

Andy Russell – Oral History Transcription

Interviewee(s): **Andy Russell**

Interviewers: **Jenifer Baker** (Deputy Archivist), **Tori Otten** (Microfilm Technician)

Date of Interview: 1 December 2021

List of Initials: JB = Jenifer Baker, TO = Tori Otten, AR = Andy Russell

Location of Interview: Warren County Garage in Lebanon, Ohio

Transcriber: Ted Hitchens (Records Specialist)

[Begin transcription 00:00:02]

TO: Did you already turn that one off? Okay – Today is Wednesday, December 1st 2021 and we are here for a Warren County employee oral history with Andy Russell. My name is Tori Otten.

JB: My name is Jenifer Baker.

TO: And then Andy, would you like to say who you are?

AR: Well my name's Andy Russell and I am the chief mechanic for the Warren County Commissioners.

TO: Perfect. So, covered your name, so when and where were you born?

AR: I was born in Wilmington, Ohio. August 31st, 1962.

TO: Thank you. And did you grow up there or elsewhere?

AR: I have lived my entire life in Lebanon, Ohio.

TO: Perfect. I feel very much kinship with that. What jobs did you have prior to working for Warren County since you were—

AR: Well, prior jobs before or employment here at Warren County, I worked for Russell's Auto Repair for four years during my high school years. So I was actually wrenching cars from my freshman to my senior year and that's how I ended up here at the county garage. We were actually working on the sheriff cruisers back in the seventies, we were rebuilding the transmissions in their Buick LeSabres. So actually that's how I ended up here.

JB: What year did you graduate from Lebanon High School?

AR: May 26th, 1981. And I started here May 27th. I graduated on a Sunday and I started here on a Monday. And I was actually hired as the assistant to the chief mechanic, and I worked with him through the summer of '81 and I can't remember what month, but he bought a business here in town and he

went to that business and I kept doing the job here at the garage, and they posted the chief mechanic job for Warren County and I took that job in October of 1981.

JB: So has the garage always been located here?

AR: The garage was originally started at Justice Drive at the sheriff's office. It was a two-bay garage over there. I actually operated the county garage out of there for twenty-five years. And then we moved and we've been over here over fifteen.

JB: Okay.

TO: So – we actually covered a lot of these – so you already said that the county was very different when you started versus now. Can you kind of elaborate on that? Like what did it used to be like versus now, at least for your department?

AR: Well when I first started, our main customer was the sheriff's office. And that's ninety-nine percent of my business was with them. And we did a good job, and after I became chief mechanic then we had an assistant too, so we had two mechanics taking care of the sheriff's office. They had a total of twenty-five cars and we were doing a good job for them. And the commissioners recognized that we had a talent and then we started expanding. So today we have forty different agencies, we have over five-hundred cars and I got a crew of five mechanics. So it went like from Mayberry to where we're at today and the whole county just grew and expanded until we got to the point where we're at now. So this is a- it's business owned by the county and I operate it.

TO: So there's forty agencies, are these all government-based agencies?

AR: They're all agencies located within Warren County.

TO: Okay.

AR: Any of the government agencies that have fleets of cars could approach us if they want and we do a lot (of) different government agencies here. So that's their choice if they want to take advantage of us.

TO: Yeah.

JB: Do you like the system they have today versus when you started?

AR: Yeah. Progress is good, the technology is good. The problem with it is trying to keep up with all the changes we've seen and the cars have really changed over the years, you know, they were all mechanical, not they're all electronic. So things change. And the cars are better today than they ever were in the past. You know, they're safer. They run better, they get better gas mileage and they're comfortable- and they're better – everything is better. Now I like- I like the old- I would like to go back there, but that's gone. And today where we're at we're doing a good job.

TO: I will say during the pandemic, I've noticed that the car industry as a whole seems to be struggling. Has that really impacted the way you guys have operated, like getting parts and things?

AR: Well, yes it has and we are having problems getting things. But we usually keep- we tend to keep spares for some of- for emergency uses. So we have extra patrol cars, we have extra water trucks, and we have materials in the garage that we need readily available so we can get the cars in and out.

TIME 00:05:00 MARK

AR: Because the cars and the trucks are no good in this building. So we need to maintain them and get them out because that's what they bought them for – transportation, not to be 'worked on.' So yeah.

TO: So what would be some of your daily tasks and duties here, and especially have those changed over the years since you now have moved up?

AR: Well, I've been the chief mechanic for forty years. And I actually- I oversee everything that goes on here, every repair that's done here. I have individuals that I use for different things, I have heavy guys, I have people that built patrol cars, I got people that do programming on the cars, and I oversee all that. So, and I actually participate in a lot of the work too so I'm actually on the floor a lot and I'm actually in here (*office*) a lot, and I have people that prepare things for me and then I approve them and send them on down the line. But I'm the last person in the chain-of-command that checks everything before it leaves the building.

