

LCPL Samantha Pope  
Camp Johnson, North Carolina  
Interviewer: L.J. Kimball  
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L.J. Kimball: So, LCPL Pope when were you born and where?

LCPL Pope: I was born in South Carolina 4/11/79. I was raised in Virginia so I haven't spent that much time in South Carolina.

L.J. Kimball: Were you raised by your parents?

LCPL Pope: Yes.

L.J. Kimball: And your parents moved from South Carolina to Virginia.

LCPL Pope: Right. My father was in the Military and they got divorced and my family and I moved up north.

L.J. Kimball: To Virginia.

LCPL Pope: Right.

L.J. Kimball: Your mother remarried?

LCPL Pope: Yes.

L.J. Kimball: Where about in Virginia?

LCPL Pope: Richmond.

L.J. Kimball: Is your father still in the Military?

LCPL Pope: I believe so. I am not sure if he retired yet or not.

L.J. Kimball: Was he in the Marine Corps?

LCPL Pope: No, he was in the Air Force.

L.J. Kimball: So, how old were you when you left South Carolina?

LCPL Pope: One or two.

L.J. Kimball: You spent the rest of the time in one place in Virginia?

LCPL Pope: Right.

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L.J. Kimball: Went to school there and everything?

LCPL Pope: Yes.

L.J. Kimball: When did you graduate from high school?

LCPL Pope: Um, 6/97.

L.J. Kimball: Did you decide once you graduated to run right over and sign up for the Marines?

LCPL Pope: No, I knew in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade that I was going to go into the Marine Corps.

L.J. Kimball: Why did you know you were going into the Marine Corps?

LCPL Pope: Because in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade I went to a mini boot camp and it was a Marines mini boot camp and I already knew I was going into the military I just didn't know which branch I was going into and that kind of pushed me in towards the Marine Corps.

L.J. Kimball: Mini boot camp, and you decided after that what you really wanted to do was be a Marine.

LCPL Pope: Right.

L.J. Kimball: Okay. You graduated from high school. What happened after that?

LCPL Pope: After that, that summer I spent at home then I went to boot camp.

L.J. Kimball: So after you graduated you signed the enlistment papers what, for the late entry program?

LCPL Pope: Right.

L.J. Kimball: Then you went to boot camp. When did you go to boot camp?

LCPL Pope: 11/97.

L.J. Kimball: Did you go to Parris Island?

LCPL Pope: Yes.

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L.J. Kimball: 12 week course?

LCPL Pope: About three months.

L.J. Kimball: What did you think about boot camp?

LCPL Pope: I thought it was easy. It wasn't what I had thought it was going to be. The only thing about it was the yelling. I had to get used to that but then everything else just fell into place. So it wasn't hard for me as it was for some other Marines because I was already athletic in school so the little humps and the running was easy for me.

L.J. Kimball: Your stepfather, what did he do?

LCPL Pope: He had his own business.

L.J. Kimball: What kind of business?

LCPL Pope: A tire company. I really don't know too much about it because that is his thing you know.

L.J. Kimball: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

LCPL Pope: I have an older brother and sister and that's it.

L.J. Kimball: Any of them go into the Marine Corps?

LCPL Pope: No.

L.J. Kimball: How was your upbringing, was your father very strict with you or were you a rebel?

LCPL Pope: My father or stepfather?

L.J. Kimball: Your stepfather.

LCPL Pope: No my stepfather was the type of person who would tell you right from wrong. You knew what was right and wrong and if you did it you knew the consequences and so be it.

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L.J. Kimball: Did you have any awareness before you joined the Marine Corps of being treated differently because you were black?

LCPL Pope: No sir. It is all in how you carry yourself. There are some people that right now can say that they feel the Marine Corps has a problem because of discrimination, but then I can look at them and see maybe why they have been treated that way. Since I have been in the Marine Corps and my whole life I never had a problem with discrimination at all.

L.J. Kimball: One of the reasons that I ask about your family life other than that it provides a good background is you said boot camp was easy and I just wondered what your childhood might have been like that you thought boot camp was easy.

