

TAPE # JK 001
Joe Keenan, #001
November 7, 2004
JIM WHITAKER, Producer/director
PROJECT REBIRTH

01.00.03 PICTURE UP

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : Where are we now in terms of the process with the documentary?

01.01.03 JOE KEENAN : Where I think we are now is I, I think on this level, we've formed uh, a friendly relationship (~I~) between myself and, and, and your group. When uh, anybody calls the house uh, my wife or my kids will tease uh, your friends are calling again (~I~) yeah. but uh, so I, I think we, we get along. We have uh, a, a good relationship, but I just don't know where we're going.

01.01.30 Uh, I don't know how much more I have to offer. Uh, I, I came here thinking you wanted to hear my story about 9-11. and I tried to tell that with my feelings, but now I'm starting to understand that's not really what you wanted. You wanted that in relation to how that affected me as a person or how my personality before that affected how I behaved uh, during that uh, 9-11 time to, which was a whole year.

01.02.04 Uh, still I feel that uh, (~I~)

JW : It was some of the before and some of the after, but also what your involvement might have felt like afterwards.

01.02.33 JOE KEENAN : Well, I felt uh, when it was over, when uh, a lot of people were involved 100%. But for a short period of time. I was involved for a long period of time. We went from September all the way through July. By the time July came, we were worn out. And we were ready to move on to our next job or our next assignment or our next task, whatever that, what ever that was.

- 01.03.00 And my particular case, that next assignment was to leave. I had decided to retire, for a number of reasons. But 9-11 was a major part of that, but for a number of reasons I had decided that I was going to retire. And it was time to move on to the next, next story. People who I feel that people who are involved uh, traumatically or completely immersed for a week or, or for 3 days or for that two or three hours that it was happening, it's still really vivid in their mind.
- 01.03.39 Because whenever they think of it, they think only of that. When I think of it, I think not only of that, but that ended uh, right away. And then we had a job to do, to do in relation to uh, uh, the buildings coming down and, and there was a lot of work that had to be done, and we moved on to that part of it.
- 01.03.59 So my, my memory of it or my feelings, I guess would be the opposite of a funnel, where in the beginning it was really large and, and a lot of things were involved, and then it started to come down and get smaller and smaller and smaller. And at the end, when we were going to work and we were going to Staten Island, I don't know if we as we were driving there every morning, if we were thinking about where we were actually going and what we were actually doing.
- 01.04.30 It sort of had become part of our job. And it, it, there's a time to move on, there's a time to leave it. Well, it, when we finished, I don't think anybody up there said let's come back tomorrow. Everybody was ready to go home. And (~I~) and that's the way I feel about it.

JW : You said, right now it sort of was like that.

- 01.05.03 JOE KEENAN : I guess I could feel it coming. Uh, (~I~) Do I still have strong feelings about it? Absolutely, and I don't think anybody who was here that day will not ever have strong feelings about it. But they're not as painful now. Now they're uh, they've developed into political opinions and what we should do and what we shouldn't do.
- 01.05.27 Where back then it was pretty much what happened to us and how, how could this possibly have happened and uh, what are we gonna do about it, and how are we gonna fix it and uh, how we gonna help people? And, and now back then it was actually more people or more personal than it is now, more people-oriented or more personal than it is now. Uh, when it

happened, I don't think we were really thinking about war and uh, international political ramifications.

01.05.58 We were thinking about holy mackerel, what happened, let's, let's uh, let's see what we can do. Let's uh, get to work and, and fix this. And now it's developed in, that, that, the bad part, you know, your memories uh, the bad part of your memories of an incident start to fade and typically with the police department. Uh, you see a lot of things during your career. And as you move on and you go back to your, your reunions and you meet your friends, you only talk about the fun you had. You don't talk about the bad things.

01.08.30 You remember the funny things, hey, do you remember when Joe Blow did this? And everybody laughs. Uh, so that might be and I don't mean to (?) trivialize it anyway, but that might be where uh, where I am right now. I'm starting to fade away and my memory, it, it's something that happened to us that made an indelible mark. I'll never feel differently about it. It's just not off, just not my focus anymore.

JW : What is your focus?

01.07.01 JOE KEENAN : I don't, I'm not exactly sure what my focus is now. I'm uh, I'm enjoying not having a focus. I'm, another thing, but I have to keep relating back to the police department, because that's, that's what I am. That's uh, what I did. One of the first questions you'll ask another police officer when he retires is uh, uh, do you miss it? What's different, what do you miss the most? What, what you know, how you, how are you adjusting?

01.07.29 And I think that I found, when I, when I, when people ask me what's, what is the most different now? I pretty much say my freedom. I can't believe how much freedom I have and I'm starting to enjoy that. I'm, I am enjoying it. I, I've stopped starting to enjoy it and I'm enjoying it now. Uh, when we, when we were working, whenever we wanted to do something, whatever it was, if it was family, if it was work, if it was personal outside, you always had to plan it. You always had to, ok, I can do this Tuesday at 3 o'clock.

01.08.01 I'll meet you Wednesday night and then all of that was subject to change if something came up at work. Now if I'm sitting in the house and you call me and say uh, Joe, you want to meet me at 2 o'clock? I can get up, get in my car and go and meet you at 2 o'clock. It, and that's a hard thing for a cop (LAUGHS) to get used to, that kind of freedom. So that's what I tell

people. Uh, it was the, the biggest adjustment, and you have a fear of that in a way, because you, you relate that to value.

01.08.33 Am I valuable anymore? Uh, do I have a function? I got over that (LAUGHS). I don't need a function. Uh, I'm, I'm enjoying just being able to do whatever I want, whenever I want. And uh, I like that now. I didn't know if I would, but I do.

JW : Did that come quickly or slowly?

01.09.00 JOE KEENAN : It came all of a sudden. For the first three months uh, my last day at work was New Year's Eve. So I, I always joke with everybody, I said, the city threw me a big party, a retirement party in Times Square. And then the next day I was out. And when you're out, you're out. There's a, there's a definite, definite separation. And probably I retired at the worst time of the year. You shouldn't retire in the winter. Because the winter is grey and dreary and you're stuck in the house and you watch everybody going back and forth to work outside the window, and you say, gee, what am I doing?

01.09.32 I don't know, should I be doing something? Uh, everybody in my job (?), everybody in my job who retires not into another job, pretty much goes through that, and it's, it's so severe for some guys that they actually go back and then they say what am I crazy? (LAUGHS) And they leave again. Uh, so for the first couple of months, it was a very big adjustment, but I tried to force myself to do stuff.

01.09.58 I got up every morning, I made sure that you know, I was out of the house and by 8:30, 9 o'clock, I was, I didn't want to be one of these guys who was still sitting around reading the paper in my slippers at noon. Uh, because that's a good way to get old. And, and I didn't want to do that. Uh, so those first couple of months took uh, some adjustment. And then uh, as the spring came and I started to get more involved in things, maybe the winter was the worst time to retire, but the spring was a good time, because uh, philosophically it rejuvenates you.

