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LOCAL

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oyce, City Editor; 459-7575

Friday, October 31, 1997

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Retiring chief calls community policing big plus

By JOLIE LEWIS
Staff Writer

The faces are changing, the philosophy is not.

Reflecting on almost 24 years as deputy chief of the Fairbanks Police Department, Ken Steinnerd described recent community policing endeavors as the highlight of his career. For Lt. James Welch, who steps into the post as Steinnerd retires, it's likewise a top priority.

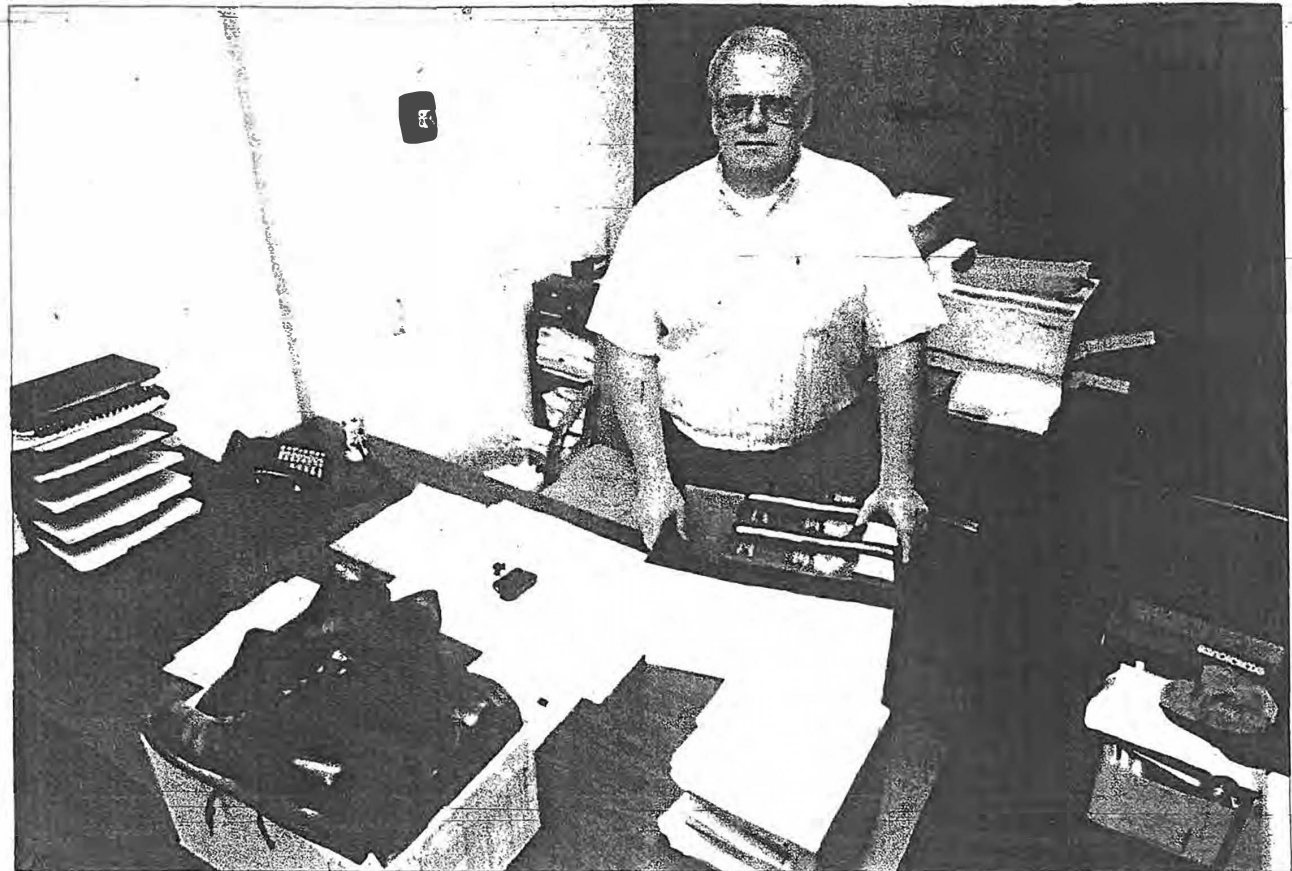
"A crime-intolerant community is a lot more effective than the best police department," Steinnerd said. "For the longest time, communities and police departments felt it's the police department's responsibility alone with problems of crime. ... That simply has not worked."

Though his retirement isn't official until Nov. 15, Thursday was the deputy chief's last day in the office. He will spend his last two weeks on leave.

Steinnerd, 44, joined the Fairbanks Police Department in 1983 after 5½ years in Sitka. His retirement wraps up a career that began dramatically on a dark, winding road in Missouri in late 1973.

"My first day, I was riding with another deputy and when he made a car stop, of course I got out of the car as well," Steinnerd said. "Two young male adults were in the vehicle; the one in the passenger side got out and pulled a pistol from his clothing and aimed it at me."