LCPL Pope: I guess it is because the main thing in boot camp is dealing with the drill instructors yelling and doing what they want you to do and when they want you to do it and I know people had problems with the humps and the runs and that kind of stuff but that was no problem for me because I was already into a lot of school activities so that didn't bother me.

L.J. Kimball: Did your high school have girls' athletic teams?

LCPL Pope: Yes.

L.J. Kimball: What sports did you participate in?

LCPL Pope: I played soccer, basketball, and volleyball.

L.J. Kimball: Pretty good?

LCPL Pope: Yes.

L.J. Kimball: When you left boot camp, you went right from there and what did you want to be when you left boot camp let me put it that way first.

LCPL Pope: My whole intention of joining the Marine Corps was becoming a drill instructor. My MOS [Military Occupational Specialty], I already knew was going to be an 0151 [Administrative Clerk] because that is what I had chose and told my recruiter about. After MCT [Marine Combat Training] I came to school here and got stationed here.

L.J. Kimball: Where did you go to MCT?

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LCPL Pope: What did I do at MCT?

L.J. Kimball: Where?

LCPL Pope: Oh, over at Camp Geiger.

L.J. Kimball: All female graduates of boot camp do MCT at Camp Geiger instead of Parris Island?

LCPL Pope: Right.

L.J. Kimball: So after graduating boot camp after your recruit leave you went right here to Camp Johnson?

LCPL Pope: Yes sir.

L.J. Kimball: And you went through what they call it, admin. school?

LCPL Pope: Yes sir.

L.J. Kimball: And how long was that?

LCPL Pope: My school was about a month and a half.

L.J. Kimball: And they trained you to be an 0151?

LCPL Pope: Yes sir.

L.J. Kimball: What is the official title of that MOS?

LCPL Pope: Personnel Administrative Clerk.

L.J. Kimball: Okay, did that used to be an SRB [Service Record Book] clerk?

LCPL Pope: No, just sort of a clerk typist.

L.J. Kimball: Have you been at Camp Johnson ever since then?

LCPL Pope: Yes sir.

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L.J. Kimball: You graduated from admin. school and then they shipped you over to Camp Johnson headquarters?

LCPL Pope: Yes sir. I got orders to go over and check into building #12, then I came back over here and have been here since then.

L.J. Kimball: Where do you live?

LCPL Pope: Oh I live off of base.

L.J. Kimball: Are you married?

LCPL Pope: Yes sir.

L.J. Kimball: Okay, Pope is your husband's name?

LCPL Pope: Yes sir.

L.J. Kimball: What was your family name or maiden name.

LCPL Pope: Small.

L.J. Kimball: What does your husband do?

LCPL Pope: He is in the Marine Corps. He is a 3531 [Heavy Vehicle Operator].

L.J. Kimball: Where does he work?

LCPL Pope: On Camp Johnson, at the motor pool.

L.J. Kimball: Is he an instructor?

LCPL Pope: No he just works on the trucks.

L.J. Kimball: How long have you been married?

LCPL Pope: Three months.

L.J. Kimball: Three months, okay. Where do you live out in town?

LCPL Pope: Hunters Creek.

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L.J. Kimball: I know where that is. You and Corporal Lawrence's phone numbers, is that Camp Johnson admin.?

LCPL Pope: We all have our own direct lines to us.

L.J. Kimball: Well, what is your phone number here?

LCPL Pope: 450-1119.

L.J. Kimball: All right, and Corporal Lawrence would have his own direct line on his telephone also?

LCPL Pope: His should be 1136 or 1135.

L.J. Kimball: All right. I guess you lived in the barracks before you got married?

LCPL Pope: Yes sir.

L.J. Kimball: And now you are married but you have been in the Marine Corps about 2 years. Have you ever experienced anytime while in the Marine Corps or heard stories of or know from your own personal knowledge that you have been discriminated against because you are a female?