01.10.31 And I got out and I started getting into my baseball and traveling around, and, and I said I can do this. This is good. Uh, I really don't need a job. I promised myself I wouldn't work for a year. When I got out, 'cos I don't care what happens, I'm not working for a year. I'm

just gonna decompress. And then when the year was over, I said, I'm not working for another year (LAUGHS). I'm gonna decompress. (LAUGHS)

01.10.57 And, and that's where I am now. Uh, I got used to it.

JW : What about next year?

JOE KEENAN : Next year, I'm gonna not do anything, I'm gonna decompress (LAUGHS).

JW : Your refereeing was intense, and you are focused?

01.11.19 JOE KEENAN : Well, you know how I feel about that? And, and pretty much is the organization that it belonged to that does the work. Uh, we have to train to do that. That's not just some, something that somebody oh, I think I'll be a referee.

01.11.30 And they go and they buy the clothes and they go out on the field and they fake their way through it. That's not the way we do it. We got to go to school. I went to school for baseball and for football. And we were certified, an then we had to be state certified. And every year, we take tests to recertify. We have field tests. So we have to know our stuff. We have to, to be competent. And the way I look at it is, those kids practice it every day. They, they play on the weekend, they play on, you saw me yesterday, Saturday.

01.12.00 So those kids played on Saturday. They were off today, Monday they go back to school, they'll watch films. Uh, Tuesday through Friday, they'll practice on the field, and they'll work as hard as they can. And if their team is good, fine. If their team is bad, fine, too. But when we go out on that field, we have to give them back what they practiced for. It's not fair to them, it's not fair to the, to the game itself. Uh, to cheat them by not knowing what we're supposed to do and not being in the right spot at the right time.

01.12.29 And if you, if you were an official, if you are an official and you watched us on the field, you would see things that you wouldn't see if you weren't an official. You'd see us communicating to each other with hand signals, positioning each other. Uh, uh, (~I~)

JW : I was watching and it was interesting. You all have your own functions?

01.13.07 JOE KEENAN : We all have our own little zone. We have a, we work in cones. We all have our own responsibility and as it moves along the field, we have to stay within that, yet we have to be aware of where our partners are, in case something else happens. I happen to belong to a good organization, where, where everybody works that way. I don't know if I were to move upstate and some small town if, if the officials would be uh, I don't want to say as competent, but would be as interested in what they do.

01.13.34 Or if they would be just oh, it's Friday night, let's got to be football game. Uh, we don't, we don't approach it that way. (~I~)

JW : Please talk about Karen and your father with regards to the documentary?

01.14.05 JOE KEENAN : Well. I guess I, I, I followed in my father's footsteps and, and uh, Karen, my second daughter is following uh, in mine. It's, I don't know if it's something that you intend to do uh, or if it's just the atmosphere that you grow up in that draws you to it. A certain type of personality does this type of work.

01.14.30 Uh, do we have people whose personality is wrong for uh, doing it? Yes. Uh, and they either weave their way out, you know, they're weeded out or, or they find a little cubby hole to (LAUGHS) to hide in and, and they perform that function. Uh, (~I~) or they're placed in, right, right, they, they, a function is found for them (LAUGHS). Uh, but I don't think you can grow up in a police household and not have it affect you.

01.14.59 Because uh, whether it's your mother or your father who are a police officer, they're regimented and they bring that home, and uh, it, it's a big part of how they set up the rules for their kids, and their kids grow up in those rules, and they either rebel against them or they accept them. Uh, Karen and I had some uh, interesting times when she was 15, 16, 17. Uh, but we held through it, and uh, she surprised me very much when she came to me and told me she wanted to be a police officer. She had already finished college. She was out in the business world working.

01.15.36 And uh, she came one day and I think we discussed this, and she said uh, I want to try it, I want to do it. So that, that's interesting. So uh, we passed the baton now to her uh, so we've been, we've been doing this job since 1946 now. So we, we're pretty well-entrenched (LAUGHS).

JW : What about in terms of the documentary?

01.16.05 JOE KEENAN : Well, uh, in the beginning uh, I wasn't sure of where you were going and what you wanted. I thought you were interested in my experience in my relation to 9-11 (~I~) And I came in and tried to tell you how I felt about it and what we were doing and what my experience was. But now I feel that my experience in relation to that is over. Uh, just from the passing of time, we're separated for a few years now.

01.16f.32 Uh, I've uh, I don't know if emotionally moved on sounds too dramatic, but uh, as time moves, these things start to fade. They'll never fade in your memory if you were directly involved and they, and it hasn't. and there are still times where I'm extremely touched by it. But it's not as often as it used to be. I feel I've told you my story, in relation to 9-11. And I really, I'm really not sure what you want from me now uh, uh, of how much, how many more times I can say the same thing about how 9-11 affected us and what I did, and how it affected my home life, which it did.

01.17.12 I wasn't home for a year uh, almost for, you know, for 10 months I just wasn't home. I came home to sleep and I got home at uh, somewhere between 7 and 9 every night, had something quick to eat, in bed, up at 2, back out again, back to work at 3. So it did affect us. But that's been pretty much been put to bed.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : I can relate to your disconnect to the event. What about in respect to Karen and your other son, even if it's not task-oriented?

01.18.40 JOE KEENAN : Well, if, if, if we're turning now towards a story or a documentary about Joe Keenan's life in Brooklyn, (LAUGHS) Ok, fine, I understand where we're going then. Uh, if we're going to continue to talk uh, about how things are going with me uh, and, and my children, I can talk about that.

01.19.00 It's just that I still have in my mind how is this affected by, by 9-11. Because when, when you call me uh, or when Danielle calls me, I don't think about documentary, I think about 9-

11. Oh, these are the 9-11 people who, who are calling. Uh, so uh, maybe incorrectly I've pigeon-holed this uh, that way. If it's to be expanded, fine. I can do that.

01.19.30 Now I think probably (?) well, Joseph's in the police academy. Which is, which is uh, another story from a different story from Karen, which we can talk about if you want to (~I~)

JW : We can talk about whatever.

JOE KEENAN : But I think Karen's probably more of an extension of my involvement with 9-11 than Joseph is. Of, of course just (~I~)

JW : Why do you say that?

01.19.50 JOE KEENAN : Well, because uh, Karen was old enough to really appreciate my involvement when I was working uh, at the landfill and we were working downtown before that. I feel as a (?) partially as a result of that uh, it had an affect on her decision to become a police officer. I, I uh, it had to, it had to factor in. She lived through it, she was living here just like everybody else. She had friends in the building. She had friends uh, that were killed. So it had to factor in. Now of course, uh, as I mentioned before, her upbringing in this police environment, I'm sure uh, definitely had to factor, but this had to affect it also.

