

Rochford files

Commander has yet another award for his career path

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After 30 years and seven badges, Farmington Hills Police Cmdr. Dennis Rochford's office wall depicts a storied law enforcement career pursuing a few wise guys.

Four degrees pinned on the same wall also reflects a career path wisely pursued.

Rochford, 48, is proud of his academic and career accomplishments. One wouldn't have happened without the other, he said.

He earned associate's and bachelor's degrees in criminal justice at Madonna University and a master's in public administration from Eastern Michigan University. He's also a graduate of the Northwestern University Traffic Institute's School of Police Staff and the FBI National Academy.

He'll have to make room on the name wall for another honor: Rochford was named as 1998 VFW Police Officer of the Year.

'In some families, you have a father or an uncle who are police officers and you're predestined to become a police officer. It just never crossed my mind.'

Dennis Rochford
—Hills police commander

"It's one thing you need," Rochford said. "You go to school and you get different ideas and realize there are different people out there. You're not in this one mindset."

Rochford's educational background is partly due to the Omnibus crime bill of 1968. Federal legislation provided money for police officers to get additional education and training, which raised standards for new hires

and law enforcement in general, he said.

Virtually all Farmington Hills police commanders and half the number of sergeants have master's degrees.

Ironically, Rochford initially dropped out of college to become a police officer. The 1968 Detroit Cathedral High graduate was an engineering major at Lawrence Tech, but left to become a cadet with then-Farmington Township police department.

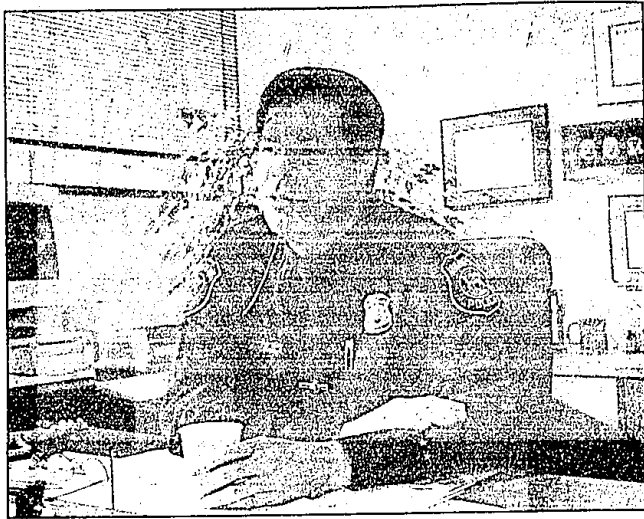
He was the first but not the last in his family to go into law enforcement. After Rochford joined, his brother, Dan, became a Detroit police officer while his sister, Sue, worked for Westland's department. Two of his cousins also became police officers.

"I got into it and I really enjoyed it," Rochford said. "I think they saw how much I enjoyed it."

"In some families, you have a father or an uncle who are police officers and you're predestined to become a police officer. It just never crossed my mind."

At the height of the war protests in 1971, Rochford became an officer. He went onto become a sergeant, lieutenant, captain and commander.

In the meantime, he's witnessed the profession and city



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DREIER

Honored: It's not the first time that Commander Dennis Rochford of the Farmington Hills Police Department has been honored. But being named the 1998 VFW Police Officer of the Year is nonetheless an honor.

grow.
"The technology you have in a scout car now has changed a lot," he said, referring to the computer terminals and radios in today's vehicles. "When I started, you were lucky to have a prep radio inside. They didn't

even have screens between the front and back seat (where prisoners usually sit)."

His experience is an asset, Chief Bill Dwyer said. "Longevity of this kind is not only rare but serves to illustrate the commander's commitment to

his duties and community," Dwyer said.

Said Rochford on the VFW honor: "It's a great honor to be recognized by your peers and subordinates."

Child car seat inspections set for Bob Sellers Pontiac Feb. 20

Recent publicity about the complexity of child car seat installation has led many parents to question their children's safety while traveling. A team of local experts and Botsford General Hospital representatives will help sort out the issues and provide free, on-the-spot checks of child car seats.

The inspections will take place

from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 20, at the Bob Sellers Pontiac/GMC Dealership at 38000 Grand River in Farmington Hills. In addition to child car seat checks, the event will feature demonstrations of "Andy the Ambulance" by Community EMS, face painting for children, give-aways and kids finger printing.

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