LCPL Pope: No sir. Not yet. I guess because I figured from what I have seen so far that everybody is given an opportunity. If they want to step up and get promoted or if they want to step up and do something they have to want it and grab it. That is something that I tried to take in inside. I feel that nobody can hold you back if you really want it. I haven't seen any discrimination since I have been here. If it was there before I can't tell you.

L.J. Kimball: Well, that is as a female. How about as a black?

LCPL Pope: As a black?

L.J. Kimball: Have you seen discrimination?

LCPL Pope: No.

L.J. Kimball: At any time have you noticed that you were treated differently than another Marine because you were either black and/or female?

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LCPL Pope: No sir.

L.J. Kimball: Okay. If that is what you honestly believe that is fine because that has been your experience, but if you did have some experiences don't be reluctant to tell me about those too because I was the Base Operations Officer, I was in the Marine Corps for 26 years, and I know that when the young Marine sits down and talks to an older person or a senior officer they are very reluctant to say what is on their mind until they get a chance to get to know each other a little better and feel more comfortable doing that, but if that is your experience that is fine. But don't feel reluctant if you have had a bad experience to tell me about it.

LCPL Pope: Right but I have had no experiences like that since I came out of school. I graduated first out of my school.

L.J. Kimball: High school valedictorian?

LCPL Pope: No, from PA School. I have had no problems. I have always stepped up. I never worried about what everybody else thought about me. I do what I was supposed to do and do it in a timely fashion then I don't have a problem. If there was another female who was having those problems I couldn't tell you because I did not get into all that.

L.J. Kimball: Did you get meritorious Lance Corporal after graduating #1 from the school?

LCPL Pope: Yes sir.

L.J. Kimball: Did you have any trouble getting your meritorious Lance Corporal?

LCPL Pope: No sir.

L.J. Kimball: How long ago was that that you graduated from school?

LCPL Pope: Last June.

L.J. Kimball: June 1998?

LCPL Pope: Yes sir.

L.J. Kimball: When will you be up for Corporal?

LCPL Pope: I am going on a Corporals' Board 8/17 but my MOS is closed.



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L.J. Kimball: When you say that you are going to a Corporals' Board, is this for regular promotion or for meritorious?

LCPL Pope: Meritorious Corporal Board.

L.J. Kimball: How do you feel about the Marine Corps now after being in it for two years?

LCPL Pope: Since I have been only here, I can't judge the Marine Corps just based on this duty station.

L.J. Kimball: I understand, but based on your experience strictly at Camp Johnson.

LCPL Pope: It's fine, you know some things here I don't agree with but we are in a school environment so, you know, the way we do things is the reason why we do things the way we do over in the admin. shop.

L.J. Kimball: What is it you don't agree with?

LCPL Pope: I guess its just stuff in our admin. shop. You know, like people that's coming in and people bringing people from the Fleet [FMF] and stuff . . . I'd say are just not up to my standards.

L.J. Kimball: Are you talking about Administrative standards.

LCPL Pope: No, the people. The people that they are bringing in. In the office, I don't feel that they should be here in the student environment because they don't set an example for the younger Marines that are coming in straight out of boot camp or MCT or whatever, but as Lance Corporals we cannot voice our opinion like that.

L.J. Kimball: What rank are you talking about?

LCPL Pope: The Sergeants, Corporals, and the staff NCO's there.

L.J. Kimball: They don't meet your perception of the what a Marine NCO or staff NCO should be like?

LCPL Pope: Right. There is no motivation and there is nothing from me or the majority of the Marines coming out of school, there is nothing to keep them going unless they have self motivation. Myself I could keep myself going because I know what I want and I will get what I want but a lot of people they will come here and they go

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down the tubes because there is no motivation, no nothing. You come in, do your job and go home.

L.J. Kimball: Did you have a chance to do anything motivational as a unit, for example, to do PT [Physical Training] in the mornings?

LCPL Pope: We do PT but just regular PT. We don't do no formation runs or anything like that.

L.J. Kimball: Just individually you do PT?

LCPL Pope: We go to the gym and maybe two people run side by side.