01.20.38 And now with her, with her boyfriend having been in Iraq, and pretty much looks like he's going back again, she's living this more now than I am. She's still involved, her connection is still there. Maybe her connection is starting, where mine has ended. Uh, she's not experienced the, she's not experiencing the everyday work at 9-11, but she's living through the, the effects of it.

01.21.05 Because now in the police department, uh, there, there's a whole line of different type of training uh, terrorist training that she's involved in, just like every other police officer. Not that she's particular, not that she's special, but everybody's being trained a different way than I was trained when I was her age in her position. And her personal connection with her, her boyfriend going back to the war zone, that has to, that has, she, she can relate to feelings that my mother must have had.

01.21.36 That I never really had. Even if I had been there, I wouldn't have been experiencing those feelings that she has. When my father went away to war, and all his friends went away to war, my mother and her friends were home. And they experienced whatever environment there was at that time, whatever those feelings were. Now Karen can relate to that, where my other daughter, Jeanine, can't because her husband hasn't been there.

01.22.03 So maybe this is affecting her more. I don't know if that makes sense, but (~I~)

JW : It does make sense. Did you ever hear of a connection between the war and your father's decision to become a police officer?

0122.30 .JOE KEENAN : No, I don't really think so, because uh, from what I remember my father wanted to be a police officer before he went away. And he was just waiting to go on to the police department when the war happened. When the war broke out. And then he, like everybody else, went to the war. So I don't think the war experience made him come home to be a police officer. Uh, but he did experience both of them. Uh, he, he was in the war and, and he was a police officer, but, but back then, everybody was in the war.

01.23.00 You know, uh, and, and all the police uh, all the men who became police officers when they came back had, had come back from some part of the, some part of the service. What I really was trying to refer to was my mother's feelings about my father being away. That Karen can probably relate to now, or related to last year. Uh, while her boyfriend was away, and now (?) most likely going back again.

JW : Does she talk to you about these terrorist training areas?

01.23.40 JOE KEENAN : Sometimes. Uh, I know that (~I~) I know the training that's going on, so sometimes uh, uh, I'll see her out, well, she doesn't, Karen doesn't live at home. She has her own place. So I'll see her out of schedule (LAUGHS). I'll, I'll know she's supposed to be working, yet she's in my house, and I'll say, you know, what (?) oh, we had training today.

01.23.58 We had a, we did a day tour instead of a 4 to 12. We had uh, terrorist training, we had uh, you know, uh, mobilization training. So I'll know basically what she's going through. We don't really talk about well, what did you do today? Uh, how are they training you? We

don't go that way. But I know what she's doing, uh, just by having a knowledge of where she is.

JW : It's got to be that way?

01.24.24 JOE KEENAN : Yeah, it has to be that way, they have to, they have to. (~I~) I have to understand what she's doing, just by the nature that I've been there, and they have to train, they have to train the police officers a different way than they trained us. We were uh, I don't know if we thought about it this way, but we were only (?) community-oriented when we came on. our job was the community we worked in. That's not the job anymore. You know, they have the community they work in plus they have to worry about outside factors coming into the community and what are we gonna do and how are they gonna be trained to uh, deal with that. That never was before.

01.25.00 It wasn't even an issue. We didn't even, it wasn't that there was such training and we didn't get it. It just didn't exist. (~I~) It was just a different game. Yeah. (~I~) Different day.

JW : Have you talked about her boyfriend being away?

JOE KEENAN : Well, sure. Uh, (~I~)

JW : This is personal, I know.

01.25.24 JOE KEENAN : Well, we don't talk, we don't talk, we're concerned about her feelings uh, about Vinny going away, but we try not to uh, get in, when (?) for instance, when Vinny came home. Uh, I told my son and I told my son-in-law and Karen, that's, that's her business. But I told him I says, look, leave him alone. Don't ask him questions, don't ask him silly questions. Don't ask what did you do, you know, uh, what did you see? I said, leave him alone. Let him have time to come home and, and get back to his routine.

01.25.58 He'll tell you what he wants to tell you. And what he doesn't want to tell you, you shouldn't ask. Just leave him alone. And that's pretty much the way uh, we dealt with that. I don't know if it was right. Maybe it was way off-base, maybe it was wrong in handling it that way.

But I still personally haven't discussed it with him. The only conversations we've had is, I'll say something along the line, do you (?) do you think you're going back? You know, what did they tell you, when are you going? You know, uh, do you have any idea what you're gonna do, where you're going? Uh, and we'll talk about that, but I've never said to him, what did you do when you were away?

01.26.30 Uh, you know, what did you do on Tuesday, what did you do when you were in Baghdad uh, I've never asked him that. That's, if he wants to tell me, he'll tell me.

JW : Do you think that instinct is (~ovlp~)

01.26.43 JOE KEENAN : Probably a police instinct, because I can see with other people, I can see other people asking him questions. And I'll, and I'll pretty much say to myself uh, gee, that's none of your business (LAUGHS). (~I~) Yeah, yeah, that's none of your business, will you leave the guy alone (LAUGHS).

01.26.57 If he experienced something bad, and he doesn't want to talk about it, uh, don't bring it up. Uh, he'll tell you the funny things. He'll tell you about uh, taking pictures with camels. Uh, I have ten pictures on my computer he sent home with camels (LAUGHS). I don't know why, but uh, apparently that was funny at the time. Uh, and if that's what he wants to talk about, fine. Uh, I'm sure he speaks to his father about it. I'm not his father. Uh, also if, if it was my son uh, maybe we'd have different questions.

01.27.29 Maybe we'd handle it a different way.

JW : How's Karen dealing? How are you experiencing the transition from daughter to police officer?

01.27.53 JOE KEENAN : Well I think if I can separate the fact that she's my daughter (~I~) and just, which is just really hard to do, and just look at it as Karen and her personality, I have to say I'm pleasantly surprised. Uh, she's, I think she's really, from what I can see and from what I hear from my uh, well-placed spies (LAUGHS) she's uh, she's doing well. Uh, she understands her job, she, she's a good worker. And uh, I think she has a good attitude. Attitude's a lot uh, your attitude has a lot to do with how you perform as a police officer. Uh,

everybody wakes up some days when they just don't want to do it, and you go to work and you just don't want to be there.

01.28.32 And it doesn't matter whether you're a banker or a sanitation man or a brain surgeon, some days you just don't want to do it. But if your overall attitude is good, which she seems to have uh, she seems to be uh, moving along. (~I~) Handling it well.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : Was Karen more middle-of-the-road?

01.29.02 JOE KEENAN : No, Karen was more than middle-of-the-road. I had to lasso her and bring her in a few times. (LAUGHS) She did her work, she was a good student, she did her work, but uh, she knew how to have fun, too. (LAUGHS)

JW : What about the transition of the year when you weren't home and her career choice to be a police officer?

01.29.35 JOE KEENAN : I don't know about a (?) complete surprise, but probably a 90% surprise. Uh, I know, I knew she had taken the test. Uh, but again (~I~)

JW : Did she tell you?

