

WB police chief was tough, fair

BY GREG KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

Alfred McGhee was a tough, street-smart Detroit cop when he came to West Bloomfield in 1971 as the new police chief.

It was a world removed from what he was used to. West Bloomfield was still pretty much rural and the police department had all of 16 officers.

"We had a one-button radio," said Patti Page, administrative secretary who had joined the department as a cadet dispatcher just six months before McGhee arrived.

But West Bloomfield and McGhee were a natural match. He settled into the job quickly, gaining the respect and admiration of the department and the township administration.

"He loved West Bloomfield," Page said. "This was his home. That's why he stayed here for 20 years."

McGhee retired in 1991. He died last Monday of diabetes complicated by Alzheimer's disease.

He expressed his view of West Bloomfield when he retired.

"From the time I arrived in West Bloomfield it was like, well, I shouldn't say heaven, but that's what it felt like," McGhee told the Eccentric at the time.

"He was true and honest," Page said. "He had a loud bark but a big heart. He was very well liked."

"Tough but fair," were words used more than once to describe McGhee by those who knew him.

"He was a tough man but treated people very well," said Lt. Mike Madigan who served with McGhee's administrative staff.

"He was just a good man to work for."

"Chief McGhee was of the old school," said Juddy Hood, township supervisor. "He was firm, but fair."

Indeed, McGhee once described himself as a "tally old cop." But he had a big heart and a sense of the community. He helped raise money for charity as an actor for 25 years with the Redford Suburban League Theater Guild. And he was longtime member of the West Bloomfield Optimist Club and was president of the club in 1978-79.

"He was very much loved by everyone who knew him," Hood said. "He was a very important part of the township's growth."

Alfred and wife Jessie were married for more than 55 years. They had three sons, Alfred, Robert and James, nine grandchildren and one great-grandchild. A daughter, Sandra, died some time ago.

McGhee was a veteran of World War II, having joined the Navy just after Pearl Harbor was attacked in 1941. He was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Fraternal Order of Police, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and was a life member of the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police.

After Chief McGhee retired he and Jessie moved to California but occasionally returned to West Bloomfield. Stricken by Alzheimer's, McGhee's health faltered. Last October, as his condition worsened, McGhee moved into the Silverado Living Center which specializes in the care of Alzheimer's patients.

CAMPUS PIPELINE

employed by Ernst & Young in Detroit.

DETROIT DEAN'S
The following Farmington area residents made the Dean's List at the end of the fall full-term: Robyn Seay, Jessica Strong and Suzette Wiscinski.

OU HONORS
Lisa Velasco of Farmington

Dolan, an accounting major, is

Hills was listed on the University of Oklahoma Norman campus honor roll for the fall 1997 semester.

WESTERN DEAN'S
Courtney F.X. Cahill has achieved the Dean's List at Western Michigan University. He is a junior majoring in integrated supply management.

Courtney was an honors graduate in the Harrison High School class of 1995.

Rainbow from page A1

gives you a real feeling of how the real world is. And starting this early gets you even more prepared for college and the real world."

She said the mix of students at Mercy fosters the great experience of being able "to talk to other students, interchange ideas, get other perspectives."

Young people are growing up with such beneficial values ingrained, Gustafson added following Thursday's breakfast program. But she stressed that there is a growing commitment toward multicultural/multiracial understanding from people of all ages in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

"Our community has worked so hard toward getting everyone educated about diversity, culture."

Rainbow award winner Michelle Meyers, a Beechview Elementary School teacher, echoed Gustafson's enthusiasm about how the exposure to diverse people earlier in life bodes well for a less-divided future when they become adults.

"In Farmington and all over," Meyers said, "the students, at a very young age, are very culturally aware. And that's a great sign."

Meyers, co-teacher Fay Kinaya and principal Norma Jean Sass won for this year successfully piloting a multiage/multicultural class at the Farmington district school. The program gives "newcomers" from foreign countries, as well as career students from the area, a unique learning opportunity.

Award winner Patrick Battah was one of 10 East Middle School students honored for their part in a successful student-led fair about Middle East culture. The students were nominated by seventh-grade teacher Marilyn Greenstein.

"It's a great honor," Patrick said succinctly, clutching a Rainbow proclamation, certificate and pin, the latter featuring peoples from different backgrounds holding hands.

Several others in attendance at the breakfast also cited the importance of young people winning the awards.



Honored: Congratulations go to Omar Odeh, one of the East Middle School seventh-graders cited.