L.J. Kimball: What would you do if you could, say, General Jones the Commandant was in here talking to us instead of the Officers and Staff NCO's over there, what would you like to tell him about what you think could be improved in the Marine Corps or what problems exist now?

LCPL Pope: As far as the Marine Corps worldwide or just here on Johnson?

L.J. Kimball: Yeah. If you have any ideas based on your experiences in the Marine Corps as a whole, that's fine too. I would like to hear any of the ideas that you have.

LCPL Pope: As far as the Marines, I think the Marine Corps is fine. You know, I like the Marine Corps. It's just the people that get into the Marine Corps that don't maintain the standards and things like that. I only know that after four years I am getting out because my intentions was not to get out I wanted to be a Drill Instructor but, if I had to stay here then I am out.

L.J. Kimball: Stay here?

LCPL Pope: Yeah stay here in Camp Johnson.

L.J. Kimball: But if you had the chance to go someplace else you might change your mind and get away from this environment?

LCPL Pope: Right.

L.J. Kimball: What would you change if you could?

LCPL Pope: What would I change?

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L.J. Kimball: Say that the Commandant were here and it is within his power to do almost anything you would say "General if I were sitting in your seat, this is what I would do." What would you say that you wanted to do?

LCPL Pope: There's really nothing that I could tell him to do because everything is already there. You know, the only problem I have as far as the Marine Corps is just the people in our office. You know what I'm saying. They don't fit the standards and don't set the example like they should. They don't follow none of the NCO traits and principles but other than that I haven't had any problems with the Marine Corps. But then that is also on each individual and how they carry themselves and how they want to portray themselves in the Marine Corps.

L.J. Kimball: When you talk to other Marines, is there a perception that women or blacks are not treated the same in the Marine Corps as their male counterparts or white counterparts are?

LCPL Pope: No. I guess in my shop people don't come across like that you know. I haven't experienced being in other shops as far as females and the females and the males balance out so it has never been a problem since I have been there. I have a personal problem with one Marine who feels he should not have to take orders from me because he has been at this duty station longer than me and I don't know if that comes from me being black or female. He states that it is just that he has been on duty station longer than me but I picked up Lance Corporal before him. That is the only thing that I have encountered.

L.J. Kimball: So you are senior in rank. How about your office positions? Are you in a senior position here in the office or you both have the same job.

LCPL Pope: As far as our section, if the NCOIC [NCO in charge] is not there, then I am in charge. Point blank. Nobody else is in charge but me. The majority of the time he is not there so I am in charge and he doesn't like taking orders from me.

L.J. Kimball: Is he white or black?

LCPL Pope: White.

L.J. Kimball: You think that reluctance might be because you are female black or just because he has more time on the station than you do?

LCPL Pope: He says that it is because he has more time on station but like I told him before, he knows just as well as I know that that does not make a difference. It is whoever

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picked up rank first. It is just like saying that a Sergeant come in here and a month after I came in here I am going to tell him I can't listen to him because I have been in station longer than him? No way that is crazy. He may be saying it is just because he had been there longer but it could be a racial conflict or whatever. I don't know and don't even want to get into that. If it is, he should let me know but he hasn't attempted to let me know so I couldn't say.

L.J. Kimball: How does your husband like being a Marine here?

LCPL Pope: He don't care being here too much.

L.J. Kimball: He doesn't like Camp Johnson?

LCPL Pope: No.

L.J. Kimball: Is he going to stay in the Marine Corps?

LCPL Pope: Right now he is debating whether he is going to re-enlist or not.

L.J. Kimball: How soon is that coming up?

LCPL Pope: 8 months.

L.J. Kimball: Did I ask you what rank he was?

LCPL Pope: He is a Corporal.

L.J. Kimball: So he is a Corporal re-enlisting in about 8 months but is not sure yet.

LCPL Pope: Right.

L.J. Kimball: Do you have any problems with him staying in the Marine Corps?

LCPL Pope: No, that is his decision.

L.J. Kimball: How do you like Hunters Creek.

LCPL Pope: It's all right, pretty quiet.