JB: So when you started at eighteen, did you foresee staying in this position for this long? Or did you have a certain—?

AR: Well, it went by fast. I can tell you it went by fast. I'm a second-generation mechanic. My father still wrenches on cars today, he's eighty-five years old. So I actually work part-time with them to this day. But- you know what, when you're interested in something and you like what you do, I never really considered— I've had offers to go other places, but I've been my own boss for forty years and the only thing they've ever asked of me is to keep this running and that's what I've done, and I've had a good job- or a good time doing it too. I've worked for some great people – a lot of different elected officials, and not only are my bosses, they were my friends because once you build a relationship with them, they take you to the next level and I've learned so much from so many people. So it's been good. It's been a good career. I've enjoyed it tremendously.

TO: So you've talked about vehicles changing. Do you guys work on any other forms of machinery like we saw- some of the photos that you donated to us there were snowmobiles and helicopters in the photos...

AR: Yeah. Well, over the years the county's had a lot of different machines, okay. They've had snowmobiles, we've had boats for the lake, we actually had a helicopter – the first time I ever flown was in the county helicopter. It was- Jerry Finland was the pilot. He ran the- it was called Disaster Services back in the day- today it's called Emergency Services. That's the first time I ever flown in my life was in a Army surplus helicopter. And they used to have a helicopter mechanic come down from the State of

Ohio, he had to be certified by the state. His name was Juan Thompson – and I just remembered it because it was a unique name – and I actually got to work with him on the helicopter and he showed me how to check all the cabling for the rear rotor, he showed me how the ignition system worked – it had two magnetos. And it had two different ignition systems, so if one ignition system failed, they could switch to the other one so they didn't fall out of the sky like a rock. But I actually flew in that thing three times. Knock on wood I'm still here!

JB: Did you guys drive the snowmobiles frequently?

AR: I rode the snowmobiles more than any officer every did. Now every winter, we would have to get them- they bought those snowmobiles actually before I got here because they had that big blizzard of '78 (TO: *Oh yeah*). I was still in school, and I started here in '81 so every year we'd have to get the snowmobiles out and get them operational, make sure they were good to go. And some years we didn't get snow! But in other years we would and I actually have went on calls with the sheriff's office where they had to go out and do business with people in the winter, and they sent me with them to go out and help the officers operate the snowmobiles.

JB: How- when did they get rid of them? Do you know?

AR: You know, we probably had them twenty years – maybe twenty-five years. But they were '78 John Deere snowmobiles, there were a pair of them, and they were actually manufactured by Kawasaki. Those were fun! Those were fun to work with, so-

TO: So where would you just practice on them?

AR: Actually I'd take them over to Harmon Golf Course and I'd ride them on the golf course. As long as you didn't tear up the turf, they were fine with that.

TO: I never would have thought—

AR: I did that a lot.

TO: That's great! So, what are the main departments besides the sheriff's office that you interact with here? Like what are you other big clients, I suppose.

TIME 00:10:00 MARK

AR: Okay. I got the Sheriff's Office, Water & Sewer, Building Electrical & Zoning, the Commissioners' Office, Emergency Services, Deerfield Township, South Lebanon, Waynesville, and a whole bunch more.

JB: And the Records Center.

TO: Our one vehicle for the Records Center!

AR: You guys came a long way because you never had a vehicle forever.

TO: We had that Jeep Cherokee.

AR: Was it white?

JB: Like a cream color.

AR: That- that actually came from Emergency Services. That was actually a police-edition Jeep Cherokee so it was kind of a little bit unique. Frank Young had that before. He operated Telecom and – what else did he do over there? Emergency Services maybe.

TO: Okay. Alright, well I did not know that's where the Jeep came from, that's for sure. So how often do you get to interact with the public since this is a lot of the private—

AR: Well, you know what? The only time we interact with the public is when we're going out and maybe bidding for new cars, trucks, you know. Or we buy them on the state contract, or we're dealing with body shops. I deal a lot with insurance agents because we're constantly having cars wrecked – I got two or three out here that are wrecked right now – so I'll be dealing with insurance adjusters, I'll be dealing with body shops and then we have to deem a value on a car if it's totaled, and then we gotta make sure we're compensated for. And I work with Tammy Whitacre over at OMB (*Office of Management & Budget*) with that too. She handles all the insurance claims; I send information to her, and we get together so we can resolve whatever happened.

JB: So when the county purchases new vehicles, they consult you?

AR: What we do is- actually before we go out and purchase a new car, usually the department head comes in and says 'hey we need some cars, we're looking at these' and we go over specs and stuff and we make sure they get what they need. And we try to keep it at the minimum. The cars aren't plush, the trucks aren't plush. They're good, they do what they need to do and our goal is to get them in here, set them up – we build all our own police cars in-house. We wire every patrol car that was ever built here in Warren County for forty years. We do that up front right now. But we build the cars for them, we call it 'doing the tour of duty,' we track everything with the computer, we watch our expenses, and when it gets to a certain time we remove the vehicle from service. But our goal here is to get a vehicle in-service, make it look like something, represent the county well, do what it needs to do, and be financially responsible for it.