01.29.46 JOE KEENAN : Oh, yeah, well, I pretty much told her uh, that comes from that uh, civil service mentality. You never let a Saturday go by that you don't take a test. Uh, you know, 'cos you never know what's gonna happen in the future. And that's true. And, and that's true. A lot of, a lot of guys, I was a college graduate before I went on the job.

01.30.04 And uh, one day I'm standing there looking around and I say, gee, I don't have a job. I lost my job, what am I gonna do? So uh, we grew up in that type of environ, blue-collar environment. So I, I encouraged her to take tests, you know, federal tests and state tests and just as I did with, with, with Joseph. And then this sort of came out of the blue the day she said she (?) I think we spoke about this, where she said uh, actually what she said was, I've

been thinking about this, and it has nothing to do with 9-11, but I'm pretty sure I want to go in the police, I want to go in the police department.

01.30.36 And that was a shocker. The way she, because Karen is a, at times can be very straightforward. She just says what she wants to say. Uh, and uh, the, it was a surprise that day. And uh, I'm pretty sure we spoke about it although I don't remember specifically. I, we, the way we handled it was Karen this is a surprise.

01.31.00 Uh, let me have time to register that uh, let me think about this and we'll talk about it in a couple of days. And if uh, if you convince me it's what you want to do, go do it. And she convinced me. And (~I~) she went ahead and did it, and it's over two years now, and she's seems to be doing fine.

JW : How's your wife doing?

01.31.23 JOE KEENAN : I think uh, you know, it's hard to tell, but I don't think it affected her that much, 'cos she was used to it. I mean, she saw my father, uh, I know my wife since I'm 15, so it's not like this is a surprise. You know, so uh, I mean, she had an uncle who was a police officer, and, and my father and my, my uncles and my cousins, so she sort of understood a little, and then I did it. And it's now here we go again (LAUGHS), you know, now Karen's doing it. And uh, now my mother has a grandchild doing it. She had a husband and a son and now a grandchild doing it.

01.31.57 So here we go again. It's just gonna continue (~I~)

JW : What about your mother?

01.32.05 JOE KEENAN : My mother? She was uh, surprised, but happy. Uh, she said, do you think it's good for her? Do you think? I said, I think she can handle it. Yeah, she's smart. She knows her way around. She's tough inside. I don't mean tough I'll punch you in the nose. But she's tough inside. Uh, so I think she can handle it. And uh, she doesn't seem to have any problems with it.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.33.05 JOE KEENAN : (MID-STATEMENT) I'm pretty much covered from March 'til Thanksgiving. And people say to me uh, we talked before about uh, when you meet the other guys, what are doing, what are you doing? They, that's a big question, what are you doing, what are you doing? And I always say I'm doing nothing. Uh, and then I qualify it and I tell them from March to June, I do my baseball. From the end of May 'til the beginning of September, I do men's leagues, and then from September 'til Thanksgiving I do football and from Thanksgiving to March I'm a bum.

01.33.30 And uh, (LAUGHS) that's how I break it down. That's how I break down my year (LAUGHS).

JW : What will do you?

01.33.37 JOE KEENAN : I'm gonna be a bum. I'm probably gonna wind up painting the house and doing all those little honey do's. Uh, you know, the, the bad thing about your kids getting older is you no longer have one honey do list. I now have 3. (LAUGHS) I have one on my kitchen table, one on Jeanine's kitchen table, and one on Karen's kitchen table (LAUGHS). And now the girls are arguing, Daddy said he'd come here Thursday, and he's not finished in your house yet.

01.34.01 And I need him because I have to get this done. So (LAUGHS). So now they argue with each other.

JW : Your son joined the Academy? He's different?

01.34.18 JOE KEENAN : He's different. Uh, when Joseph left high school, he, he went to Xavier High School. And uh, when he graduated, he got some college offers to play ball. He was very good athlete. He is a very good athlete. He's a much better baseball player than he is football player, but football was his love.

01.34.37 He had some Division 1 scholarship offers for baseball, and uh, he didn't, he only had one Division 1 football offer. He uh, basically Division 2 football offers. And he uh, he took an offer to go to Kings College in Wilkesberry, Pennsylvania, which is a Christian Brothers

school, which a very good school. They're the people who own, I think they own 3 colleges. They own Notre Dame, I might be saying their name incorrectly. But uh, I think they're the Christian Brothers.

01.34.05 They own (?) Notre Dame, they own a place called Holy Cross, and they own Kings' College.

JW : Holy Cross in Indiana?

01.35.04 JOE KEENAN : In Indiana? No, not the one, not the one in Massachusetts. It's another one I believe in Indiana. And they, they have these three schools. So they offered him, they made him an offer where he could play baseball and football, because most schools, the coach only wants you to play one things. The coaches are very territorial. Football coach doesn't want you getting hurt sliding, and the baseball coach doesn't want you getting hurt being tackled.

01.35.34 So they really don't want you to play two sports. So Kings College said that he could play two sports. And when we narrowed everything down, the colleges and the, the quality of the schools and what the offers were back and forth, uh, we started narrow down, narrow down and, and Kings was the place he chose. He goes away, and what happens? He gets hurt (LAUGHS) He gets hurt playing football.

01.35.58 And uh, he was hurt badly enough that he lost his NCA eligibility. The doctors pulled his eligibility. There was a 3 or 4 month period where he would, he was being reexamined every 3 weeks, every 3 weeks. Finally uh, he got hurt in November, and I think it was around March that they pulled his eligibility, and they called me up and they said, look, the doctors feel he shouldn't play. Well, if he can't play, he can't play. That's all there is to it. I think they were, I think they were waiting for an argument from me.

01.36.30 Uh, I think they had a little New York prejudice where they thought I was gonna say what do you mean he can't play? But, but I didn't accept it that way. They, they uh, they kept up their end of the bargain for, as far as school was concerned, so I was happy with that. Uh, but uh, his eligibility was pulled. When that happened, I think he lost a little bit of his identity, because he had been playing since he was 7 years old. And he was the big shot in high school, you know, in the neighborhood and even though he didn't flaunt it, he walked a little bit that way (LAUGHS).

