

The following is a transcript of an interview as seen on “Youtube” that took place between Eddie Morgan (*EM*), retired unit manager, OSP, Jerry Holt (*JH*), retired shift captain, OSP and Sharon Hamilton (*SH*). It was filmed in McAlester, Oklahoma September 2010.

SH – “I wrote this book and I know I gave you each a copy. Do you think, bearing in mind that I come from another country and I’m not from around here, do you think I’ve told the story as accurately as possible about what happened especially leading up to and during the riot?”

EM and *JH* – “Yes”

SH – “And I know I phoned both of you and we talked so that I could get the information I needed to write the book, but I’d like to ask you Jerry, first, what do you think caused the riot at Oklahoma in 1985? Why do you think those inmates rioted?”

JH – “Well, they wanted... The administration wanted to use people off of PC – protection – for workers and you couldn’t do that because if they have to come down for any reason at all, on any run or across the yard, you have to lock that particular section of the prison down to get them through. They couldn’t even work in the Rotunda because if general population was coming through, if they wanted to come visit, they couldn’t be in there with PC.”

SH – “You couldn’t put a PC, a protective custody inmate near a general population inmate? What would happen if you did?”

JH – “Some of them would get killed or hurt real bad.”

SH – “Because those men were put in protective custody for a reason. Because it wasn’t safe for them, for whatever reason to be out in general population.”

JH – “That’s correct.”

SH – “Those jobs that the men had in general population, were those jobs important to those men?”

JH – “Yes, they got a lot of freedom. They could go here, there and visit. They could take care of the jobs and they could still visit.”

SH – “They could come out of their cell, they could move around.”

JH – “That’s pretty good freedom for them in max security prison.”

SH – “Why do you think that they wanted to take those jobs off those men? Had they had those jobs for a long time?”

JH – “Ever since I’d been there and I started in 1965.”

SH – “And they’d always had those jobs?” (They both nod their heads and *EM*, says “Yes”)

SH – “Why do you think in December 85 they decided to take those jobs away from the general population prisoners?”

JH – “Well, I don’t know. I know several officials went to different prisons, especially maximum and most of them was on lockdown, like McAlester is now. I think they thought they might have a little trouble, but then I don’t think they knew it was going to be that bad. I think they thought they’d have a disturbance and that way they could justify locking them down, but it got out of hand. That’s what I think. I don’t know, but I think that’s what got it started.”

SH – “So you think that they took the jobs off the general population prisoners, gave them to the protective custody prisoners but thought that there might be a little bit of

trouble. But not as much as there was, because what happened to you?" (addresses Eddie Morgan)

EM – "I got stabbed multiple times."

JH – "Thirteen times."

SH – "You got stabbed thirteen times?"

JH – "He got his eye put out."

EM – "Yeh, they left me for dead."

SH – "And how did you not die, what happened? Why didn't you die there?"

JH – "An inmate helped him."

EM – "Yeh, an inmate helped me out."

SH – "One of the inmates in general population got you out of there?"

EM – "That's correct."

SH – "Did they know that that riot was going to happen? Did you warn them about it?"

(They both nod)

EM – "Oh yes, me and Jerry both did. Jerry was working dayshift and I was working evenings and when I came in Jerry was telling me what was going on and I said, 'Oh, I guess it's up to me to tell everybody.' He said, 'Yes, but I ain't going to leave you this way.' I said, 'Oh Jerry, you done your shift, you go home, I don't have any problem locking them down.' So I go lock general population down. Well, after the evening meal, they got back out and that's when it happened."

SH – "So you locked them down and they got back out because they were so mad because their jobs had been given to those men in protective custody." (They both nod their heads and Eddie Morgan says, 'Yes, that's correct')

SH – "So could they have stopped that riot?"

EM – "Yes they could."

JH – "Yes, any time they wanted to."

SH – "Why didn't they stop it? Because you could have been killed in that riot and those other men were seriously injured. So they actually put you at risk. They put your life on the line."

EM – "Yes, they did."

SH – "Even though you had told them that the riot was going to happen. Yet they disregarded you?"

EM – "They said you hear rumours all the time. In a penitentiary setting you hear rumours. They said, 'Do your shift' and I said, 'okay'."

JH – "When certain inmates tell you something's coming down, you better take it seriously. When they tell you something, certain people you know, they're not shooting the bull, they're telling you just like it's going to be. They told me that day just before I left and I told Eddie."

EM – "And we went back to Boone."

SH – "Who's Boone?"

EM – "He was chief of security at the time and now he's regional director."

SH – "He's regional director now?"

EM – "Well, yeh, we went to Boone and we told him this lot is going to riot. They're going to tear the place down. He said, 'Aw, it's just rumours.' But we had several general population inmates a day or two before, well they were catching out. What we call

catching out, meaning they wanted to go to PC (protective custody). It was real abnormal. I mean some real hard ones.”

SH – “They didn’t want to be in that situation because they knew there was going to be a riot.” (They both nod)

EM – “Yes, they told me and Jerry both, but they (the prison administration) wouldn’t listen to us. It was just like we were ignorant or something.”

SH – “Now Jerry, my husband, I write in the book, he wasn’t where the riot took place. He wasn’t on A and C units.”

EM – “No, he was in F Cell House.”

SH – “So when the riot was ended, and there was an inquiry into what caused the riot - I know there was an inquiry by the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation. Can you tell me what the result of that inquiry was?”

