds to it, does the interview. Those series of

problems we had before, the uniformed officer would take the report, get the information, talk to the people, see if there is any kind of identification for the suspects; but, then you usually hand that over to your detectives. And that is because they have the time, they have the opportunity, they can do a photo lineup and that's how we found our suspects. They have the facility to do it, where a gentleman or a lady in a car just does not have that time to do it.

[01:15:37:20]

[Jacquie]

Is there advice that you would have as a policeman for homeowners, visitors, anything they could do differently?

[Starr]

Sure. Basically, again, most of my problems in the Fells Point area are crimes of opportunity, OK. So, if I tell people, don't put anything visible in the car, that means anything visible, prior to coming to this area, or any other area in the city or anywhere else, put it in the trunk of your car. I can hardly think of any time I've had somebody break into the trunk of the car. But don't take your pocketbook and put it in the trunk of the car when you get there, because that just told somebody that you put something valuable in the trunk of the car. Do it ahead of time. Homeowners, if you have stuff outside, make sure it is chained down or you lock it in your garage when you finished it. Don't walk out of your house for any reason, even if you're going half a block away, without locking your front door. Remember I said, my people in the area are, they're victims of opportunity. OK? So, when people see you leave... There are people always looking at you. And, they see you leave, and you didn't lock your door, as you're going in one direction, he's going to come into your house. And, we rarely have situations where they break a door down. We rarely have situations where they knock windows to get inside to your house.

[Kraig]

A long time ago I studied in college different police courses, and a long time ago I was thinking about becoming a cop. One of the neat things, and it's still a thing I like to ask cops is: to me one of the most important things is public relations between the officer -- so many people go, "Oh! Police!" Which, I don't feel that way. I mean, if you're not there, Uh, oh! There's where the real problem begins. How do you see as far as this city and coming from Brooklyn or whatever. How's the public relations here in this town? How do people view police?

[Starr]

The majority of the people in this area view police extremely favorably. I work out of the neighborhood service office, and we're the ones who hand out the brochures about the Blockwatcher programs and the Neighborhood Watch programs. We have homeowners, business, Food and Beverage Association. We always try to get one officer every couple of months to at least attend one or two of those meetings. We have an answering machine in our office, so even if we're not there at 4 o'clock in the morning somebody can call up about a complaint. We will eventually get back to you with some type of an answer on what's going on. We have an excellent rapport with the people here. I mean, most of the people...

[Kraig]

It seems that way to me, not being a cop...

[Starr]

No, we really do. We have an excellent rapport. The people are very, very hospitable to us. I've been invited every single year to their Christmas parties, you know. They know that if they have a problem, they can come, and they will get an honest answer with us. And we always follow through on it.

[Kraig]

It's so important to have a good guy out there on the..., that visibility out there. You on your feet, walking around.. Ninety percent of the stuff stops...

[Starr]

And they do. You go up and down the streets. You know, I try to spend some times on the side streets, some times in the residential area, but I don't spend as much because I have a lot of businesses. This is a way that you can stop any shop-lifting. If I have a vehicle, I try to leave a vehicle one location. I'm going in the other, then I go back to the vehicle, and I move it. It's always looking like we have people all around the city out here.

[Jacquie]

I've heard from some people that Fells Point has a reputation of being complainers, and now that the area is getting wealthier, do you think that the city (maybe as a resident I shouldn't say this) is maybe catering to Fells Point more than some of these other neighborhoods?

[Starr]

No, I work with the other neighborhoods, and I know that they are doing as best that they can in all the neighborhoods. There is sometimes financial problems that the city has. We certainly don't have as many people, officers, as we have had over the years...

[Kraig]

That's what I was going to ask you, are there enough cops or...