- 01.37.02 And then when he went to college and now all of a sudden he lost it, and now he's sitting in his room and all his friends are going to football practice. And he's sitting in his room and they're all going to games and to meetings, and it affected him. And he called me up and said uh, I want to come home. I don't want to stay here anymore. So he came home. And it sort of killed that next semester and then the following semester, he went to St. Francis in Brooklyn, and he was going to school there.
- 01.37.30 But I think he really lost his zeal for it. And he was doing it because he knew he had to if he wanted to stay alive. (LAUGHS) You know, he wanted to live in our house and have food, he had to go to school. So he was doing it, but he really didn't have his heart in it. And he had taken the tests, like I mentioned before, a Saturday can't go by without taking a test. And police department called him and he said I'm gonna go.
- 01.37.57 So he left school, he still has a year to go. But he left and he went on the police department. Now in his case, in Karen's case I would have said, don't do that. I would have said finish school. In his case, I still feel finish school, but I think now in, in his situation, it's good. He can always finish. You know, if, if he really wants to he has the next 20 years to finish. Uh, so it, I think it uh, maybe that identity that he lost a couple of years ago when he stopped playing football, maybe he's regained it in a different, different aspect now.
- 01.38.34 Uh, I don't know if that sounds too much like I'm trying to climb into his head, but I, as I mentioned to you before, he's, uh, I, I think he's gotten older in the last few months. I can see the way he's behaving. And he comes home, he does what he's supposed to do, he gets up in the morning without us having to chase him, which is good because he gets up at 5 o'clock, and I'd hate to be getting up every morning at 5 o'clock to make sure he's up. (LAUGHS) But he gets up and the night before he makes sure his uniform's cleaned and pressed.
- 01.39.00 And he gets up and he gets dressed and he goes to work. And he comes home and he does his studying at night. I told him, I said, if you had studied this much when I was paying to send you to school, as you are now, I said, you could be a doctor by now. And he laughed, he says yeah, I guess you're right (LAUGHS). But he, he wants to do this. So uh, if, if you want to do something, you do it. And he's uh, I, I think he's jumped into it. We'll see. You never know. we'll see, but right now, I think he's accepting it in, he, if I were his instructor in the academy now, I think he'd be one of my good students.

01.39.37 He'd be one of the guys I wasn't worried about, and I'd be worried about somebody else who might be floundering a little bit. But he has a good situation, too. He's not married, he's young. He doesn't have to worry about his family and his kids. He's got guys in his class, 32, 33 years old with kids. Those poor guys, it's hard. You know, (~I~) Yeah, yeah, when you come home at night and you have to study, and the kids are running around the house or they have to do their own homework, and uh, it's not easy.

01.40.02 But he has a, he has a good situation for right now. He's younger, he can come upstairs, go up in his room or go down in the basement with the computer and do his work. So he seems to be doing it. I got my fingers crossed, we'll see.

JW : How's the neighborhood?

JOE KEENAN : Yeah, we, we still live all next to each other (LAUGHS).

JW : How many houses does your family occupy?

01.40.23 JOE KEENAN : We have three houses together right now. Where I have uh, my house next to my house are my in-laws. And next to my in-laws is my mother and my sister. It wasn't always that way. Originally (~I~)

JW : Were the in-laws on the other side?

JOE KEENAN : No, no, no, no (LAUGHS).

JW : The in-laws far away?

01.40.39 JOE KEENAN : Sort of (LAUGHS). I have a little story about that, too. Uh, uh, my father bought the house there in '63, 1963. And that's where we, from 1963 on, that's where we grew up. Then I got married and I moved away. And then a house became available on the block. Actually before that, the people who lived next door to us decided to move to South Carolina, and my cousin bought that house.

- 01.41.07 Then uh, a few years later, I was looking for a house, we were ready to buy a house. And we're looking around in the neighborhood and wanted to stay in the neighborhood. And a house on the block became available. It was a little bit of a ghost house. It was the run-down house on the block. So we bought that. And we built it up, so I was living next door to my cousin, who was living next door to my mother at the time. Then my cousin got sick and he died.
- 01.41.31 So his house was for sale. My in-laws were looking to move from where they were, and they said, well, what about we buy this house? So they bought that house and they moved in, so now we're all, we're all connected. One day I'm out in the backyard and I'm, I'm working, I'm doing something and I, my father-in-law is there supervising. And uh, he's really giving me the business. (LAUGHS) So we call him Pop. And so I said to him, Pop.
- 01.41.59 Give me a break, huh? (LAUGHS) And he says, that's what happens when you live next door to your in-laws. I said, whoa, wait a second. You moved next door to me. I didn't move (LAUGHS) next door to you. (LAUGHS) And we laugh about it. We still laugh about it now, I still tease him (LAUGHS). (~I~) And now, and uh, Karen lives only, Joseph still lives with us, Karen only lives ten minutes away. And Jeanine's about 20 minutes, a half hour, depending upon traffic, no traffic.

JW : How's Jeanine?

JOE KEENAN : She's doing (~I~)

JW : There's news?

- 01.42.28 JOE KEENAN : Yeah. So uh, she's pregnant. So we'll, we'll uh, hopefully things will go well. Uh, so we're looking at an addition probably late March. It's gonna go right into my baseball season. (LAUGHS) It's gonna mess it up (LAUGHS). So uh, uh, so we're keeping our fingers crossed there, that that works out.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : What about cops being task-oriented in relation to the documentary?

01.43.05 JOE KEENAN : Well, my, my original understanding about speaking with you for this documentary was that uh, I thought you wanted my experience in relation to 9-11. Which you do, but you want more than that, which I didn't really understand in the beginning. And (~I~)

JW : (COACHES RESPONSE)

01.43.30 JOE KEENAN : (MID-STATEMENT) Cops uh, when we, when we get a job uh, it's a task. We, we're task-oriented. We move from job to job to job. When you work in a radio car, and you work in a busy precinct, you might get 17 jobs for the night, 17 calls over the radio. Each one's different. You go and you do it, you stop, you go to the next one, you perform that task, you go to the next task. Some tasks are big, some tasks are five minutes, some tasks are 3 years, depending upon what it is. So when I went to work in relation to, to 9-11 and we worked in the landfill and we did, and we did the recovery, that was my job at the time.

01.44.03 I completely immersed myself in that job. And after we got over the original emotional effect of it, it then started to become our job. We knew what we were doing, there's no question about we knew what we were doing. But it became a job and it was a hard job. And we did it for 10 months. And by the time we got to the end, we were ready to stop.

01.44.28 That, that task, that job was over. Uh, we didn't feel different philosophically about it, we still had our, our feelings, and probably more so, whichever way they were, but probably our (?) feelings were stronger. But it was a job, it was a task, we did it and we were ready to move on. And in relation to this now, the documentary uh, (~I~) I really don't know (~I~) what else there is for me to say. I feel like every time I come here I'm saying the same stuff over and over again.

01.45.01 We seem to have better conversations off the camera (LAUGHS) than we, than we do on. (~I~) Uh, but uh, I'm not sure how much more uh, I have to offer you. My, my job was, my job is done. In relation to uh, 9-11. I still have my own personal feelings about it, but I don't see it affecting my life in the future now. Uh, because I haven't moved on to another task.

My task after that was to become retired. And now I'm doing that and I'm moving in a whole different way.

01.45.38 Uh, I, I don't have a job now that's affected by my last job. And uh, I'm not every day thinking at my desk or, or out in the field in relation to experiences or, or things that I've learned from 9-11. Uh, do I think about it, sure. Everybody who lived in New York thinks about it.