JH – “It was like our story we put out, the same thing. The DOC knew about it and didn’t do a damn thing.”

SH – “And that’s in the OSBI report?”

JH – “It is.”

SH – “You had a copy of the OSBI report?”

JH – “I stole a copy at the courthouse. We had some inmates up there and they had a stack that high. (He indicates with his hands about 15 inches high) I just took one of them.”

SH – “And it said in that report by the OSBI that the blame for the riot was on the administration.” (Jerry Holt nods his head)

JH – “It didn’t come straight down in words, but that’s what it said.”

SH – “You could read through it.”

JH – “The warden called me up there a few days later.”

SH – “What warden was that?”

JH – “Maynard.”

SH – “Gary Maynard?”

JH – “Yes.”

SH – “He was warden when the riot went down. Gary Maynard?”

JH – “Yes.” (He turns to Eddie) “What was the name of that guy, the one that came out there?”

EM – “Hargo”

JH – “He walked up off the hill there and there’s a little female, a little blonde taking Eddie up the stairs. He done had his eye put out, one lung collapsed and she was taking him up the stairs.”

SH – “When he was injured?”

JH – “Yes. All he says is, ‘How’s it going down there lieutenant? He says (meaning Eddie says) ‘By god I’m dying.’ He didn’t even go out to the infirmary to check on him or nothing. When I came in they told me about it. When I came in later I met the deputy up at the front door and I called him everything but a human being.”

SH – (Turning to look at Eddie) “So they didn’t even care about you? (They both say, “No, they didn’t care”

JH – How’s it going down there, lieutenant? That’s all he said. He didn’t say are you hurt bad, do you need some help? He didn’t say nothing, but I cursed and called him everything in the world and the warden called me down there and he told me about word

for word what I said and I said, 'Yeh, that's damn sure what I told him and I meant every word of it and if you don't think so bring him on in and I'll tell him again how sorry he is, you know? And he, (meaning warden Maynard) said, 'I wonder why he done that?' and I said, 'well he did'. But anyway, the warden, he wrote a letter and put it in my jacket that I failed to notify anybody written or orally about the pending riot."

SH – "That's what they put in your jacket?"

JH – "Yes, the warden wrote it and I went to laughing. I thought he was kidding and I said, 'You know better than that warden' and he said, 'No, that's the way it's going to be' and I said to him, 'Well, if you can live with it I damn sure can't because you know better than that. You know I know better' I just threw it down and walked out the door."

SH – "So they put that in your jacket? What's a jacket for you?"

EM – "It's just like a prisoner's field file."

JH – "As far as I know, it's still in there."

SH – "So they put a letter in your jacket stating that they didn't know about the riot, when you had gone to them. That you had failed to tell them about the riot."

JH – "Orally or written. Jim Cline, he's dead now. He was internal affairs investigator. He was standing there at the doors with Boone the last time I went out and told Boone that if you don't do something, they're going to hurt some people. They're going to take this damn penitentiary over. Cline was standing there and he said, (meaning Boone) 'Aw, we'll just check on it tomorrow' and I said, 'Hell, you don't have tomorrow. They're going to take it over this evening or tonight. You don't have tomorrow.' (Jerry holds up his hand to emphasise how Boone stopped him speaking and repeated Boone's words) 'Aw, well just see about it tomorrow.'"

SH – "So when the riot was over with, did the Oklahoma State Penitentiary change to how it had been before the riot?"

JH and EM – "Yes, they locked it down."

SH – "They locked it down and when you say locked down, how do you mean locked down?"

JH and EM – "They're just locked in their cells."

SH – "Locked in their cells 23 hours a day and it's been like that since 1985 after the riot. And it's still locked down." (They both nod and Eddie Morgan says, 'As far as I know')

SH – "So they can't move out of their cells. Most of them are stuck in their cells, and that all goes back to the riot of 85."

JH – "Jim Cline, internal affairs man, he was tough. If you did something wrong, convict or officer, he'd get you. But he called me one day from Oklahoma City. Me and Charlie Gray – he was captain too. Me and Charlie was telling them all it was going to happen. And Cline, he said, 'I read your report. The warden don't agree with it.' I said, 'I can't help that Cline.' He said, 'Well, I'm supposed to come down tomorrow from the city to interview you and Captain Gray again and see if y'all want to change your story.' And I told him, 'Hell, I don't want to change a comma, question mark, dot, nothing because by god that's the way it happened.'"

SH – "They wanted you to change what you'd told them? They wanted you basically to like about what had happened." (He nods his head)

JH – "I told him you're wasting your time and Cline says, 'Well, I know that. I was standing there when you told Boone. I'm not changing either (Jim Cline confirmed in the OSBI report that Jerry Holt did warn Boone that there would be a riot), but I'm going to

be there in the morning.' Next morning, instead of just taking us off up there in a little office like they usually do, we went to the warden's office. The warden was sitting there by his desk and he didn't say anything, but boy are you talking about some looks. I mean... (He mimics a severe expression)

SH – "If looks could kill. Because you wouldn't change your story."

JH – "Cline says, 'I've read your report. Do you want to change anything? I told him, 'No. Not a nickel worth. That's just the way it happened. They called us down there three different times. We was asked three different times and we just said, 'No, we're not changing nothing. That's the way it happened.'"