

Officials turn out to honor Nichols

BY PAT MURPHY
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Oakland Sheriff John F. Nichols received full military honors this week as he was remembered by friends and admirers who fondly recalled his exemplary career as a professional cop and his commitment to friends and colleagues.

"Sheriff Nichols was one of a kind," said Capt. Damon Shields, one of about 100 command officers who served under Nichols. "Anybody who tries to imitate him is doomed to failure," he said.

Shields was one of thousands of mourners who visited Mt. Zion in Clarkston Monday and Tuesday, where Nichols died in state prior to his funeral Wednesday.

Nichols was in full uniform — with dozens of police commendations and medals adorning his chest — as admirers filed by his casket. Some paused briefly in silence, others had tears rolling down their cheeks.

Honor guards in full dress uniform were stationed on each side of the casket. They were from the sheriff's department or

either the Detroit or Farmington Hills police departments. The three police agencies in which Nichols spent more than 55 years as a patrolman or command officer.

For the funeral, Army guards from Fort Knox, Ky., were scheduled to provide a rifle salute, along with the traditional rendering of "Taps." A formation of military jets was scheduled to fly over the funeral ceremony, a symbol of Nichols as a World War II veteran and a retired colonel in the Army Reserves.

"I'm not sure what I'm going to say," said the Rev. Loren Covarrubias, senior pastor at Mt. Zion, which only recently dropped the word "Temple" from its name. "It's hard to find the appropriate words to honor somebody like Sheriff Nichols."

Covarrubias is also a member of the chaplain's core established by Nichols about five years ago.

Nichols was the right man — an innovative disciplinarian — for the right place when he was elected sheriff of Oakland County, according to county executive L. Brooks Patterson, another person scheduled to eulogize the late sheriff. At the request of The Eccentric Newspapers, the executive provided an advanced copy of his remarks.

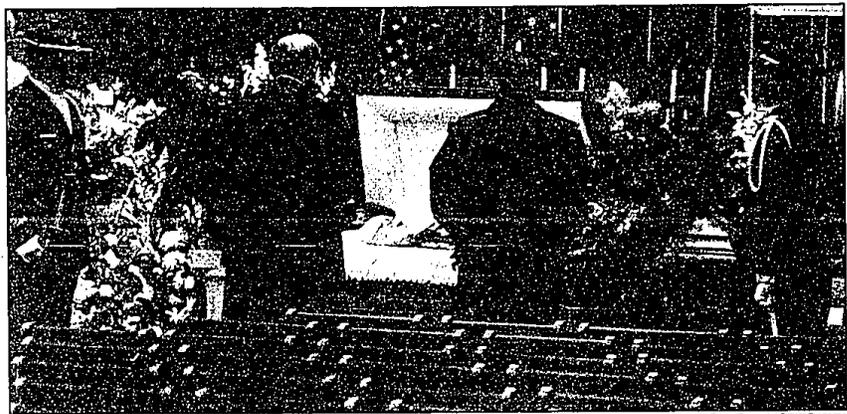
"When John Nichols was appointed undersheriff in 1974, I was starting my career as prosecuting attorney," Patterson said. "It was then that we began a three decade long friendship."

When Nichols was elected sheriff in 1984 (after being chief of the Farmington Hills Police Department for seven years) the department was ready for some new leadership and some major changes, Patterson said.

"John Nichols may have been born a few years before the pentium chip was invented," Patterson said, "but he was still quick to embrace new technology that would give the men and women of his department a cutting edge advantage in the war on crime."

The sheriff's funeral was expected to be to draw thousands of admirers, including sheriff's deputies and police officers from dozens of departments.

The funeral procession itself could include hundreds of vehicles — so many that organizers were cautioning motorists along the route from Mt. Zion in Clarkston to Roseland Park Cemetery near 12 Mile Road and Woodward in Berkeley.



STAFF PHOTO BY STEVE CANTRELL

Visitation scene: Police officers provide an honor guard during visitation at Mt. Zion in Clarkston Tuesday for John Nichols, Oakland County's long-term sheriff, who died Dec. 18 at age 80. His funeral was Wednesday.

Front-runners emerge in sheriff's race

BY PAT MURPHY
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As the campaign to select a successor to the late John F. Nichols begins in earnest, two front-runners are emerging — State Sen. Michael Bouchard of Birmingham and Undersheriff Henry Buffa of Rochester Hills.

Neither has publicly acknowledged wanting to succeed Nichols. Each has deferred comments until after Wednesday funeral at which Nichols was eulogized and his family comforted.

But Bouchard and Buffa are clearly far ahead of the other candidates — including Thomas E. Quisenberry, chief of staff within the sheriff's department.

Bouchard is a former police officer who has been Bouchard's name is mentioned so frequently that candidates are already lining up to run in the special election that would be needed to fill his senate seat in the 13th District if Bouchard is indeed tapped as the new sheriff.

If Bouchard's successor happened to be a state representative — say Patricia God-

chaux of Birmingham — another special election would be needed to fill that vacancy. Some business executives, including Edward Hamilton of Troy, are mentioned as possible candidates.

While Buffa hasn't said he wants to be Oakland's next sheriff. But if he does, he will have the support of Rudy Lozano, a Clarkston business man who was a friend of, and fund raiser for, the late John Nichols.

"Hank Buffa has the qualifications," Lozano said Wednesday. "But John Nichols

Please see NEXT SHERIFF, A6



■ 'It's hard to find the appropriate words to honor somebody like Sheriff Nichols.'

— The Rev. Loren Covarrubias
Mt. Zion

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