TO: So you do all of the paint and everything for the vehicles as well?

AR: Actually those cars are decaled (*TO: Okay*) and we do all our own decaling here at the garage. We actually have a room here that has all our decals here. We purchase them and we install them. It usually takes a day to mark one of the patrol cars. And it's actually like wallpapering (because) they're put on there wet and we dry them, and we have to take a squeegee and get the— It's time-consuming and it's monotonous, it's like— I've lettered so many cars, I don't care if I ever letter another one!

JB: So that's not your favorite task?

AR: Well you know what, it was cool at first. But after you do- I can't even tell you how many I've built. Hundreds and hundreds of cars, so. It's like- I've trained other people and they're doing a better job

than I ever did. But listen, things get better with time, the materials get better with time, so I trained them and they're gonna go to here (*elevates hands*). So they'll do the same someday for somebody else.

TO: Right. So when a vehicle goes out of service, what has to go into it to be able to sell? Like one of the vehicles—

AR: Well first thing we'll do is we'll remove any of our electronics, all our police markings or anything like that. We'll make sure the car is presentable, and what we do then is we put it on GovDeals and we write a description up and it's sold and that money goes back into the general fund.

TO: Okay. I always kinda wondered. So, what are some of the highlights of your time with the county that you think?

AR: Alright, this is one of the- When I first started- when I first started, I was making three-seventy-five an hour. I was just a kid and I never really had- you know, when I worked at Russell's Auto Repair in high school, I always had money because my father would just hand me money, but I never had a paycheck. But I always had money, so I went to work for the county and I'm making three-seventy-five an hour and I was working here about a year – year and a half – and I was the chief mechanic by then. And it hit me all of a sudden and I'm producing a lot of work, but I'm not making a lot of money. So I thought 'hmm, I need some help.' So I was real close with- I've always been real close with the sheriff's office, and probably closer with them when I was over there than I am now because we're kinda separated.

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AR: But I thought 'I need some help.' So I can walk in and out of the sheriff's office and the jail like my house back in the day. So I walk in behind this desk (*points to office desk*) – this is the original desk of the sheriff's office – and Bob Dalton was the sheriff. I said 'I need to talk to you' and I'm sitting where you're at now (*points to Tori*) and he goes 'what can I do for you' and I said 'well, sheriff, I need some help.' He goes 'what is it.' I said 'I need a raise' I said 'can you help me.' And he goes 'sure.' He goes 'how much you looking for?' And he had- he was a husky man, cigar – and he's rolling it – he goes 'how much you want?' I said 'I want a dime or a nickel.' And he looked at me and he laughed and he goes 'you don't want a dime or a nickel' and I thought 'what are you talking about?' He goes 'you want a dollar!' My eyeballs got that big around (*motions with hands*) and I thought 'really?' He goes 'yeah I'll see what I can do' because they were meeting with the commissioners all the time. And back in those days, the commissioners – mainly one of them, Dave- what's Dave's last name? Dave – I'll think of it here in a minute – would come up here to the garage and he'd check on me, see what he was getting for his money. And we got to be real good friends. And I was in the garage working one day and said 'I need to talk to you' and he goes 'what is it' and I said 'I need a raise' and he said 'how much you want?' I said 'a dollar.' He goes 'who you been talking to?' I said- I said 'the Sheriff.' I got thirty-one cents. I got thirty-one cents and I thought I was living high on the hog. I only wanted a dime or a nickel but I ended up with thirty-one cents. So that's kinda how it started out and that was fun. I worked with Sheriff Dalton for six years, Sheriff Collins for six years, I worked with (*Sheriff*) Tom Ariss for sixteen years, and Larry (*current sheriff Larry Sims*) I think is going into his fourth term, so he's almost at sixteen

years. But I'll be out before that, but I've always worked close with them. If you take care of their cars, they take care of you. And I've got some really good friends there and I've done a lot of work with them over the years, and something I wanna show you (*reaching for old license plate*) – this is off a 1979 Buick LeSabre. And I worked on this car back in the day and the deputy actually autographed this and gave it back to me. I usually give these to the deputies when they retire a car, and I worked on these cars for thirty-five years. And he's since passed away and was one of my best friends in the world. So – Bill Spurlock. Not great man, great deputy and he just lived up here on top of the hill, so... That was- that was- that was good. I enjoyed that. And- I don't know, I could go on and on and on. I could tell you about different things that, you know, but—I don't know where to start, whatever you want to ask me... But when we moved over here, they didn't have no- they never had any money for furniture and stuff for us.