[Starr]

I don't know if you'll ever have enough cops! Make the city 100% safe, you put a cop on every corner. Other than that, you're not gonna... How many people have said, all my life, Where were you when...? Well, very few people are going to rob a bank when the police officer is sitting outside. OK, you're not going to rob where we are right now because I'm sitting in here. But what does happen is, they will put officers in areas where they need them if there is a problem. And, as far as down here, we have a permanent officer. When I go to work, this is where I go to work. They try to work it out as much as possible to keep officers in this area here and other special areas. As far as complaining goes, these people have put hundreds of thousands of dollars into their home, and all of us have to live down here together. We have to have the bars, which are not going to go away and

the residents, which are not going to be moving. OK? And they all have to work together. And sometimes it works, and sometimes it is very difficult.

[Jacquie]

Now the city has an effort to encourage Citizens on Patrol organizations.

[Starr]

Yes.

[Jacquie]

And Fells Point has an organization, but it's almost one in name only. They have a newsletter and they don't do much else. Would you care to speculate as to why?

[Starr]

Well, I think it's like any organization. I mean, we've all been members of organizations, you know, and as the years go on, you just kinda lose a little interest, a little interest. And it happens on anything. I wouldn't want to put out the Citizens on Patrol as an organization that has just lost its favor. OK? Somebody has to take the reigns and somebody has to say, "This is the day we meet, and this is where we're going." Yes, I do know that certain groups, I mean, even the meetings I go to. You know, you go to some meetings and there might be very few people. Certainly, in the cold, cold weather people don't want to go out of their house, people don't want to walk in the city. But, you know, as the summer comes up, it gets a little warmer, you get more people out in the community meetings, and you will get more people walking on the citizens patrol.

[Jacquie]

'Cause I just kinda wonder if, you know, some of the need hasn't gone away as the area has gotten a little bit better, and that's why it's...

[Starr]

No, I don't think the need's gone away. No, no, I don't think that's gone away.

[Kraig]

We really still need that type of thing.

[Starr]

I think you need it. Yeah, I definitely think you need people walking on the streets. You need citizens to be aware of what's going on out here. I don't know that that need has gone anywhere. They still have a lot of problems. It's not any major problems. They have a lot of problems. I think those groups do some good.

[Kraig]

So you have any plans for running for governor you retire?

[Starr]

I think what I'm going to do, maybe when I retire, I'm going to take my winter coat, and I'm going to start heading south, and when somebody asks me, "What is that coat for?" That's where I'm going to stay. If they don't know what a winter coat is for, that's where I want to stay.

[Kraig]

We just got back from Aruba. Check that out. I'd go back down there. It's nice. No crime! What else you got? ...

[01:23:20:06]

[Jacquie]

Maybe you could just kind of give us an overview. What's Baltimore like from a Police standpoint. If somebody was watching this and trying to find out about Fells Point and they were from Minnesota, can you give them a perspective on what's Baltimore like? What's Fells Point like?

[Starr]

Baltimore, OK, it's an incredible city. It's a fun city. I was born and raised in New York City, and this is like a very large little town. And that's good, because people do know each other. We have our Little Italy areas out here. Since I been here, I have seen the Inner Harbor, which was not there when I came here, just become something that is absolutely, totally world-famous. Two beautiful stadiums, OK? A world championship football team. You know, we have a lot of things to be proud of and really enjoy. And one of the problems is people in the area really don't get an opportunity to see it. We've got the Constellation, Star Spangled Banner, Shot Tower. We've got all these fantastic things! You can take a walk over to Patterson Park, this incredible pagoda that they fixed up out there, OK, a beautiful area. You know, I mean very, very cold right now, but we've got an ice skating rink in there. We've got an ice skating rink down at Fells Point now. The city is just a magnificent city. We've got part of the Triple Crown right here in the city with the Preakness. The city is just growing by leaps and bounds. You know, there are a lot of people coming into the city. And this small, little area down at Fells Point -- these areas where there were just vacant lots six months ago, they have beautiful homes now. They've just done on Bond Street or Caroline Street these beautiful, beautiful homes out there.

[Kraig]

You know the place you are sitting right now is one of the only two authentic English pubs in the United States? One's in Boston and one's right here.

[Starr]

I did not know that. I really didn't.

[Kraig]

...It's not anywhere else.

[Starr]

Oh yeah!

[Kraig]

Lord knows, I've been in a couple bars. ... Andy?

