

Nichols from page A1

charge of the department. "He gave me my first promotion, to sergeant," he recalled.

Dwyer, who succeeded Nichols in Farmington Hills, remembers the commissioner as a stern disciplinarian, who demanded professionalism. "He was demanding, but fair," said Dwyer. "And he always stuck up for his people, as long as they had done the right thing."

Ironically, Nichols was fired as Detroit's top cop in 1973, when he ran for mayor of Detroit without first resigning as police commissioner.

Nichols won the primary, but lost a hotly-contested general election to Coleman A. Young who campaigned, in part, on the promise to integrate the then

mostly-white police force to make it less of an occupying army and more reflective of the increasingly black community.

In 1974, Nichols became undersheriff to Johannes Spreen, a position he held until 1977, when he became chief in Farmington Hills. Seven years later, in the fall of 1984, Nichols ran for Oakland County sheriff and won easily.

County executive L. Brooks Patterson was prosecutor at the time. He remembers Nichols — who celebrated his 80th birthday Nov. 23 — as a tough professional. "In a career that spanned five decades, he was the best," said Patterson.

Goreyca was 34 — less than half

Nichols' age — in 1997, when assumed the duties as prosecutor. He remembers the crusty Nichols calling a meeting, "to tell me, the rookie, how the game is played."

"I was respectful," the young prosecutor recalled. "But not intimidated. One thing I always like about him was his bluntness. You always knew where you stood."

Deputy Douglas C. Edgar, outgoing president of the Oakland County Sheriff's Association, remembers Nichols as "probably the most intelligent person I've ever met."

As the head of the deputies union, Edgar said he negotiated labor contracts directly with Nichols and, on occasion, negotiated disciplinary problems. But the relationship was more like professional and student, Edgar insisted. "He knew so much, and he was so wise."

One important lesson, Edgar said, was in negotiations. "He always found a way to let the other person save face. The modern phrase is 'win-win' negotia-

tions, but Nichols said it was an age-old concept."

While Nichols knew history, he was always conscious of the need for change and adapting, said Capt. McCabe. "His boot camp is probably the most successful in the state," he said. "And he was always conscious of changing technology and its impact on department."

Last month, for example, when Oakland was awarded a \$17 million federal grant to upgrade communications, Nichols was just beamed," said McCabe. "I've never seen him happier."

Nichols had a police administration degree from Wayne State University and, at various times, was on the faculty of Wayne State and what was then Mercy College.

Nichols is survived by his wife, Jean; a son, Jon; a daughter, Sharilyn Schleicher; five grandchildren; and four



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great-grand children.

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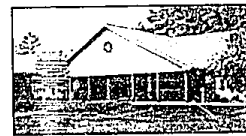
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