L.J. Kimball: Do you go in there off of [Highway] 24 by the railroad tracks?

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LCPL Pope: No, it is the one off Piney Green [Road].

L.J. Kimball: That is where you drive by the school.

LCPL Pope: Right.

L.J. Kimball: It's nice back there, waterfront property. I've rode my bicycle back there, nice place to live.

LCPL Pope: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: How does the Marine Corps treat you, well you are both active-duty Marines so I can't ask you what it is like to be a dependent. You are a family. Do you think that the Marine Corps takes care of you as a family as well as it could or is there anything that you would like to change?

LCPL Pope: Well, being that we are both in active duty, we really haven't experienced that family thing because we have no children yet but from other Marines that do have kids, I see that they have a lot of problems as far as duties and all that. The first thing that they tell them is that the Marine Corps comes first but then on the other flip side they say that family comes first. So it is a toggle between there because there are a lot of single female Marines.

L.J. Kimball: I am kind of curious. You don't have any children.

LCPL Pope: No.

L.J. Kimball: You are very conscious about your job and we both know that there are a lot of single parents in the Marine Corps.

LCPL Pope: Right.

L.J. Kimball: You have a single parent, male or female, it doesn't matter. Because they have a small child sometimes they can't get in early because they have to drop the child off at day care and can't participate in PT in the morning or there are some special dispensations required for them. Do you feel that single parents with children should be treated differently?

LCPL Pope: In my opinion no because they knew how the Marine Corps was before they had that child. Even though they had that child, when you have a child you have to realize and look at everything from each angle, especially in the Military. Is there

somebody going to be there to take care of your child in the morning? If you have duty is somebody going to be able to take care of the child overnight? That is why I haven't had none yet. I don't want none while I am in the Marine Corps.

L.J. Kimball: Right.

LCPL Pope: But do they get treated different? Yes. Is there anything we can say? No.

L.J. Kimball: You and I both know Marines, also civilians where, sometimes you have a loving couple, they have a child and all of the sudden the wife or the husband decides to seek greener pasture some place else, not to the fault of the other one or that somebody is to blame here, but all of a sudden you have a single Marine with a child. It is not the situation that they wanted, not the situation that they expected, they assumed the parental responsibility with their eyes wide open, but all of a sudden the spouse takes off and they are stuck with the child.

LCPL Pope: Right.

L.J. Kimball: I always wondered, you'd have to have the wisdom of Solomon to handle a situation like that. I wondered what the counterparts in the office would feel about it. Let's say there is a mother who is a Lance Corporal like yourself and they had a child and her husband took off. Do you feel she should be given any special compensation or is it totally her own responsibility that she meets all of the requirements the same as everybody else?

LCPL Pope: If I was in charge of her, being that her husband just up and left, I would not expect her to be at PT at 5:30 a.m. for the single fact that now she has to take the time to find somebody to watch the child in the morning. If I was in charge of her I would give her enough time but set a time limit where she would need to find someone to take care of her child so she can perform her duties and be where she needs to be at all times.

L.J. Kimball: Do you think that she should make up that PT some time else during the day?

LCPL Pope: Yes.

L.J. Kimball: You haven't been in the Marine Corps very long. Have you been here long enough to observe any changes for the better or the worse?

LCPL Pope: No not since I have been here. It has been pretty steady.

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L.J. Kimball: What is your overall feeling. I understand that you've only seen Camp Johnson but the quality of Marines here, do you think that they are good, should they be improved, are you disappointed, or how do you feel about that?

LCPL Pope: As far as be coming in?

L.J. Kimball: Well the quality of the Marines that you see. You look around and say "okay, I am surrounded by all of these Marines and they are really super or they are not really super." How do you feel about that?

LCPL Pope: When I look around here, there is only half the people I would want to be like or want to use them as a role model. Everybody that you know you have to take the good and leave the bad. But as far as putting them on a scale from 1 to 10, the Marines here are just a 5 because the majority are about to retire so they just don't care or they are about to get out, or they got into some trouble where they are also about to get out and there are a lot of people around here that just don't care. Since they are getting out they don't care no more. That is all you see around here.