[Andy]

For as long as you've been here, you've seen the neighborhood change a lot, does it still feel like home? Do the people still... do you still feel like you belong here?

[Kraig]

Are you still a New Yorker, or are you Baltimore now? You still sound like a New Yorker.

[Starr]

Don't say that!

[Andy]

... all these changes that have happened, does it feel like it's, you know... I think sometimes some of the long term residents here feel like their Fells Point is dead and dated. It's nice that all of these things are happening, but I think they feel invaded ...

[Starr]

I think that's true with everybody. When there's ever some kind of a change, you know... When there's ever a change or anything like that, people do feel, OK, that something is different, something is out of place, I didn't ask for this. And, you know, five years, ten years from now they will be the people who will think other people are invading them. Ah, yeah, so it's just, kind of it's a round robin, and it goes around. People do feel...

[Starr]

It's just a great area, you know. And most of the people do get along out here. You know, there are different community groups and homeowners groups out here, and people should join them and have an opportunity to voice their opinion.

[01:27:09:06]

[Jacquie]

Are there more groups here than other parts of the city?

[Starr]

There are more groups in a small area like this, basically because we have a lot of different things down here. There are not... Where there's a residential area, they only have a residential group.

[Kraig]

It's not a tourist spot yet, but it's...

[Starr]

Oh, this is a big time tourist spot!

[Kraig]

But, I mean, I don't mean, it's not sanctioned as the government saying it's a tourist spot, but it is a place... We have tourists, lots of tourists here.

[Starr]

We have lots of tourists, because of the boats who let them off right down at the foot of Broadway at two different spots. We've got two companies working...

[Kraig]

You see more tourists now than you did when you started?

[Starr]

Yeah.

[Kraig]

You see that going to increase?

[Starr]

Yeah, I think it will. I think that the boats have helped us that have been here for the last couple of years. The Water Taxi has helped us by coming down here. And they do have a lot more people, because it lets them off right there at the foot of Broadway, and then they kind of disperse throughout the area. And as they are dispersing, they're looking. You know, we have some really unique shops here. We have some incredible antique shops, flea market shops out here. We've got places that sell records... You can go in a store and get a CD. You ask them what a record is, they don't even know. So, we have that. We have incredible restaurants out here. We've got nice little pubs, you know. And, people walk away and they're happy! They'll come up to me and they'll say, "Where's to eat?" or "What's to do?" And there are brochures we hand out, and it really is an enjoyable area.

[Kraig]

This is terrible! I'm usually sharper than this; well, not really. Oh., she did Ed Kane's interview the day before he died! She was in his house, did the interview with him. He talked about the Water Taxi.

[Starr]

I might have seen that!

[Jacquie]

You might have seen an eight-minute version of it?

[Starr]

Yeah, where would I have seen that?

[Jacquie]

Maybe at the Preservation Society?

[Starr]

Yes, and at the end you said, dedicated to Ed Kane, or shot the last day, or something. There was something...

[Jacquie]

Yeah, right, he died ...

[Kraig]

We were at his house setting up. She said, I got to get him this afternoon. She didn't...

[Starr]

And, actually Ed was one of my characters. You know, God love Ed! You know? I mean, he enjoyed life.

[Kraig]

Anybody about Ed to add?

[Starr]

No, Ed was just a character. He was just a nice man. You know, we got along fine. You know, he was rough around the collar. There was no fine work on Ed, but he was sincere and honest. If he wanted to say it, he said it. And that was Ed Kane. We got along fine. One of my dear friends worked for Ed on his boats.

[Jacquie]

In your mind, what area the most memorable parts of Fells Point?

[Starr]

Memorable parts? I don't know if there is any particular thing. I really do like the Fells Point Festival, because it's one of the largest festivals on the East Coast. Hundreds of thousands of people come to the Fells Point area to see it for the first time. OK. I mean, there are people come from the East Coast come here to see it. Now the store owners don't do well because they said everybody's out in the street doing their business, but they said they do get a lot of business after the fact. People will come back and say, "You know I saw this in your window at the festival, and I didn't have an opportunity..." So, somewhere down the line, maybe two, three, four weeks later people do come back. But, the Festival is it. They have all kind of other festivals. They have oyster festivals here on the square. They have different things that are going on. They have things for the kids. They have music during the summertime. It's just what they do out here.