TO: Oh no!

AR: So uh, you know, it's a garage! You know, we just need something to operate but this desk that I'm sitting at was actually in the sheriff's office for forty years (*shows desk panel signed by Tom Ariss, Warren Co. Sheriff 1992-2009*). The sheriff- the sheriff signed this and he gave it to me, so what's funny about this desk- what's funny about this desk is this is the desk that the deputies – when they were in trouble – they would pull that out on the other side of the desk, there's a thing, and they had to sign these papers when they were getting wrote up for banging their cars up and stuff. It was all good, and they all worked together good for years. It's kinda ironic that this ended up in here.

JB: So how long had the sheriff's department been there when you started?

AR: Okay that- that S.O. was built I think in '74 or '75 and you know what's ironic about all that? That was a Democrat sheriff. And that was the last Democrat I believe to hold office in Warren County. So he actually got that complex built. His name was Roy Wallace (*Warren Co. Sheriff 1969-1981*), he was a three-term sheriff. He lived out here on Hart Road and he got beat on his fourth term by Bob Dalton (*Robert G. Dalton, Sheriff 1981-1986*) that was from Franklin, he was Franklin P.D., and he ran as a Republican. And I came- Dalton came in January- I believe January of '81 and I showed up May 27th, 1981, so I came here right after they'd taken over and uh- it uh- it was good, it was like- like I'm telling you it was like Mayberry. You know, everybody knew everybody. I knew everybody on which watch they were on. They had three watches – first watch, second watch and third watch. And back in those days, they have a North Unit, a South Unit, and they'd have whoever was in charge going north and south. So at one time during the day or second watch or third watch, there's going to be three people on duty. Today it's totally different. There's patrol cars all over the county. So it really- it really grew.

JB: Right. We interviewed a gentleman a couple of years ago who grew up in Lebanon and he said like, prior to that jail being there, like complete darkness out in that area. And then like, once they built the jail- or the sheriff's office- it was like lit up (*AR: Right*) like out in the distance sort of situation.

TIME 00:20:00 MARK

AR: That- That was called the county farms, I believe, back in the day and the old East Street building was there. And they built the sheriff's office first and the courthouse. Now what's interesting about all this – the old jail down on Silver Street – on my mother's side of the family, she was a Brant. Two of my grandfathers were sheriff of Warren County, Morrow Brant (*Warren Co. Sheriff 1921-1925*) and Alfred Brant (*Sheriff 1925-1929*). And the Brants hardware store was purchased I believe in 1929 out of the sheriff's sale. So Alfred Brant was Sheriff one term, he bought the hardware store here in town and it's been- it was in that family for ninety years until it was sold here recently. But that was some connections- my grandmother used to be the matron at the county jail on Silver Street. And her three brothers- well that would have been my great-grandmother that was the matron. But my grandmother and her three brothers – Dick, Zane, and Dan and her name was Marjorie – lived in the sheriff's office. They had a jailbreak down there, she told me, they had to hide under the couch as children there. But they actually lived there for four years.

TO: I never honestly contemplated what happened in the jailbreak because we were told by Vance and Mariam Satterthwaite about how they had – what did they refer to them as? They had certain individuals who were in the jail like—

AR: Trustees?

TO: Yup. And told us about them and then how they wandered to like the stores to get stuff. I never really considered what a jailbreak looked like.

AR: The jailbreaks were probably hardened criminals. But your trustees were locals that you knew that kind of got in trouble once in a while. And when I was over on Justice Drive, they had trustees out and heck, we knew them. They have to go in jail at night- well I won't tell you his name, but I had a gentleman that I was acquaintance with that got locked up in the jail, was an excellent mechanic, and he worked with me that summer – I think it was 2003. And he worked with me that summer and he said 'I love the work, enjoy the company' he goes 'but I hate going home at night' because he was in jail. I can't- I don't know what for, but he did a nice job for us.

TO: Well that's good!

AR: So I guess he got rehabilitated and became a productive person in society.

TO: Well then if your mom's side has been in the county at least for that period of time, how long has your family been in Warren County? I know you said you're born in Wilmington...

AR: Well I think ... There were no hospitals in Warren County. Okay? I think there was one downtown in Lebanon and I can't remember what the name of the building is. It's kinda caddy-corner from The Golden Lamb, but my parents- both my parents were born there.

TO: The Blair Brothers Hotel?

AR: That's it.

TO: ... Hospital, not hotel.

AR: That's exactly it. But my mom and dad were both born there, they both graduated from Lebanon High School and since then, that was closed evidently and different shops went in there and they took me over to Wilmington and that's where I was born with my brothers. So—

JB: Generations.