01.45.59 And uh, do I think about it more than other people? Maybe uh, maybe (?) I'm sure less than a lot of people and more than some people. But I think, I think we pretty much move on. now, when, when something triggers a memory.

JW : What might that be?

01.45.16 JOE KEENAN : Well, something on TV. Or uh, or uh, going for instance, this year, 9-11. last year you asked me what did you do on 9-11. This year on 9-11, I really planned to do nothing.

01.45.28 Uh, nothing, (?) 9-11 or, you know, related.

JW : Was that by design?

01.46.35 JOE KEENAN : (MID-STATEMENT) by design. (~I~) Well, I just, I was ready to move on. I'm ready to leave it. I was invited down to the ceremony. Uh, but I passed it on to the new president of our society. That, that I said you go. And now I had, I was there. Uh, I, I had my shot there. I, I don't want to go. And I didn't. I didn't want to go. And if it, it had been uh, a rainy, dreary day I might have just sat in my house all day and read.

01.47.01 I don't, I don't know what I would have done. But as it turns out, I had a football game that day. So I went to the, one of the high schools in Brooklyn, Poly Prep High School, uh, to do a football game. Uh, I think it was a Saturday this year. (~I~) Pretty sure it was a Saturday. And they had a ceremony uh, honoring uh, alumni that were lost on 9-11. So I was there for that. But it wasn't really me. Uh, I was just one person who happened to be there while this ceremony was going on.

01.47.30 And in a way it was good because I didn't have to do anything with it. I didn't have to be part of it. I was just a spectator. And that's pretty much where I am now with it. I'm a, I'm a spectator. I'd like to uh, I'll never forget it. I have my own feelings about it and my own memories of it. Honestly, things are probably triggered less often than they used to be, but that's just nature. That's just the way things are.

JW : What do you think that is actually?

01.47.59 JOE KEENAN : It's probably a defense mechanism. It's probably easier to move on than to dwell on it. And, and you get new focuses, new things to, to eat up your time. I had nothing else in my life from uh, when 9-11 happened until we, we closed the landfill. There really uh, oh, sure there were things that you did and you, you saw people. But your whole focus every day was, was that, was work. And uh, not in a negative sense.

01.48.31 It was definitely a good experience for me, but I had my fill. I'm uh, I'll uh, give it every respect that it, that it deserves. From now until I die. But I'm ready to, to leave it, ready to move on. I don't know where moving on goes, but I'm ready for it.

01.48.57 END OF TAPE # 001

TAPE # 002

Joe Keenan, November 7, 2004

JIM WHITAKER, Producer/director

PROJECT REBIRTH

01.48.54 PICTURE UP

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.49.23 JOE KEENAN : If, if I had to, if you tied me down and forced me to make a decision, I'd have to say that she's probably my continuance here. She's picking up. I, I passed the baton. And, and now she's moving along with it. You know? (~I~) Because of her, her relationship with her boyfriend and, and work and so she can't get away from it. It's, it's a continual uh, reminder for her, probably more so now than it is for me.

01.49.54 And two years ago, it was more so for me than it was for her. So uh, uh, it's, it moves along that way.

JW : What about Iraq and the elections?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.50.23 JOE KEENAN : I, I stayed up all night to watch it, and when uh, Joseph got up for work in the morning, he said, any change? And I said yes and no. I said it, it's not over, but it is over (LAUGHS) you know? We know who's going to win, they just haven't announced it yet. Uh, I, I was a Bush supporter. You know, I, I probably would have been a Bush supporter even if there was an Iraq. Uh, you know, that's just the way I leaned. Uh, but uh, I believe and I might be a 1000% wrong, but I believe we don't know what's going on over there.

01.50.56 And it's just because it's, it's hard for, it's hard for the government, whose ever running the government, to tell you everything, because when they tell you everything, they pay their hand. And you shouldn't know everything. Uh, I don't think I'm oppressed by my government, so if they don't want to tell me something that might scare me, that's Ok (LAUGHS). You know, you don't have to tell me, I don't want to know. But I, I think there's

probably like you know, nobody talks about the schools that are being reopened, the water plants that are being reopened, the cities that are being rebuilt, people getting jobs over there. Nobody talks about that, and that's not fair uh, because that is going on.

- 01.51.32 Are there still terrorist bombings? Absolutely. Is there still fighting in the street? Absolutely. But good stuff is happening, too. And news just by its own nature you, you don't open up the daily news in the morning or any, in any daily news where you live, to read about uh, uh, little old ladies going to church. (LAUGHS) You want to know what happened last night. What was bad.
- 01.51.57 Uh, so the front (LAUGHS) the front two or three pages of (?) a newspaper aren't about good things. They're about things that uh, are going to affect you, and maybe I'm wrong, but that's the way, that's the way I feel. I, I feel that uh, as with every aspect in life, as with every occupation, the media skews things they way they want to (~I~) . And that's, and that's the truth, and anybody who doesn't want to accept that isn't looking at reality. (~I~) If you're on the side they're skewing to, fine, it's good. If you're on the other side, it's not so good (LAUGHS).
- 01.52.28 If you don't agree with them, you say oh, they're ruining everything.

JW : Why is it always the bad news?

- 01.52.35 JOE KEENAN : It's not news reporting, it really isn't news reporting. Because good things are news, too. Uh, but they only report how many people are, you know, they report how many guys were killed every day. Well, that happens in war. You know, and, and is it good? No, and would it be better if those thousand soldiers hadn't died, absolutely. But you know, that, that's what happens in war.
- 01.53.01 You know that going in, and if it affects you personally and only one person dies in a war and it's your person, then it was a tragedy. Uh, so I think a lot, a lot of good is going on there. And a lot of bad is going on. and if bad has to go on, I'd rather the bad go on there than here. And, and I, I think our presence there is helping that. Uh, is, is protecting us. I might be wrong. That's the way I want to think, so that's the way I'm going to think (LAUGHS). You know, show me different (LAUGHS) you know, that's the way everybody feels, though.

01.53.36 And, and the people who are against the war feel that, feel just completely opposite and they're entitled to that opinion. But uh, so because of that, I, I, I don't want to see Vinny go back. Why would you want to see somebody go there? I don't want to see anybody go there. But it's just the way things happen. And you have to accept it.

JW : What does Vinny do there?

JOE KEENAN : He's an MP. (~I~)

JW : (REPEAT PREVIOUS RESPONSE)

01.54.01 JOE KEENAN : Yeah, he's a, he's a, he's an MP. So probably I don't know what he does, but probably just knowing the way things work, as the, as the Armies move on from on location to the next, from A to B, you can't leave A alone. Somebody has to protect A uh, so that's pretty much an MP's, they'll move in MP's. but also when uh, at the front lines, they have them there also because there are functions they perform, intelligence and investigative functions, and just simple logistic functions that have to be uh, have to be uh, done.