[Kraig]

If you were to change about this area, over the last twenty-nine years, do you see anything, seeing this stuff day-in and day-out, anything you'd change?

[Starr]

Put it this way, rephrase that: What would I have done? I would have bought homes. I would have bought every property I could have in the Fells Point area. Then I would be a rich man.

[Jacquie]

Now businesses are complaining that the business has fallen off a lot. What, you know, as kind of an observer, do you have any feelings about what's causing that?

[Starr]

Well, I don't know... I think sometime I think business has fallen off, but, you know, if you go to the businesses in January and February and part into March, they should say, "It always falls off." After that Christmas rush, nobody has any money anymore, you know. If that's what they mean, January and February, that's a norm. That's a norm here and that's a norm ...

[Jacquie]

No, this is more like over the past year or two kind of thing.

[Starr]

Well, you know, they would be the best barometer on what they have and haven't done business-wise. And I also think maybe business has fallen off in the entire city and entire country, too. They have said that business is low throughout the country. People aren't spending as much as they have in the years past. So, I don't know if that's just something general in the Fells Point area or if it is something indicative of the whole city and country.

[Jacquie]

And then I think you talked a little bit about homeowners and visitors, would you have any advice for the businesses in the area as a policeman?

[Starr]

Well, the businesses know that if they have anybody that they, police-wise, that they that is kind of suspicious, that they feel uncomfortable, that they should just go ahead and maybe just dial 311, "I have somebody in my store. I don't feel like... I feel uncomfortable. Can you try to send somebody." Now, there's a time, you know, from the time we get the call to the time the call goes to the call clerk, the time the call clerk dispatches it, to the time that I receive it... There is some kind of a time, like three to five minutes. You know, and people usually don't stay in the store that are going to do some harm. But I've had opportunities when I've gone to that store, and "He's no longer here." But he might be three or four stores down. And then you go and find out. A man has a right to be in a store, no matter how rough he looks around the collar. And I always tell my people, "If you feel uncomfortable, go with your feeling."

[Kraig]

I was in New York City, standing near Broadway. There was a Greek restaurant. I couldn't remember where it was at. Then I saw this cop. He was about your size, talking real calm. And I said, there's such and such a Greek restaurant around here. I've eaten there, and I can't remember if I go north or south. He said, "Oh, yeah, that's such and such. You just go down two blocks..." And as he was talking to me, he's slowly pulling his nightstick out. I didn't notice that there's this guy running down the street, just throwing things. And as he's talking to me real calm, he just whacks the hell out of this guy, just levels him out without even breaking stride. He says, "You're gonna really enjoy the food." You're kind of like that character. You're calm and stuff...

[Starr]

I am calm, and I do carry an old truncheon, which is a nightstick. I mean, it's an old, big one. OK? And I twirl it ...

[Kraig]

You haven't gone to the new lighter, plastic ones.

[Starr]

Well, we all have to have them.

[Kraig]

But, you stay with the old wood...

[Starr]

The old wooden nightstick, and I do twirl it, and I know people get a kick out of it. And I know I do it. And I don't even know I'm doing it half the time. So, it's just part of my old routine when I started out here.

[Andy]

You really have to get that...

[Kraig]

That's almost something that's disappearing in the United States, like I don't know what else...

[Jacquie]

Well, can we, um...

[Andy]

Are you really good with it?

[Kraig]

After twenty-nine years? Of course.

[Jacquie]

Let's pick up the table and move it and let him stand up.

[Starr]

I don't have it with me. ... But..., it's in my car.

[Jacquie]

All right. Here, I'll put the camera on pause.

[Cut. 01:35:03:07]

[Andy]

Wow! That is great! [Andy looks at nightstick.]

[Kraig]

You know, YOU KNOW, if this thing could talk!

[Andy]

How long have you had that?