AR: Yeah. Oh, getting back to the question. I'm probably third-generation in Lebanon. I've got two grandfathers that are buried up here in the Lebanon cemetery. But what's interesting, I had a nephew here recently who did this ancestry.com and he traced our family history all the way back to the Revolutionary War. And over in Jackson County, I have a sixth- or seventh-generation grandfather – his name was Enoch Russell – he fought in the American Revolutionary War and the government gave him property in Jackson County and I've been over there twice recently this summer. I've taken my son over there and I've got a bunch of pictures of the tombstone and stuff and it's kind of ironic. And they lived there probably- that generation of Russell. But we went over there, we knew that his gravesite and stone were there. But what we didn't realize was a lot of his family was there too, so we found like twenty more (*grave*)stones with the name Russell on them. And it's real interesting because not all those were on ancestry.com yet, so that's still be fulfilled. But it's real interesting. So we've been in Ohio for at least a hundred years.

TO: So, have there been any memorable projects that you've helped with over the years? Is there something that really sticks out in your head?

AR: Well, basically all we did was automotive and stuff. We were always out-of-sight out-of-mind. But when they needed us, you better be there. But when we moved over here getting this complex set up, they bought this from Turtlecreek Township, and they got a great price on this building and modified the building and got it operational today.

TIME 00:25:00 MARK

AR: This garage is like an assembly line now. This stuff comes in and – usually I'm not backed up like this and I've got people off and this Covid stuff and- it's an assembly line. Vehicles in and vehicles out, so this biggest project we'd had in my timeline was getting this complex set up. This has been a great money-saver for the county. It's unique. The things we do in here most government agencies don't. These guys- these guys on the floor that work for me they're exceptional, very talented, and they really do good work for the county and they've saved them thousands of dollars. And the thing about it is the quick turnaround time that they get. So we get on a project and we're constantly building new cars and trucks. So I mean, those are other smaller projects but they weren't nothing big like this. We just set up two new dump trucks for the Water and Sewer Department. We probably build ten, maybe fifteen cars a year for the Sheriff's Office which includes South Lebanon and Deerfield so we're constantly building those. If you want, I'll take you up front and show you a couple cars that are being built. And there's hours and hours of work that go into those cars before they can go out of there. Usually when a patrol

car comes in, we have to disassemble it. All the interior goes out on the floor. We install our equipment and then we put it back together and then it's ready for its tour of duty.

TO: So if you have a vehicle that goes down somewhere, do you have a wrecker where you go get them or do you hire that out to a wrecking company?

AR: We do both. Sometimes we'll go to the vehicle and a lot of times we can get it going and bring it back. Or, I call a local wrecker company here in town, whoever is prompt and quick and can get the vehicle back to me so we can get the car back on the road.

TO: Gotcha. So switching a little bit, has anything significant happened – I know there has – within the county government during your time as an employee?

AR: Well the thing about it is, here in Warren County ... the county tends to vote Republican. So once an elected official is in office, they tend to stay there three to four terms and then they go on to something else or then they retire. But we haven't had any Democrats here in forty years. And it's not a bad thing. But we are operating well, all our bills are paid, our equipment is good and life is good.

JB: So just circling back, we've done a few exhibits on the various county buildings. Do you have any memories – this is prior to your time as an employee here – but- because they built all of the Sheriff's Office and stuff out where the old county infirmary is. Do you have any memories of that area prior to the Sheriff's Office being there, or even – so we're currently working on an exhibit on the old courthouse and we've done one on the old jail, like – do you have any memories of those in operation prior to all the newer buildings being in place.

AR: Well, I've been in the old courthouse several times because there was some different agencies in there down there on the corner, I guess it's Silver Street and East. I've been in there numerous times. I've only been in the sheriff's office – the old one down on Silver Street – one time. And I've been in the old administration building hundreds of times before it got moved up there. So I'll tell you what's interesting: When the new jail up on Justice Drive was built, the one that they're getting ready to probably demolish because they went into the new one, my grandmother took us up there for a tour. So I was actually in that building when I was probably seventh or eighth grade. And then I went to work there right after I graduated from high school, so it was kinda interesting. But what was weird the other day, Trevor from Facilities came over and got us and Nolan and I went over there because like I said, we always try to get hand-me-down furniture and shelves and stuff, so we went over to the jail. And now they're in their new jail and I'm walking through the old jail and I got memories of where people worked and everybody was busy doing their jobs and coming and going and stuff. Now it's all empty like a ghost building, it's like- It kinda brings back some memories that are sad, it's because some of those people moved on, they retired, some of them passed away. And that's the only thing that kinda gets to me. You miss those people you worked with. And you build a relationship with them and unfortunately we all grow older in life – I have too – so... I'm fifty-nine and I've been here forty years and I've had a wonderful career. This has been an ideal job, it's been close to home, I've enjoyed working on all the cars, and we got a lot of production here. So, it's been- it's been good.

JB: Do you recall when the Records Center was located in the Sheriff's? It was more the microfilm department, I suppose, operated out of the Sheriff's...