01.54.34 So the last time he was there, at times he was in the thick of it, and at times he was a little bit in the back of it. And uh, I don't really know how much was, was each, but I know he was, uh, I know he was in both spots. And if he has to go back again, he's willing to go. And uh, I'm sure if you said you can go or you don't have to go, he'd (LAUGHS) probably say, well, Ok, I'll stay home. (LAUGHS) But uh, you know, he, he knows what he's involved in, he, he volunteered to do it.

01.55.06 And uh, I hope it ends before he has to go. But if he has to go, I think he will. He will. And now Karen will experience that. More so than we will. Every time we see her, we'll feel it, but we won't be thinking about it every day, all day long as she will.

JW : Do you think Karen will talk with us?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : Your story is moving through a generation?

01.56.04 JOE KEENAN : It might be a little fresh for her. (~I~) You know, if uh, she probably would be more willing to speak about how she felt about the last time he went, if he didn't go back uh, if you wanted to interview her say in, next month, and it was no uh, there was no inkling that he was going back uh, she could probably talk about how she felt uh, about what happened in the past.

01.56.31 But if it's still ongoing, if it's still fresh, I don't know how she'd feel about it. (~I~) You know? I'm, I'm sure she'd be upset.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JOE KEENAN : I think she could, she could continue (?) that aspect of the story better than I could now. Because I have no fresh (~I~)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : What about the future?

01.58.05 JOE KEENAN : You know, it, it's funny, when you're, when you're younger, when you're a kid or when you're a teenager, and you look at your family, you see your parents and you see your aunts and uncles uh, as, at one level, uh, the older part of the family. And then there's all of you, your brothers, your sisters, your cousins, your friends. And uh, you don't really think of yourself as the family. You just having fun moving along.

01.58.29 Well, now I'm that older part (LAUGHS). And my kids are now moving into the, in, into the uh, running the family. Uh, we were having uh, we had a, we had a party uh, last week for my mom's birthday. And my mom is actually the uh, uh, the oldest remaining on both sides of the family, on her side of the family and on (?) my father's side of the family. So we had a nice big family party. We had a 150 people at the church basement, and we had a nice party.

01.59.00 And uh, we were all teasing each other, we were looking at pictures, my sister had put together pictures. And uh, on a bulletin board of, for my, when my mom was a kid, all the

way through 'til today. And we're looking at them and my cousins and I are standing there, and saying, you know, you know, we're the old ones now (LAUGHS). We're the old ones in these pictures. We, we, where this used to be my father and your father, it's now me and you.

01.58.28 Uh, so we're probably moving along. I don't know how much uh, I'm not saying that we're not controlling the family anymore. But we're really not. You know, in, in the beginning, your parents did it. And then when you had children, you did it. And then when your children get older, you sort of uh, uh, my wife and her brothers and sisters tease my father-in-law uh, about uh, how, how he forgets that he was stricter when he was younger because he's not with the grandkids.

02.00.01 And, and they tease him about that all the time, 'cos he's a much with the grandkids. And he wasn't a much with them (LAUGHS) So that's probably where we're going now. Myself and, and my wife and, and the family's moving in that direction. What's the next part of my family with me? Probably grandkids and uh, Joseph and Karen getting married. And that would be the, the next natural progression uh, of, of me with the family.

02.00.32 I'm no longer directing it. I'm now advising it (LAUGHS).

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : Any thoughts about things I didn't bring up?

02.00.54 JOE KEENAN : No. Not really. Just what I mentioned before uh, uh, we mentioned it a little bit here now, and we mentioned it down, we talked about it downstairs. I, I don't know what my worth to you is any longer. If it's just uh, let's stay in touch, fine nothing wrong with that. And if it's, lets stay in touch incase things change in the future, that's good, too. But I really uh, I really think that my portion of the 9-11 story is over.

02.01.26 I really do.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.01.44 JOE KEENAN : I had no apprehension about speaking with you. It was just that uh, I, I could sit at home and I tell Janie, you know, I don't know what to say to them. Uh, you know, I've said everything I have to say. And it's nothing new. Uh, I'm (~I~) just go see them.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.02.16 JOE KEENAN : I giggled to myself a little bit when I talked to them because they're so involved in it, the two of them. It's really a passion for them to do this. And when I, when I hear that in their voices, I think about how I was with things like that myself.

02.02.34 But I'm, I'm no longer (LAUGHS) that way with, with uh, with this. But yet they still are, they're very energetic. I can feel it when I speak to them.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JOE KEENAN : It's that old cliché, labor of love.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.03.53 JOE KEENAN : You know, I, I just thought of something that uh, when we were speaking briefly about uh, the future might bring things back again, uh, when we were in, when we were in uh, the landfill, oh, probably, I don't remember when, maybe October, maybe November, people from Britain came over and they started interviewing us. And they were watching our process and doing, they were getting ready to be hit. And they figured they were gonna have to do something similar to what we were doing. And at one point, they even said to us, would you people be willing to come over and, and help us if, if we needed it.

02.04.34 And we joked about it, we said, well, I, I think if the prime minister calls the president and the president calls the mayor and the mayor calls the police commissioner, I think you could probably swing that (LAUGHS). You know, but uh, uh, that's one thing uh, about I, I probably know things that I don't know I know. And if, if we had to do them again, we could probably do it. Uh, but I, I don't know exactly what that means, but uh, yeah.

JW : That's part of it, and who knows? The Karen thing came up in the process, mentioning the baton being passed.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

- 02.05.38 JOE KEENAN : On, on that part, having nothing to do with uh, 9-11 or the government or anything, one of the things uh, you asked me about the ring, and I mentioned that that wasn't my number. Well, one of the big things in the police department, and all, in all police departments is uh, the passing of your, your number with your shield number. So I had my father's shield. And Karen now has my shield. So it's passed, so when she goes to work, every day, and she puts that shield on her shirt, it's the same one my father had on his shirt. It's not, it's not even a duplicate or a remake. It's the exact same uh, exact same piece.
- 02.06.11 Now my father's brother, now Joseph can't have it of course because Karen has it. Uh, so that was sort of broken a little. But my father's brother was also in the police department, and he had a shield. And I, I didn't really remember what his number was, and we have a picture, and I tried to read it from the picture, and I, I thought I made it out.
- 02.06.30 So I called my cousin and I asked him what his father's shield was, and immediately he told me the same number that I had figured out. Now, I've just arranged for Joseph to have that. Uh, I had to call a few people and have some maneuvering made, and there's a little bit of a family tradition to it, because uh, my uncle had just retired, and uh, when you retire in the police department, a month or two after your retirement, all the guys get together that you worked with and you go some place and have a little get together, a little party. And he had done that. And on his way home from the party, he was murdered. He, he had stopped, he was stopped at a red light.
- 02.07.11 And he saw what he thought was a robbery on the corner, and he jumped out of his car to help. But it was really one of those set up things at 2 o'clock in the morning, they were just waiting for somebody to come by. And they stole his money and they stole his car. And because he used to be a cop, or he was still in his own mind, he fought with them, and in the fight escalated, he was killed. So although he wasn't actually what we call a line of duty death, the department did give him a funeral.

