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STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LAMBERT

Making his point: Farmington Hills Police Deputy Chief Mirl Spencer makes his point campaigning door-to-door in White Lake Township.

Hills' loss could be White Lake's gain

BY WILLIAM COULTANT
STAFF WRITER

If Farmington Hills loses a top police veteran, it will be because White Lake Township is gaining a new supervisor.

Deputy Chief Mirl J. Spencer, 57, has so far convinced township voters that he can be as successful in leading the township as he has been with the police department.

"I've been a resident for over 20 years," he said. "I think people believe it's time for some new blood."

Republican voters agreed, picking Spencer over incumbent Terry Lilley.

Spencer has spent the summer and going door-to-door, pressing the flesh and talking to residents.

"It's new to me," he said. "But I've enjoyed it." If he succeeds, Spencer will take a big chunk of Farmington Hills history with him.

The 32-year veteran was the twelfth officer hired by the

department, then Farmington Township, on Aug. 16, 1964.

Spencer had law enforcement experience in Novi and had worked with the Washington Metropolitan District of Columbia Police Department after serving in the army as a military police officer. He had also served in Korea and at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

During his tenure, Spencer has earned three life saving awards, a valor citation, meritorious awards and citations. He was the department's first Operations Bureau commander in 1978.

Spencer was a department pioneer, rising to corporal in 1968, sergeant in 1974, lieutenant in 1975, inspector in 1978 and deputy chief in 1985. He is the first and, so far, only deputy chief to serve in the department.

Spencer and his wife Jo have three grown children. He has a degree in criminal justice and social sciences from Madonna University.

"I love what I'm doing here," he said, adding that he still enjoys his job with the department. "But this is a time for a new challenge."

And if you think because he beat the incumbent in the primary and faces no Democratic opposition, Spencer is relaxing, guess again.

"Look at this," he says pointing to an add in the Spinal Column in which the Committee to Reelect (Terry) Lilley ran an add extolling voters to be part of "history making" by writing in their candidate. "He's not going to give up."

So neither can Spencer. After work at the department, he's off to campaign again.

Should he win, Spencer will be missed.

"One of the first things I did after I was named chief was to appoint him deputy chief," said Spencer's boss, Chief Bill Dwyer. This is really an outstanding opportunity for him. He's got all the qualities to do a good job and I think he will do a good job."

But Dwyer said he won't jump the gun.

"I'll wait until after the first of the year to do anything," Dwyer said.



Pounding the pavement: Mirl Spencer asks for support from his neighbor, Debbie Darga.

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