TIME 00:30:00 MARK

TO: Yes!

JB: ..Department?

AR: Well, I don't know about the records department within the Sheriff's Office. But the garage, the old garage over there actually has a gun range in it and it also had two rooms for evidence. So the deputies were constantly coming in there and they were training, shooting their guns. And we would be in there working and their a four-stall range in there and they would be firing their guns. And people would come in and they would do business with us and they would hear these guns going off and they'd almost hit the floor. Okay and it's like "you're safe, it's in a different room" and we'd have to explain to them ovwhat was going on. But they'd have the evidence room, okay, and they used to store marijuana in there. And it would be in there so long that it would dry out and it would actually— it would take your breath! And the rooms were only about as big as this office! And they'd leave it in there until they got a court order. And once they got a court order, they would have me take a 55-gallon drum and I'd take a torch and I'd cut the top out of it, take it out behind the garage, and Jack Whitacre was in charge of the patrol cars back in the day and he's also in charge of destructing the marijuana. Well Jack is a deputy sheriff and he's in his uniform and he'd go out back and he would burn for days! They would burn marijuana. We used to burn that out behind the garage. And people would come in and they would try to do business ... (*indecipherable*) ... "What are you guys doing?" Well we're working, what are YOU doing? And they'd "what are you doing" Well, we're working! And we'd say "why don't you go out back" and they'd go out back and they'd see what was going on and they'd start laughing ... That went on for years. And something else I used to do that was real unique: The Sheriff's Office would take weapons from people and then they'd get a court order and have it destroyed and they would bring it out. One day, Mark DeVilliers (*spelling?*) and I cut guns for one day. One solid day we cut guns up and knives and swords and hatchets – destroyed that for one whole day. And something else happened that was really funny: They had these gambling machines they used to seize all the time. Once they got the court order to destroy it, a deputy would come out and I told Jack, I said "Jack..." Jack Whitacre, I said "There's some coin in that." And he didn't want to fool with it. I said "Jack there's some coin in that." And he said okay. Well anyway, he had to get a five-gallon bucket because it was full of quarters and it had four-hundred dollars worth of quarters and he had to take it over to the treasury, or the auditor's office so they could deposit it into the general fund. So we used to do that kind of stuff all the time too. Oh, and I'll tell you something else interesting. A lot of times when they would seize a car for a case, we would disassemble it for them, you know, so they could take whatever parts they needed and send it out to the crime labs and try to pull stuff, whether it'd be blood, fingerprints, or stuff like that because – you gotta realize the deputies- some of them are not mechanically inclined. And you have to figure out how to take the steering wheel off for a door panel and stuff like that. We did that stuff for them all the time.

JB: Did you warn people about the shooting range?

AR: Actually, no! I actually got a charge out of them, watch them jump a little bit then I'd tell them to calm down. But what was neat when they were shooting in the gun range, the bullets would be going down the block wall and you could hear them skipping down the wall. And then they'd hit a gun trap at the end which was all metal which would ring real good when the bullet hit it. But it was four stalls. They qualified all the time. I actually got to shoot with them numerous times. Something else I used to do for them over there: They- A lot of those guys were "gun guys," gunsmiths maybe. And I actually got to work on guns and stuff with them because I owned all the tools. I had punches and presses and stuff like that, and we'd actually take guns apart and modify barrels and switch barrels to different calibers and that stuff. I did that a lot with them too. So I'm mechanically inclined, but I'm not a gunsmith so it worked good for both of us.

TO: Seems to be a jack-of-all-trades that you experienced around here!

AR: I've done a lot of different things for the county.

TO: So, something specific about this location here- When Mary Haven still existed next door and after it shut down and they stopped using it for storage for like the Juvenile (Court) and such things... Do you ever remember- were there ever and people just randomly wandering the property that you noticed or... We've heard a lot and seen things about people ghost hunting the area, so just curious if—

AR: I have seen people over there doing some metal detecting. That's about basically to the extent- whether they had permission or not, I don't know because I kinda (*TO: Fair enough*) stay here taking care of business. Now if they would've asked me, I would have said yeah somebody's over there. You know a lot of times I'm sure there's people who got permission before they went over there. But something interesting years ago, probably thirty-five, maybe a little bit longer – Mary Haven had a bus. So they wanted me to work on the bus...

TIME 00:35:00 MARK

AR: ... So I put an alternator or something on the bus, no big deal. But when we took it back, we put it on top of the hill. Well they didn't tell me necessarily where they needed it parked so I took it up there, parked it, went inside, gave them the keys (and) left. Well some of the kids decided it was time to ride the bus down over the hill, so they flipped the bus into neutral and ran it down the hill! So from that point forward they said when you bring the vehicle back, it has to go here because they weren't watching the kids all the time and they were riding the bus down over the hill and not running (the engine). So they were ornery but nobody got hurt.

