

RUSH COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT/A Look Back

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This is the 24th article I have written to commemorate the Rush County Bicentennial in 2022. The topic for this writing is the last five decades of law enforcement in Rush County through the eyes of two law enforcement officers, Bob Bridges and Marvin Hedrick. I interviewed them at the Rush County Museum on March 4, 2022.

Bob Bridges attended Moscow Elementary School and graduated from Waldron High School. He married Mary Ann Fry, and they have three children; Maria, Joe, and Brendan. Bob served in Vietnam in 1969-1970 where he was a Specialist 5th Class (Sergeant). His base camp was near the DMZ. He received the Army Commendation Medal and the Bronze Star for Meritorious Service in a combat zone.



In 1975 Bob worked for Christian Chevrolet. One year later he attended the Police Academy at Plainfield, and was a member of the Rushville Police Department. By 1987 Bob became Chief of Police and continued in that position until 1995. He continued in the department serving as Captain for four years. Then he ran for Mayor of Rushville and was elected. He served two terms from 2000 to 2008. By 2012 he accepted a position as Resource Officer for Rush County Schools and still serves in that capacity. Bob also serves on the Rushville City Council. Over the years he has been an athletic official for the IHSAA, and was a referee for basketball and soccer primarily at the high school level.



Marvin Hedrick attended Richland School through the eighth grade, then graduated from New Salem High School. Marvin married Emily Pond in 1972, and they have two children; Matthew and Hollee. Later on in 1992 Marvin married Madonna Daubenspeck. During the Vietnam War Marvin served in the Army stateside. He did his basic training at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and was stationed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and Fort Ord, California. His specialty was security.

After his term of military service, Marvin returned to Rush County. He worked part time for the Rushville Republican Newspaper as a photographer and covered a news beat at the Rush County Sheriff's Department. On one occasion Marvin learned that a couple of prisoners had escaped and were running north on Perkins Street. Marvin hurriedly exited the Republican Building and tackled a man he believed was an escaped prisoner. Wrong! He was a man chasing the prisoners! Later the two escapees were recaptured; one at Ft. Wayne Road, and the other at Meyers Livestock Sale Barn. By 1970 Marvin was working full time for the Rush County Sheriff's Department. Marvin lamented that when he

attended the Police Academy at I.U., anti-Vietnam War demonstrators threw items at the police trainees.

Marvin Hedrick became Rush County Sheriff in 1975 when he finished out the term of Ted Owens. Hedrick was elected Sheriff again in years 1978, 1982, and 1998 making him a four-term Sheriff with 32 years of service with the Rush County Sheriff's Department. On December 31, 2021, Marvin retired from the position of Glenwood Town Marshal where he had served for the last 20 years. Marvin has served continuously the last 52 years as a certified Law Enforcement Officer of the State of Indiana. He still serves as the Glenwood Project Manager, and Code Enforcer. Marvin is also a former two-term member of the Rush County Council.

Hopefully you have noticed in these short biographies that both Bob and Marvin have a lot in common. They both attended Rush County Schools and married ladies from Rush County, they both served during the Vietnam War, they both were law enforcement leaders, and they both continue to serve Rush County. One other thing they have in common is that they have sons that went into law enforcement. Brendan Bridges became a member of the Greensburg Police Department and later served as Police Chief. Currently he is the Resource Officer for Greensburg Schools. Matt Hedrick became a Deputy Sheriff for the Rush County Sheriff's Department and still serves the department.

I asked both Bob and Marvin about the type of equipment in use when they started their careers in law enforcement. Marvin said his firearm was a Colt Trooper Mark 3 revolver he purchased from Marvin Cole's gun shop at Moscow. Later on in 1975 Sheriff Hedrick's department was provided .357 Smith and Wesson Magnum revolvers by the county. Bob Bridges said his first firearm was a Model 19 Smith and Wesson .357 furnished by the city.

How about the police vehicles? Marvin's first car was a 1968 Plymouth, but some deputies drove Nash Ramblers that had been purchased from Busard's Car Dealership in Rushville. Bob stated that he remembers his first police car was a 1969 Dodge. But later most of the city's cars were Fords. One Ford was an unmarked vehicle painted green. None of the cars had air conditioning.

There was a 2-way Motorola radio system. The county and city officers used compatible systems. One switch on the radio connected to the station, and the other was for car to car communication. Dispatch duties were shared. Some walkie-talkies were also used.

Both Bob and Marvin felt that there was good cooperation between the departments. When Marvin was Sheriff he deputized all city policemen. There had to be cooperation because of the geographic size of the county. If the county only had two cars on the road it was tough to make a run from north of Carthage to a location south of Moscow in a timely manner. Officers had to cover for each other. They still do.

How much did they get paid? In 1970 Marvin made \$4,600. There were no benefits and no retirement package. Bob made \$7,900 in 1975 and did have retirement benefits. There were no contracts. You served one year probation in the department and then became full time. Marvin said, "Much of what I learned was on-the-job training. State Policemen were a big help

in the training. Officers like John Mull, Walt Love, Bob Cooley, Ron White, Harry Moore, and Jim Kleiman provided information and support that was invaluable.”

Paperwork and record keeping is always a chore. In the “good old days” reports were prepared on a typewriter shared by several officers. Both Marvin and Bob feel the biggest change in law enforcement today is improved technology and communication.

There is a lot of emphasis today on mental stress experienced by law enforcement. Danger is and always has been a factor in dealing with crime. But improved equipment helps protect our officers, and more personnel are on board now. The Sheriff’s Department has grown from four officers when Marvin started to as many as twelve officers. There are also multiple jailers, dispatchers, office personnel, and reserve officers. The new jail facility also makes more personnel necessary. The city has twelve officers, about what they had in the 1970’s. The Rushville Police Department is located in the old National Guard Armory north of Memorial Park. In 2022 Craig Tucker is Chief of Police and Allan Rice is Rush County Sheriff. Both are from Rush County.

One regret that both Bob and Marvin have is that the law enforcement community is not as tight as it used to be. According to Bob, “There is not the same level of comradery that existed years ago.” Several law enforcement employees live outside the community. There is not as much involvement in community activities. Also, at times our county has been a revolving door. New officers get their experience here and then move to another job that may pay more. Respect for law enforcement still exists in Rush County, but when officers live locally their image is even more positive.

One community event that truly helped unify the county was the Rushville Lions State Finals appearance in 1976. Marvin remembers helping lead a caravan of Rushville fans to Market Square Arena in Indianapolis. Bob has assisted the RCHS Athletic Department in many capacities over the years. He has probably seen more games than this old Athletic Director.

How about retirement? Bob will continue as RCS Resource Officer, and Marvin will devote more time to his lawn care business and still keep an eye on Glenwood.

Rush County is fortunate to have had these two law enforcement professionals in our community. The next time you see them, thank them for their service.