See RETIRING, Page B-2



LAST DAY—Retiring Fairbanks Deputy Chief of Police Ken Steinnerd stands in his office at the police station on his last day of work Thursday. Steinnerd has worked for the Fairbanks Police Department since 1983.

John Brecher/News-Miner

Assembly tightens guidelines for landfill trash

RETIRING: Chief

Continued from Page B-1

The 16-year-old dropped the weapon after Steinnerd yelled at him repeatedly.

The gun, which turned out to be a realistic-looking water pistol, made a funny clinking sound on the road. But Steinnerd said he didn't really register that at the time.

"My heart was beating probably about Mach 6," he said. "If he wouldn't have dropped it, I probably would have shot my gun. ... In that light, or lack of light, I couldn't tell it was anything but a real pistol."

The incident drove home the seriousness of his job and taught him to always expect the unexpected—a lesson police officers should never forget, he said, even on something as seemingly routine as a traffic stop.

Steinnerd and Welch, who is 45, were junior officers together in Fairbanks in the mid-1980s. "Scooter and I are both idealists," Steinnerd said, describing the man who will take his place as "somebody who's always thinking about what to do to make things better."

The deputy chief is currently the top law enforcement official in the city's police department. Mayor Jim Hayes has been the acting director of the police and fire departments since former Public Safety Director Mike Pulice was reassigned as special projects coordinator in April. The creation of that position followed a civil trial in which a jury ruled in favor of two former firefighters who said Pulice had forced them to quit their jobs out of fear.

Hayes hasn't said whether he will hire another public safety director.

Fairbanks police employ 48 people, 37 of them officers. Of those on patrol, a couple have been with the department for 15 to 20 years, but most are young. Only seven were hired before 1994.

The department is also short-staffed. Two officer positions are vacant, and more will come open after the retirement of Steinnerd and Lt. Paul Keller, a detective slated to leave in early 1998.

Even at full force, police staffing is stretched thin, said Steinnerd. There are nights when Fairbanks police and local Alaska

State Troopers have only six officers patrolling the Fairbanks area.

"Let that sink in," Steinnerd said. "It's the reality of that that makes community policing an absolute necessity."

Steinnerd said he bought into the idea of community policing after watching the efforts of a fellow officer who spearheaded an effort to remove a group of vacant buildings downtown. "That was probably the push for me, the visual proof I needed to see."

Welch wants the department to continue supporting efforts by businesses and neighborhoods to get involved in policing. The idea is that while officers continue to respond to daily incidents, they also participate in crime prevention.

Welch moved to Fairbanks 12 years ago from Waco, Texas, where he began a career in law enforcement in 1971. In 26 years of experience, he has done just about every job an officer can: detective work, administration, training, patrol, special investigations, resource management and crime prevention.

He said Fairbanks needs to focus on reducing substance abuse and youth crime. "Fairbanks and Alaska are going through transitions. Even though we're very isolated, we still have the same crime patterns that other communities have."

Welch and Steinnerd both said they have seen increases in alcohol use, crack addictions, violence, gang-related crimes and, in the words of Steinnerd, "senseless stuff."

Combating such problems takes more than calling in police after an incident. The community needs to offer more recreational opportunities for youth, increase jobs and confront social problems such as dysfunctional families and substance abuse, he said.

"For us to believe 50 below weather in and of itself is going to take care of a gang problem is not going to be a working solution," Steinnerd said.

Steinnerd spent the past two days cleaning out his office, tying up loose ends and saying goodbye. But he plans to stay in Fairbanks for the time being, and hopes to volunteer for a new non-profit agency, the Fairbanks Community Policing Coalition.

"I would like to do more family things," said Steinnerd, who is married and has 14- and 17-year-old children. "My kids, like all kids, are growing quickly."

But he will miss the people at the police department. "The department's a big part of my life. ... I've been associated with four criminal justice agencies, and by far, this is the best group of people that I've worked with," he said.

APOC

Continued from Page B-1

deposit changed the outcome of the election.

"His seven-day report shows evidence of an active campaign that is raising and spending funds very aggressively," Prax

Obituaries

Shirley J. Parker

Former Fairbanks Shirley J. Parker, 67, died Oct. 27, 1997, in Anchorage at Providence Alaska Center. She was a widow at the time of her death.

A memorial service will be held at the First Presbyterian Church of Wasilla, 1375 Bogard Road, at 1 p.m. Nov. 4, with Dr. Gemeyer and the Palmer Auxiliary. A reception will

Shirley was born Castle, Pa., on Nov. 1, 1930. She graduated from Eastbrook High School in 1946. Following school she began her vocal and pianist engagements were in Alaska. In 1950 she moved to Fairbanks where she continued her career until 1968 at which time she moved to Anchorage. She was a professional pianist and entertainer many years. She always said that the piano was her friend. She retired from the music industry in 1968. Her love of music remained.

Besides music, Shirley was a member of the Association, Anchorage Club and the Palmer Pioneer of Alaska. She served as secretary for two years with the Pioneer in 1969. She married the late W.D. "Wally" Parke to her husband she

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