TO: Unexpected! So what's been your favorite vehicles to work on then since you've experienced other ones?

AR: I absolutely love working on the Fords. (The) Ford Motor Company has done more for Warren County than any other car company. They actually come in, sit down where you two are sitting, they talk to me about the cars, they pull information out on me – what works, what we can do better, all that

kind of stuff. They've helped me out over the years. They've given me vouchers which I in-turn turned into the county to knock their price off on cars. I've had the transmission plant down here in Sharonville actually give me transmissions for our vehicles. I was trained in Sharonville on the 470W transmission which I built hundreds of here in the garage and I've met some good contacts. Federal Signals helped us out tremendously. All our tires are purchased off a state contract, mostly Goodyear (or) Michelins. Those people come in here, the Federal Signal people come in here. I've had General Motors in here; they come in, they want to talk to you about the products and we've had a good mix of mostly Fords and GM's. We have some Dodge Grand Caravans that worked good for us at the Veterans office, and I would say Ford Motor Company is by far been more fleet-oriented and I like their product.

(Indecipherable) ...been trained here. I actually have access to their website. I can pull whatever information I need on those cars, that's been very valuable here, and it's been good working relationships with them. Something else that's neat here, we have a couple armored vehicles. I don't know if you've ever seen them. We have a new one on order. I spec'd this out (but) I won't get to see the end product because I'll be retired by then but it's coming. We have two here now – one's a Ford, one's a GMC. They're unique vehicles. I hope they don't have to use them but if they have a situation where they need them, they're ready.

TO: How many tires do you go through in a year?

AR: Well, we do – I can't give you an actual number, I'd have to look it up. But I know we do \$100,000 a year in tires here at the garage. The patrol cars probably get fifteen (*thousand*) to twenty-five thousand miles on the tires. Now those are pursuit-legal tires. They're soft-compound, they work good. Our new patrol cars are all-wheel drive, they're harder on tires. The tires have actually dictated how we do servicing on the cars. When different cars come and go – the old cars are two-wheel drive, they weren't as hard on tires as the all-wheel drive cars are because of all four wheels of tires. So we do more tire work, but the benefit of that, you know, we're spending more money but we're not wrecking the cars. Okay, they don't spin out. The old Crown Vics were like NASCAR – if they go around a corner, they'd spin out and they'd be in a cornfield. We haven't lost—You know, it was hard for me to switch from a car—we were calling the Explorers the “soccer mom vans.” Well believe it or not, they're great vehicles. The traction, the braking, it's superior to the older cars. But the problem with that (is) people resist change. But after you change, you look back and say “you know what? We're better off where we're at than where we were.” So it's been a big difference.

TO: Just out of curiosity then, what type of vehicle do you personally drive?

AR: I have all Fords. All Fords ... My dad is a Ford man and so I'm second-generation Ford and I enjoy them.

JB: Do you have any— What are your plans for retirement?

AR: Well actually, I'm going to work part-time at Russell's Auto Repair so I may be leaving here but I will still be doing this to a lighter scale because I'm gonna cut back a little bit.

TIME 00:40:00 MARK

AR: My body is sore. I've been on the concrete for forty years. I'm going to go over there- I'm a drag racer. I love racing cars. I'm going to continue to do that and I'm going to do some travelling. And someday hopefully I'll start enjoying my grandchildren which I don't have any yet, but I'm sure they're gonna be on their way! But no, I've had a wonderful career, really truly enjoyed it. I honestly hate to go but there's a time for everything. There's a beginning and there's an end. And when this door closes, another one opens and I'm grateful and thankful for the time I got to work here.

JB: Do you have any closing thoughts for your- for future people who work here?

AR: Well I've been grooming Nolan for awhile and he's going to take it to a new level, you know. I trained him, he's here, his next move is he's gonna be the new teacher. And he's going to work with these people and he's going to get people to do things that he needs done. And he'll oversee the whole operation. He'll have people that build patrol cars, he'll have people that have CDL's and work on big trucks, he'll have line mechanics ... It's just like playing baseball. We're all playing ball but there's all different positions- you've got a pitcher, a catcher, you've got a first baseman, outfield, shortstops- they're all playing ball but each position is a little bit different. And what we try to do here is let everybody do their specialty, but you gotta back up people when they're off. So you gotta make sure you can cover the bases when something comes up and people are off. So he'll be fine and he's a great kid, very knowledgeable and he's gonna do well.

JB: ... My last question: So it's very rare, I would say, in this day and age to stay in one position from, you know, start-to-finish until you retire. What do you think the benefits of you having stayed here for those forty years versus, you know, you said you've had other offers in the past like—What's the reason to have stayed here, and what are some of the things that you take away?

