

# 100 MOMENTS

## THIS IS WHAT THE DCI MEANS TO ME

By John Tinker (1968-1993)



1977: JOHN AT THE FBI  
NATIONAL ACADEMY

I have been asked to write about the ramblings of an old agent, which I am - very old. I'm not going to talk about old homicide cases that still keep me up at night or about going to a family's home at one in the afternoon on Christmas day and being met by a small boy playing in the snow telling me that he was waiting for his dad to come home so they could have Christmas. I was there to tell his mother that her husband would not be coming home because he had died during the night. Or telling a father his twin 9 year old daughters were murdered while staying at a friend's house during the night, along with the friend, her son and a daughter. But, I would rather talk about a

band of brothers and sisters whom I have had great pleasure to work with for over twenty-five years. The best of the best.

Back in the day, when I was working out of Des Moines, we usually processed our own crime scenes. We would dust for latent prints, photograph everything, attend the autopsies, do the photographing there, and collect any possible evidence. It was a great help when the crime lab started. We could just start with our investigation right away.

You might be working a burglary case in Dubuque and go into the office on Monday morning, then being asked by the director, Bob Blair, what you were doing. When you told him you were headed to Dubuque to work on an old burglary case, he would tell you, "on the way, stop in Sioux City and help them with a burglary that they had".

I believe, in the early 70's, Tom Hopewell and I along with other agents, were assigned to work with Richard Turner, the Attorney General, who was launching an investigation

into price fixing by the major oil companies. We would get into his office before 9 a.m., when he usually got there. He always had a bowl of pistachio nuts sitting on his desk. They would be gone by the time he got there but he always had the bowl filled the next morning! He would always cuss us out for eating all of his pistachios. The day after the oil companies settled out of court with the state, he came into the office with a buzzer in his pocket and a phone receiver under his suit coat. He rang the buzzer, pulled the receiver out from under his coat, and said, "But Judge, we expect more from Standard and we expect to get it". This was an old saying Standard Oil used for advertising. It was during this period of time that gambling was illegal in Iowa. He had agents raiding churches, fire departments, and other social organizations who were conducting annual fund raisers. I believe he did this to force the legislators into changing Iowa's gambling laws. One such raid involved the Catholic Church in Dubuque where the priest was arrested.

I recall assisting on a case in Eagle Grove, Iowa when the Chatterbox Café blew up and burned, killing a number of people. A number of agents from the lab, Fire Marshall's Office, and DCI spent several weeks sifting the rubble through screens. All of the rubble had been moved several blocks from its former location. We were able to identify all of the victims, but one, who was

a waitress. We never found any evidence of her existence. The cause of the explosion was determined to be a gas leak in the kitchen of the café where we believed she was at the time of the explosion.

When you were working out of your area, and another agent heard you on the air, he would always call to get together for coffee in between. If you were out overnight, you usually ended up staying with that agent, or another one in the area. I remember going to their kids' school programs at night.

If you needed help fixing something at home, agents were always there to assist, whether it was painting, pouring a concrete basement in your home, building a garage (those nail guns are very dangerous), or whatever. We would also get together for cookouts, holiday parties, and super bowl parties at different agent's homes. Everyone was there to help each other.

I recall calling an agent in Davenport to go to Ft. Madison for a homicide case. He said he was on vacation. I told him I didn't know that. I would find someone else. He said, "I know those agents are busy down there. I will go".

I also recall being sent to Iowa City to assist John Jutte with a riot at the University. When I was a short distance away, I went on the radio to ask Jutte's location. He told me, and asked who was with me. I said, "No one. You only have one riot, don't you?" There

was a long pause, and I heard a number of troopers clicking their radios and John said, "10-4"! I think it was during this riot in Iowa City that the troopers and agents had taken over a motel to stay for a few days. During the evening, one of the troopers ordered a number of pizzas to be delivered to the motel and he had the bill sent to Headquarters in Des Moines. When they got the bill, they were very upset, but they paid it!

When I was working in Des Moines, I had a television in my office to watch CNN for any breaking news. Tim McDonald would wait until I was on the telephone, and come into my office and change the station to cartoons. He then would go out and tell anyone else he could find that I was in there watching cartoons knowing the television was too far from my desk to change the station back.

After twenty-seven years, we still keep in touch. A number of us have vacationed during the winter in south Texas in the same general area, and end up getting together for a few days.

A band of brothers and sisters who would do whatever they can to help each other.

This is what the DCI means to me.



JOHN ALONG WITH COWORKERS TURNED  
FELLOW RETIREES:

Back row (L-R): Denny Smith (1977-1998), John Blessman (1977-2004), John Tinker (1968-1993), Terry Hoil (1977-2002), Robert Pontious (1970-1998), Dar Chapman, John Jutte (1968-1991)

Front Row (L-R): Warren Stump (1957-1982), Tom Ruxlow (1967-1991), Gary Marker (1977-1998), Wayne Sheston (1965-1988), Gene Meyer (1973-2006), Ron Makin (1966-1994)