[Starr]

Actually, it's a copy of another one that I broke. You don't want to know how I broke it.

[Kraig]

That's where the interview, where I wanted it to go. So, you broke the nightstick. What happened when you did that?

[Starr starts twirling nightstick.]

[Starr]

You want me to... Is that what you want?

[Close up of nightstick twirling.]

Then you walk... I didn't want to do that. I hope my head was turned the right way when we were talking. I was trying to talk to you, and then Jacquie asked a question, I was looking at you.

[Jacquie]

The only thing I've heard is that some people view looking directly at the camera as confrontational, so we want to avoid that...

[Starr]

What are you doing with Dan Rodricks?

[Kraig]

I was on his show a number of times with the Crawdaddies.

[Jacquie]

We just thought maybe a member of the press would have some different.... You know, you live here, you have one feeling. You work here, you know?

[Visual of nightstick twirling continues]

[Starr]

You need to speak to... Who's the one in the morning hour? What's his name? Does the morning ... Channel 13... Ron Matz. He did the morning thing, and he's very much in the Fells Point area. I mean, he goes down to Jimmy's.

[Close up of hand and nightstick cord.]

[Kraig]

He's outside all the time.

[Starr]

He's outside, but he's part of the quote-end quote community. He enjoys that. Him and his camera man.

[Kraig]

We ought to try to grab him.

[Andy]

I know you can't really tell us about specific incidents, but what's the most common application of the nightstick other than like the show of ...

[Starr]

Just to move people.

[Andy]

So, it's not a whack in the ankle or in the knee.

[Starr]

Does that happen? Yeah. It's a legitimate move, you know. If you feel threatened, you know, you have a right not to be threatened and not to be injured by anybody. So, you can do that.

[Visual is Starr's head while continuing to twirl nightstick.]

[Kraig]

I see, still, people, just very young kids, very confrontational, knowing you got the glock on, or whatever you're carrying and the nightstick and the radio, too. They forget how fast Motorola is. And they still try to push the...

[Starr]

And they still do that, and I just look at them and I said, "It's not going to go anywhere, and you're going to lose. So don't worry, but you're going to lose." You know? And, it bothers me, because when you get into court, that kid's gonna have a record for the rest of his life. Never be able to get rid of it: guilty, innocent, stet, non pros He will always have a record, OK? And in this day and age, where they're security conscious, and a man wants to hire you for a company...

[Kraig]

See that line there? Boom!

[Starr]

You're history! And he says, "Look! I was just drunk down at ..." "You're twenty-five years old, now. You were drunk down when you were in Fells Point. What are you going to do when you come working for me?" You know? "How difficult are you going to be?"

[Kraig]

Twenty-nine years.

[Andy]

Keep it going. That's great!

[Starr]

I can swing it around, but I don't want to do that here.

[Kraig]

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.

[Andy]

They won't mind!

[Starr]

Is that it? You off?

[Jacquie]

Yeah, unless there's something else you can demonstrate.
[Starr stops twirling nightstick.]

[Andy]

Shall I offer my knee?

[Starr]

There is something that I know to do, called bumping, and it looks really neat. You slam it down and it pops back. [Close up of Starr's hand holding nightstick, moving as if to slam it.] Again, I'd just would feel horrible if I chipped one of the bricks. Honestly.

[Cut. 01:39:18:15]

[Kraig]

You know what? You think that things bad, you don't ever want to get hit with that thing!

[Starr demonstrates snapping telescopic baton]

[Andy]

Now, is there a move where you ... is that part of actually just getting it out, or do actually ever you that for like whack?

[Starr]

You just use this for the whack. Replace this. And the nightstick is on you at all times. Again, when I would get out of the car, years ago, or go anywhere, this was in your hand. [Raises nightstick.]

This was just there. OK? They used to have slapjacks, OK, which was a piece of actually lead inside of a leather thing. And over the years they said just don't use that. That's not good anymore.

[Kraig]

"Sap gloves"? Do you still use those, the ones with the leather, and the lead...

[Starr]

We were never allowed to use those. Never.