AR: This has been a great job. It's close to my home. Now I was offered some jobs at dealerships and stuff. But I enjoyed working with the people and I built a good relationship with them ... and another thing about- I've been here forty years and it went like (*snaps finger*). It went like that, so I'm gonna tell you two something: You're gonna be old soon and enjoy each day one at a time, because someday you're gonna be hobbling around like I am now! But I stayed here .. I honestly didn't think about leaving a lot at all. The first time I thought- I was busy working on things so it just developed. It went from a two-car garage to the facility you're sitting in today. We went from twenty, twenty-five cars to five-hundred—I really didn't have time to think about it. And you know what, over the years they adjusted my salary and they were fair and I didn't get rich, I'm not poor. And I won't be poor the rest of my life, so I enjoyed this. It's a good place to work. And you come in, do your job, and you work on everybody's car the same, you know, and they will love you. And you know, because they need us and I want our product when it rolls out on the street say "that's a nice vehicle, they're taking care of business."

TO: Well then I guess, my last question is going to be is there something that stands out to you as the best part of your experience of being here or your favorite thing from the past fifty years? ... Or forty years?

AR: You know what? Every morning I wake up at the same time. I don't have an alarm clock. It goes off, I jump up and get dressed and come to work. That's gonna be the hardest thing for me to break

because I'm so used to that. And actually, I guess it's just natural, I don't know. I told Nolan I said once I retire and they turn my badge off, my swipe cards, I said I'm gonna come out here and I'm gonna be outside of the fence with my hands stuck on the fence hollering "what are you doing in there?" So ... I've enjoyed this, it went fast. Time goes by fast. I wish it would slow down a bit. But no, this has been great. I'm tickled to death that the different boards of commissioners funded this because I've worked for- I don't know how many different commissioners over the years. They own this; I just operated it.

TIME 00:45:00 MARK

AR: And I come in, do my job and do what they ask of me. You know, they gotta have product out there to do services for the county, for the people. That's what this is, this is for the people and it's saved them thousands and thousands of dollars. They could not sublet this and saved money and kept the control on it like they have because we know what we're getting. We know what we got. And you know, there's a lot of people that will have automotive problems that they couldn't take them somewhere and get them fixed because they don't know how to explain. They can explain what's going on but they would have no idea if it was getting fixed correctly. So we're a safety net for them to make sure they're getting what they're paying for. So, it's been a wonderful career. I've enjoyed it. If it wouldn't be for people like you that have vehicles, we wouldn't be needed. So that's pretty much it in a nutshell—I could tell you all kinds of things, but I don't know where to start. I've had- I've seen some really neat things here over the years. The growth – watching Justice Drive grow over there. Used to ... those were two just grassy areas out there and then the Administration Building was there. I was here before the pond was in. The school has moved – they tore the old school down and built one behind it. They've added on the Sheriff's Office, the old building once. They've added on the courthouse several times. In the basement of the courthouse is Telecom where dispatch and stuff- I can remember when that basement was open and there was a MASH hospital in there for emergency use. So if there was disaster, they could operate that MASH hospital over there at the county somewhere. It was complete with tents, medical equipment, all kinds of stuff.

JB: It was like essentially a fallout shelter.

AR: That's exactly—it was open. I can remember when it was wide open. I was at one time or another in all the buildings because everybody had a car and you were going over there and getting their vehicles and you see this stuff, and it was interesting how everything worked.

TO: Interesting. I've never thought about what was in the basement beforehand.

JB: Anything else you would like to add?

AR: Well I appreciate you two coming over. I wish I could pull more stuff off my brains because I seen a lot of stuff. I'll tell you something that's been interesting: Some of the cars and stuff that have come in here, they were shot up and stuff and we had to work with the sheriff's office on them to... so they could build their case that they were working on, or something like that. And it's amazing what a bullet will do to a car. So when a bullet hits a car, it fragments and the energy just disperses in all different directions. And when that metal is going through the car, it destroys all kinds of things. So if you ever

get a car shot up, just get rid of it. It's not worth fixing! Today's cars got a lot of plastic in them. So once a bullet goes through there and it starts hitting the dash and HVAC system, it's just destroyed. So that's just another tidbit that we did over the years. I used to go to the lake when they'd patrol the lake. I been on the lake patrolling with them on the boat. I've been on-call. I'd go on calls in the patrol cars. I quit doing that because I could see that wasn't healthy. So I used to go on calls with them. And I used to be able to walk in and out of the sheriff's office and the jail. I used to go in the jail- they would bake cookies in there. We would help the cooks out and they would bake cookies for us and I had a great relationship with them. So it's been good.

TO: Well it sounds like you've led a very fulfilling and interesting life here at Warren County.

AR: Well I've enjoyed it tremendously and I'm very thankful, and I've had a wonderful career here.

TO (*to JB*): Do you have anything else?

JB: No I don't think so.

TO: Well in that case, Andy thank you so much. This has been wonderful, and I am going to conclude the interview. Thank you.

AR: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

[End transcription 00:49:22]