

Saying goodbye

Veteran Farmington Public Safety officer retires after 28 years

BY TRACEY BIRKENHUAUER
STAFF WRITER

Standing behind the charred carcass of a Dodge Intrepid in a strip mall parking lot, Farmington Public Safety Officer Hilton Hyde wore an anxious grin.

"I couldn't eat breakfast this morning," said Hyde, better known by department cronies as Zeko. "I was trying to get down a banana when we got the call for this car fire."

Hyde, 62, was elated to see some action on his last day, even if it was just a car fire.

"Just think, this will be your last car fire - ever," a fellow firefighter told him.

After 28 years, Monday was Hyde's final day as a public servant in a town with a low crime rate and few fires. Even during slow times, Hyde said his days have been filled with excitement and fulfillment.

His years have brought him two commendations, four unit citations, four life-saving awards and he was named officer of the year in 1991.

Retirement, for him, will be bittersweet.

He'll get to spend more time with his wife, Lynette, and daughter, Carrie, but he'll miss his title and stature dearly.

"As a public safety officer, I've been a part of everyone in this



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BARBER

Bye: Farmington Public Safety officer Hilton Hyde retired Monday. He was named officer of the year in 1991.

community's lives, but tomorrow I won't be," he said.

Hyde said he's loved everything about being a public service officer, which means he's a combination police officer, firefighter and rescue worker.

"I even enjoy enforcing traffic

laws," he said. "I love doing anything that makes this community a better place. I have loved everything about this community."

"There has never been a day that I have not wanted to come to work," he said.

What brought this gregarious Redford Township native and former military policeman to Farmington?

His answer sounds almost too simple.

"It was the only place I applied for a job and they hired me," he said.

Hyde's cousin worked for the department and told him there was an opening. He was hired on May 1, 1972. He's lived in the city ever since and he plans to continue living here indefinitely.

He's always thought of himself as a cop-type. To him, that means he's an upstanding citizen who would do anything for anyone in trouble and he'd never ask for anything in return.

He served as a military police officer in Germany for the U.S. Army from 1966-70.

"While other guys were serving in Vietnam, I was on a two-year vacation," he said. "I've been lucky like that my whole life. I truly am the luckiest guy alive."

Colleagues think they are the lucky ones to have served with a man of Hyde's caliber.

"He's kind of a father figure of the patrol division," said Commander John Coyte, who served with Hyde for 23 years. "I'm at a loss for words... He's like a very knowledgeable, consistent type of guy. He's compassionate, but

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Gary Goss
—Public Safety director

by the book."

Hyde agrees. "I'm a wonderful person," he joked. "I've loved this city and community forever. What makes my department special is the attitude that the employees have. We're the best and we only hire the best."

"The Farmington way is keeping everyone happy."

His boss, Gary Goss, said he's the guy you can count on when you need him.

"He has a natural, easy manner that served to quiet stressful situations and an ability to apply common sense to every situation," he said. "If I had to choose one officer to respond to a family's trouble, it would be officer Hyde."

After so many years, Hyde has witnessed innumerable changes in the city.

"I used to think there wasn't any room left to build anything else," he said. "But they keep on

expanding.

"The traffic is unbelievable out here. I used to recognize everyone driving through town, but that's not anywhere near possible now."

One thing that hasn't changed, he said, is the attitude within the 22-person department.

"It's still a small-town atmosphere," he said. "This department is too small for corruption. None of my co-workers would allow me to do something illegal or wrong and I wouldn't allow them to. This is the Farmington way."

As for his retirement years, Hyde has no definite plans. He wants to get a part-time job doing something. Something easy, preferably.

"I want a non-stress, no-numbers, minimum-wage job," he said. "I want to make about \$100 a week. My goal is to make pocket money. I'm open to most anything."

Casual Day at city hall goes a long way toward a big help

BY JON HUBBARD
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There's nothing casual about "Casual Days" at Farmington Hills City Hall.

While employees have the opportunity to shed their business attire for khakis, dress jeans and other appropriate casual wear, they have to pay for the privilege. The modest fee goes to support a program called "Casual Day for a Cause," launched about five years ago.

The idea, according to administrative secretary Pam Wright, was to give employees a chance to have a little fun, build camaraderie and help out organizations and folks in need. A small committee helps determine where the money goes because so many good causes exist, she said.

"We try to take into account

various suggestions from people as to where the money goes," she said.

"We try to pick organizations or individuals that are in Farmington Hills or have an impact on employees of Farmington Hills."

Contributions have gone toward personal causes, like the sister of an employee who needed a bone marrow transplant, or the friend of another who needed help paying for an assistance dog from Paws with a Cause. Cancer research, the Rouge River res-

cue, Alzheimer's Association, HAVEN shelter, Farmington Families in Action and Howell Nature Center have all benefited

from the generosity of Hills employees.

"On average, we collect about \$400, with 60-70 percent partici-

pation of all civilian employees," Wright said. "I just think not only are employees given a chance to contribute, but it also

gives us a chance to distribute information about those organizations they may not ordinarily come into contact with."

Bidis from page A1

office. Honolulu is considering a ban and the state of New York has a bill in its legislature to do the same.

Regardless, children still can order bidis off the Internet. Countless sites draw children as young as 9, who have bidis delivered to their doors.

Youths misled

There are currently no national statistics on the prevalence of bidi use in the United States, but one state's study drew alarming figures. In early 1999, the Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program surveyed 642 youths in grades seven through 12, finding that 40 percent of the children had tried bidis and 16 percent claimed to be current smokers.

The youths said bidis tasted better, and were cheaper and safer than regular cigarettes.

Health advocates cringe at that news because studies show that bidis contain three times more nicotine and five times more tar than traditional cigarettes.

"Cigarettes are bad enough on their own," said Jim Moore, director of programs for the American Lung Association of Michigan. "And bidis certainly aren't a safe alternative."

Education key

"We need to make people understand these aren't cute, little cigarettes," Moore said.

With more funding, Moore said, the Lung Association could tackle bidi use more effectively. A bill passed by the state House and currently in the Senate would allocate \$10 million from the tobacco settlement for youth tobacco programs.

"If we can get that kind of funding, we can start these types

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of programs," Moore said.

Warren city councilman Jim Fouts isn't waiting for the state or national government to act. He's the city council member and American government teacher who proposed Warren ban bidis.

He asked the council to request area stores to voluntarily withdraw bidi cigarettes until a state law is instituted to control their sale.

"This ordinance is designed to protect the children on two continents who are victims of the enslavement of tobacco," Fouts said.

The councilman introduced the ban after hearing about the torturous working conditions of children in India, many of whom are paid pennies a day for rolling up to 1,000 bidi cigarettes.

"From an ethical and a moral standpoint, they should be withdrawn," he said. "Bidis are a gateway to other tobacco products."



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