

29 years, same dutiful post: University police officer hangs up the uniform

by Matt Hietpas - Tuesday, December 18, 2012

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After 29 years of service with the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh police force, and in the same dutiful post, an officer announced his retirement.

Officer Brad Hanson started working at the University Police Department in 1983; he held the same position during his entire time with the force. His last day in uniform was Dec. 15, also known as one of the busiest days of the year for UW Oshkosh police: Midyear Commencement day when an estimated 7,000 students and guests pack Kolf Sports Center.

“Overall I enjoyed my 29 years,” Hanson said. “There were times of frustration but I was able to raise a family from it and met some nice, fine people along the way.”

Throughout his years on the force, Hanson gave of his time and talent in many ways. Earlier this year, Hanson was given a [Wisconsin Department of Transportation Award](#) for his commitment to traffic safety and outstanding effort to keep Wisconsin’s roads safe during the Click It or Ticket mobilization. It's just one example of his dedication to the University Police, UW Oshkosh and public safety.

“Brad is a true professional and a great friend and will be missed by fellow officers, dispatchers and student Community Service Officers,” said University Police Chief Joseph LeMire. “You do not replace people like Brad very easily.”

“One of Brad's strongest points is that he is willing to do any duty that is assigned to him,” LeMire said. “He is friendly and professional and no matter the situation he is calming person to be around.”

Many referred to Hanson as “Officer Friendly,” including UW Oshkosh Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Petra Roter. In a University community that has made a commitment to embracing and recognizing civility on campus, in the classroom and within the ranks of its 1,700 employees, that's not just some breezy nickname.

“Brad retires from UP after 29 years of service--our own Officer Friendly,” Roter wrote on her Facebook page. “Thank you for all you've done for us and our students and best wishes in that next big thing.”

Roter joined Hanson and dozens of colleagues and well-wishers at a retirement celebration in Reeve Memorial Union on Dec. 14. Among the handful of gifts he received was a brick from the original University Police department on campus -- Hanson's first headquarters.

“Seeing our original building getting torn down for Sage was especially tough,” Hanson said. “When I first started I was working there I was on night-shift so the only people you saw were your coworkers.”

A photo album shared at the retirement gathering and assembled by Officer Laura England chronicled Hanson's University Police service throughout four different decades. Terri Gohmann, assistant dean of students, described Hanson, whom she started with at UW Oshkosh in 1983, as "laid back."

"All you have to do is look at this book here," she said, paging through England's project.

According to Hanson, working 29 years for the University Police granted him many memorable moments, some of his favorites were doing security for former Senator Ed Muskie and media personality and American sex therapist Ruth "Dr. Ruth" Westheimer.

"Looking back at my 29 years, I got to meet and to be up close to a lot of important and interesting people," Hanson said.

In July 2009, Hanson was a recipient of the University's STAR Award after being nominated by former University Police Chief Michael Melland. STAR Awards are given to classified staff members on campus who demonstrate an extreme commitment to the University through outstanding performance.

"(Hanson) embodies exactly what true community policing is all about," Melland said in his nomination letter. "Brad possesses a combination of professionalism, ability, approachable demeanor and an honest desire to help people that is evident to anyone who has met him. Brad goes above and beyond in assuming the important duty of court officer as well as performing the duties of a police officer."

"The best compliment I can pay to Brad Hanson is that after 29 years in law enforcement, which can be a stressful and difficult career at times, he is still a fine gentleman and well-respected by fellow employees in and out of law enforcement," LeMire said.

The feeling of retirement has just begun to sink in for Hanson, he said.

"It feels different especially after having worked weekends and holidays," Hanson said. "On my last day I felt like I was just going home after my shift but now it's starting to settle in."

Learn more:

- [UW Oshkosh Police Department](#)