- 02.07.36 And, and that, so now Joseph has that shield. Well, will have that, he doesn't have the shield yet, but he will have that. So that's a little bit of the family thing passing on again. (~I~) And, and I know my cousin is very happy about that. 'Cos he feels it's, now his father's shield is back in the family. Actually what happened was somebody had it. And I reached out through friends to approach this guy, this cop.
- 02.08.02 Because I didn't want to approach him on my own, because he doesn't know me. You know, he, you know, you, you approach somebody cold, so I wanted it prefaced. And they told him who I was, and you know, they told him, you know, he's a legitimate guy. You know, talk to him. So I talked to him, and I asked him if he'd be willing to give it up. And he said, he thought about it because he knew what I was going to ask him when I called because of the, the fellows, the other guys speaking to him first, and he said he thought about it for 3 or 4 days.
- 02.08.30 And he said it was a tough decision, but he wanted to hear the story directly from me. And when I told him the story, he, he was willing to give it up. So that was good. That was, he said he understood. Because to a cop, you, your number is a lot. It means, it doesn't really mean anything, but it does mean something because it's yours. And he said he was under those circumstances, he was willing to give it back.

JW : Is it like a favorite jersey number?

- 02.08.59 JOE KEENAN : Yeah, it's sort of like that. We, when you look at a cop on the street, you don't even see the number on his shield. Uh, people probably don't even know they're there. But uh, that's how we identify ourselves all the time uh, within work. So it, it, it uh, it becomes, it means, starts to mean something to you. (~I~) You pick those number for the lotto (LAUGHS). Never work, it never works, no (LAUGHS) never works.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : Do they use it for calls over the radio?

JOE KEENAN : Oh, no, no, no. no, you, when calls go over the (~I~)

JW : When do you use numbers?

02.09.41 JOE KEENAN : On your reports. Just on your reports, and on the little PBA cards you give to your friends. (LAUGHS)

JW : PBA cards?

02.09.51 JOE KEENAN : You know, they're the ones that you give to your friends in case you get stopped in traffic, you know, you get the summons (~I~) (LAUGHS) You have your number on it. Your number is valued, you value it that way. Uh, 'cos you just don't want other people using it, and uh, and in that sense you're protected a little.

02.10.07 But it means, it, if, if it's not a family thing, it doesn't really mean all that, look, when I got promoted to detective and then when I got promoted to sergeant, I didn't have a family number. So the way I looked at it was if somebody the way I justified in my own mind approaching this fellow, this cop, was if somebody had approached me for those numbers, I would have been willing to give them up.

02.10.31 I wouldn't have given them my father's number, but if they had approached me for those other numbers and said, gee, look, you know, that was my dad's. You know, would you mind? I would have given it to them. Because it didn't mean, it didn't mean that much to me. But if it's a, a family connection it's a little bit like a superstition. Like if you have uh, if you have a family member who's retired, like you, you wear his tie clip or something or you have uh, his medal. You know, you always like pass something on.

02.10.57 Karen has something of mine, now I'll have to give something to Joseph and something just little innocuous that doesn't, it doesn't mean anything, but there's always something there. Now Karen will be wearing the, the same shield that my father wore in 1946, so that means something. And moves along.

JW : It's great because it's the same one.

JOE KEENAN : Exactly the same one.

JW : Has the shield changed?

JOE KEENAN : Shields have changed over the years, but since then 'til now the design hasn't changed, is that what you mean?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.11.39 JOE KEENAN : No, everybody has to wear the same, the same shield. If they were to change the design now, all of a sudden they came out with a star instead of a shield and she'd probably get a star with that number, but it would be the same thing. It's actually the same piece, we call them tins, the actually same piece of tin that she has in her hand that I had in my hand, that (?) my father had in his hand.

02.12.01 It's the actual same one. It's not, you get, you come on the job and they make a new one with the same number, no. It's the same where they put, when I retired and I handed in my shield, they put it in a vault, they put them in a big safe. And then when they promote the next 100 sergeants, they go into the safe and take out 100 shields (LAUGHS) and give them to those guys. That's the way it works. They don't make a new one for everybody. They just keep passing them on and on and on. If they don't have enough, like they didn't have enough with the new police officers coming on because they hired a lot of police officers in the past five years, they had to make new ones and they made new numbers.

02.12.33 They just continued on the numbers, we call them zip codes now. They're getting bigger and bigger. (LAUGHS).

JW : How many officers are in the force?

02.12.48 JOE KEENAN : I don't know. They're probably, it's probably, probably I'm just gonna throw out a number, probably 15 to 20,000.

JW : Does a lower number have significance?

02.13.03 JOE KEENAN : At one time, this was the (?) there were only 194 before this one, and when they made this, it became 195. Like my father's, the shield that Karen is wearing now is 9281. So (?) there were only 9,000 shields, 9,000 previous police officers at that time, in the history of the police department, when they moved along with those shields. And as they, now they're up into, you know, 30,000 numbers for, for new shields.

02.13.30 So if, only another cop would recognize it. And if he, if you're standing on a detail on a corner for 5 and 6 hours and you've run out of things to talk to, and you're look and (?) say, well, where'd you get that shield? That's an old one. And then she'll tell the story (LAUGHS).

JW : Her number isn't 195?

02.13.52 JOE KEENAN : No, it's, no, her number is 9281. That's the police. As you get promoted you go from rank to rank, your number changes. You don't keep (~I~) the same number all the way through. So your entry number is your police shield. (~I~)

JW : He was the 195?

02.14.07 JOE KEENAN : Well, no, no, no. What that means is that when they made this particular sergeant's shield, it was the 195th one they made. Now they might have made that 30 years before my father got it, but what happens is they keep recycling them. (~I~)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : It is the same shield?

02.14.37 JOE KEENAN : Yes, but it's not this number. It's, this was the sergeant's shield (~I~) I'm talking about the police officer's shield. Your entry level shield. (~I~) Yeah, so it's the, it's not, actually if you were to see her shield, in the background of a, of a police officer's shield, they're silver, and in the background, you know, there's the uh, seal of the city and you know, the pilgrim and the, and the Indian standing there and all of that.

02.14.59 But in the background itself it's sort of embossed uh, uh, little bubbly effect on the new shields, they're nice and bright. This one's all worn out. You can see where it's been touched so many times that it's, well, it's at least as old (?) it's at least, well, what's from '46 until now. It's almost 60 years old. It's at least that old. It might be older. I don't know if my father was the first one to have it. (~I~)

JW : That's interesting.

02.15.30 JOE KEENAN : We could find that out. You'd have to go headquarters and search in the records and, and find out. You know, maybe they made new shields when all those guys came out of the war and (~I~) you know, maybe they didn't. maybe he was the first one to have it, maybe he wasn't. But from then 'til now, it's been ours.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.15.52 END OF TAPE # 002