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“Police Officer Retires After 32 Years”



Gary Krueger didn't plan on having a career in law enforcement. He was farming and doing carpentry work in Plainview when he answered an ad in the newspaper for a Norfolk police officer position. Former Police Chief Jim Brennehan hired him and in July, 1983, Krueger began what would be nearly 32 years patrolling the streets of Norfolk.

Certain incidents from over the years stick in Krueger's mind like when a person shot at him and another officer with a sawed-off shotgun in a pitch black kitchen. Both officers were wearing bullet proof vests which saved their lives.

Krueger was in charge of the Police Division's Motorcycle Unit from 1999-2001. He was also a defensive tactics instructor, emergency vehicle operations instructor and he taught baton training.

"I've liked building into officers what's the right way and what's the wrong way. You do it right or don't do it at all- I like to pass that along," Krueger said.

He was trained mostly on the streets along with eight weeks of specialized law enforcement training. New officers now have an intensive eight week training period in Norfolk before going through a 16 week training at the Nebraska Law Enforcement Academy in Grand Island and then an additional 12 weeks with a field training officer in Norfolk before they can go it alone.

Helping people and interacting with a lot of citizens made police work a fulfilling job for Krueger but it wasn't easy. He once contacted tuberculosis from a prisoner he was transporting. Twelve hour shifts that would switch every four months from 6 am to 6 pm and then 6 pm to 6 am was tough. On many of his days off he would have to come into the station for training or court appearances.

He said that police officers are committed to what they're doing even when a Nebraska legislator this past winter cast law enforcement in a bad light.

"You work holidays and every other weekend. There are family things you miss out on. You can't really take time off or your shift is short. More is required now of officers to follow up investigations. We may have to review hours of tape to write one report. To the average citizen, it doesn't come through what a police officer has to go through," Krueger said.

He had advanced in the ranks as a Corporal and then Sergeant at the police division. He retired this spring and will work parttime as a security guard at two federal buildings in Norfolk.

"Police work is very physical. While I'm still physically able, I thought I'd do some other things. The timing worked out for me to retire," Krueger said.

He credits his faith and the support of his wife, Kathy, for getting him through years of pulling over drunk drivers, checking abandoned vehicles, assisting domestic violence victims, having his life and that of his family's threatened and much more,

"There's a lot of recidivism and you deal in a negative environment a lot of the time but if you can get a drunk driver off the streets or help someone in a dangerous situation, it's all worth it," Krueger said, "Our officers get the job done even when they're taxed and personally attacked. I've seen different officers mature and take positions of leadership. Norfolk's in good hands."