"It's good that they're getting recognition from the adult community," said Larry Moloney, one of five citizen representatives of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Steering Committee. "Solutions to all of these problems I think can start in the schools."

North Farmington High School assistant principal Ron Jones said he has "a lot of hope for our young people, a lot of hope that they recognize the diversity and don't let the diversity separate them. They communicate with each other."

They're named Rainbow Award winners

The following received 1998 Rainbow Recognition Awards Thursday at the William Costick Activities Center. The awards were presented by the Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council:

Sylvia Akouri, Julie Aoun, Patrick Battah, Janet Cheney, Greg Drozdowski, Kuman Ellison, Douglas Engler, Theda Gibbs, Libby Grewel, Julie Grodin, Kristin Gustafson, Bill Harmon, Angela Harms, Ellen Jud, George Keith, Sharon Kelly, Fay Kinaya, Susan Loece, Elsie

McKeown, Michelle Meyers, Omar Odeh, Renata Oki, Bev Papai, Justin Roumynah, Norma Jean Sass, Alvin Savaya, Sandy Savaya, Clara Seymour, Kobey Shwyder, Dee Wilson, Eric Zatin and Connie Zimmerman.

The Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council draws significant support from Farmington Public Schools, Farmington City Council, Farmington Hills City Council, Farmington/Farmington Hills Ministerial Association and Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce.

Its mission statement is "to assure that all residents of our community enjoy a harmonious, healthy environment and that they feel welcome and comfortable in their cities, schools and neighborhoods. The council is dedicated to promoting awareness and acceptance of diversity in our community."

Activities include the annual awards breakfast, as well as workshops, forums and seminars. Monthly programs are broadcast on Community Access-Cable Television Channels 10 and 12.



Speaking of: Sampson makes his point of not letting differences make a difference and not worrying about your position in life. "Encourage those in front," he said.

Streams from page A1

ington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council's Third Annual Rainbow Recognition Awards Breakfast. The event, which honored 32 local people for their impact on race and cultural relations, took place at the William Costick Activities Center in Farmington Hills.

At the beginning of his speech, Sampson told a childhood story about how, during a drought, an elderly farmer took buckets to an arroyo well to obtain some water. But then, wild boars knocked down fences in order to graze from a thicket, then drink and bathe in muddy streams. With his water all muddied, the man did nothing except sit on a log, whistle and spit tobacco — until the stream cleared itself.

Modern world

He then connected the story to today's world, trying to encourage people of all races, religions and ethnic backgrounds to not worry so much about "broken fences" in life but rather to keep the "streams" of their minds, souls and hearts clear.

"Don't be disturbed because there are some boars wild in the neighborhood," Sampson said. "They will knock down your fences, and if you're not careful they will muddy the streams of your heart."

Sampson, who marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and who in 1984 was ranked by Ebony Magazine as one of America's Top 16 Greatest Black Preachers, said these streams can be dirtied by "the recklessness of racism, the rigidity of religious bigotry."

"Keep the streams clear in the heart, the soul and the mind. Fix the fences later,"

birds fly, instinctively and in "V" formation, not worried about which bird leads the way but about making sure each member of the flock helped the cause. For instance, he said the birds at the rear of the "V" are the ones honking support for the leader.

"Days to you, you can accomplish beyond with education, wisdom and people that care."

Ron Jones, assistant principal at North Farmington High School, said Sampson capped "a wonderful program" with his prevailing theme of understanding. "You can disagree, but not be disagreeable."

According to Larry Moloney, the keynote speaker painted "wonderful pictures" of people getting past their differences to work together.

"The people without the titles are the people that are way back there somewhere, pushing the people ahead," Moloney added.

Sampson's "Broken Fences, Muddy Streams" speech made an impact on Mercy High School student Kristin Gustafson, one of the 32 Rainbow Recognition winners.

"Live in the now, seize the day, think about what you can take care of now," said Gustafson about the message of the speech.

"Anything you can do is going to have some effect, even if it's just affecting one person."

She also described Sampson's address as deep and inspiring. "It made me look more into myself," Gustafson said. "He's just incredibly motivational and provides great insight. Stories like that you can't get from everyone."

about how the elderly neighborhood woman saw the potential in him when he was a fat boy with a stutter.

"It's very important for our young people today to learn from experiences such as this," Saltz said. "No matter what anybody says to you, you can accomplish beyond with education, wisdom and people that care."

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Gustafson liked Sampson's presentation so much that she asked him to give a guest speech during Black History Month at Mercy.

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