L.J. Kimball: Do you see a lot of drug problems around here?

LCPL Pope: No.

L.J. Kimball: A lot of people getting in trouble for misusing or using drugs?

LCPL Pope: Because they are using drugs? Yeah you see that. But no drugs on base, I don't see that.

L.J. Kimball: What you see is off base?

LCPL Pope: Off base I have never seen drugs off base but I know there are a couple of people around here that got in trouble because of that.

L.J. Kimball: Do you see any cases of people getting in trouble because of male/female relationships?

LCPL Pope: Not really. Once in a blue moon.

L.J. Kimball: What is the chance of you getting a duty station other than Camp Johnson some time before your enlistment is up?

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LCPL Pope: I don't know because the majority of people that is there have been there 3 years or 4 years since they came into the Marine Corps so I don't know or either they got a year left and they just PCS.

L.J. Kimball: Have you applied for drill instructor school?

LCPL Pope: No because I believe that you can't do anything until you picked up Corporal or something like that.

L.J. Kimball: Do you think that is something that you will try to do once you picked up Corporal?

LCPL Pope: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: I talked to a lot of people who have gone to be Drill Instructors and for most of them it was a very positive experience. They came out being better Marines. Well, is there anything else you would like to tell me?

LCPL Pope: Well, when you asked me if the Commandant were sitting right here what I would like to change, I can't say anything about change because I can't change a person but I would tell them that when people enlist they need to look at the Marines a little bit closer because there is too much homosexuality going on right here in Camp Johnson that is overwhelming and that you would not even believe.

L.J. Kimball: Is this male and female or principally . . .

LCPL Pope: This is both and right now it is at the point where you kind of like don't know if somebody is just saying it to get out of the Marine Corps or if they really are. Because now since other people got out because of that, the other people come up and say that I am like that too just to get out. That would be one thing as far as morale . . .

L.J. Kimball: You think that they ought to be more closely screened at boot camp to determine if they are homosexuals? Did you see any of that at boot camp?

LCPL Pope: Yeah you see females looking at you at boot camp but you so busy trying to get out of that shower that you would not think about it at that time. But you can start telling once you get out of boot camp and then you go to MCT with the people and go to school with the same people and start noticing. They never come out but you can tell. There is a lot going on here.



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L.J. Kimball: I am not really up to date on what the policies are in the Marine Corps these days. These homosexual activities, do the NCOs and officers know about it?

LCPL Pope: They know because here people are getting out for it. So it ain't that nobody around here don't know. What can they do, nothing, but admin sep [administratively separate] them.

L.J. Kimball: So if you know you still have to separate them from the service, if someone officially knows about it?

LCPL Pope: Right, they just can't go off just on what people say. That person has to come forth and say that I am a homosexual or whatever and then they act on that.

L.J. Kimball: It's kind of hard to quantify that. To a conservative Southern Baptist a whole lot of homosexuality might be one but to someone with liberal inclinations it might be 10% of the post. Can you give me a better idea when you say there is a lot going on. Is it 1 in 5, or 1 in 100?

LCPL Pope: I can say that in 20 people, 10 out of 20.

L.J. Kimball: Really? 50%?

LCPL Pope: I wouldn't say 50% but maybe 25%.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah that is a lot.

LCPL Pope: But then again you don't know if they are just saying it to be saying it or they are really like that. Some of them you can tell if they really are like that or not.

L.J. Kimball: Some of them might be looking for a reason to get out of the service, but you feel a lot them actually are?

LCPL Pope: Right.

L.J. Kimball: Have you seen this have an effect on the efficiency of the section, or the unit they're working in, the fact that there's homosexuals working there. Is it a detriment to the Marine Corps?

LCPL Pope: No except for the fact that once the Marine comes out with that, this is a small base so it ain't like nobody is going to know and as far as work they start slacking

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off of work because they feel that people are not talking to them like they normally would just because . . .

[End of Tape]