

# Detective who kept a beat retires from beat

By WILLIAM COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

The drum roll, please. There wasn't one for retiring Farmington Hills Police Detective Jerry McKenzie Aug. 8, when the veteran policeman and musician extraordinaire was honored by fellow officers. If there had been, McKenzie, a former member of the famed Stan Kenton Band, would have done the honors.

The 33-year policeman is as famous for his practical jokes and disarming manners as for his refined interviewing techniques and musical talents. His colleagues took pleasure in sharing some funny, but true, stories about their friend.

Chief Bill Dwyer explained the "very humble senior detective" as a man who found his way to the Hills by a process of elimination.

"He started in Detroit (where he served for a year), but found it was too dangerous," Dwyer quipped. "Then he went to Dearborn Heights (for two years), where he found there was too much crime. Then he went to Wayne County (Sheriff's Department for five years), but also found too many serious criminals."

The remarks drew laughter, for even if there was serious

crime, McKenzie, who became a Hills police officer in 1970, would inject his own brand of humor.

"The young cops never shared your zeal for investigating Elvis sightings," said Inspector Marty Bledsoe.

Bledsoe's testimony was only one of many where officers remembered McKenzie in his element, often throwing other law enforcement professionals into confusion.

A famous "oral board," where McKenzie posed as an officer appearing for a promotion "in blue pumps" and with co-conspirator and former Hills police Chief John Nichols, left several other officers with jaws hanging.

Even with his disarming humor, McKenzie, who served in the patrol division and juvenile section before becoming a detective in 1982, could gain a person's confidence.

"His interviewing skills have been extremely valuable," said Sgt. Tim Swanson, McKenzie's supervisor.

McKenzie maintained a successful police career and a life with his wife Jeannie, their five children and six grand children. But he also scratched his musical itch, playing and touring with the Stan Kenton Band from 1959-61.

McKenzie traveled throughout the world for those two years



Over and out: Farmington Hills detective Jerry McKenzie, known for his musician-ship as well as his police work, is retiring after 33 years.

before becoming an officer, and took a six-month leave of absence in 1972 to again play the drums with the band after the famous band leader said McKenzie was the only man who could fill in.

He continues to play at various functions and is considered one

of the area's finest percussionists, as evidenced by his many appearances when musical starts came to the Fisher or Fox Theaters and include McKenzie in their performances.

He earned a citation, three unit citations and a certificate of commendation as well as the respect of his peers.

"You people have been very important to me," a more serious McKenzie told friends, family, officers and city officials.

"I'm not totally going away from the department," he said referring to his new duties at the 27th District Court.

Police officers in Farmington Hills won't have to go far to see McKenzie, who will keep his former colleagues on their toes.

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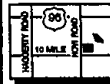
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