

BUSY SCHEDULE SATISFYING

Officer Don Gates Fights Crime Through Education

BY RAHN ADAMS

For a person who says he became involved in local law enforcement "on a whim" 11 years ago, Don Gates takes his role as crime prevention officer for the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department very seriously.

Gates' job keeps him busy "five days and nights a week," but the 55 to 60 hours he puts in each week encompass what he calls "the most satisfying thing I've ever done."

Why? Because he enjoys helping citizens of Brunswick County—both young and old—fight crime, whether through drug education, community watch programs or general crime prevention.

Before first joining the sheriff's department in 1976, Gates, 50, of Ash, was an air traffic controller for 20 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, stationed in Vietnam, Okinawa and the United States.

After retiring from the military and working here for a time as a security guard, he stopped by the sheriff's department, which was then headquartered in Southport, and casually inquired about a job. He was hired that day, he said.

Since then, he has served in the department's patrol and detective divisions before being named crime prevention officer.

Also, he was employed for five years as an Ocean Isle Beach policeman, after an initial stint with the sheriff's department.

He said he has learned that "law enforcement in

Brunswick County is no different from any other county in the state. You work the same types of crimes, even though the population density here is lower than, say, Wake County. You still have pockets where the crime rate is high—especially along the beaches and waterway."

Gates said his current post includes setting up and maintaining community watch programs; drug education for children and adults; education concerning business-related crimes such as shoplifting and employee theft; and speaking engagements on all of those topics.

Gates, who is president of the N.C. Community Watch Association, oversees 20 active community watch groups in Brunswick County.

He said the emphasis on community watch here is growing.

"We ask them to look out for any crime, not just house-breaking. We like for them to be our eyes and ears, but not our muscle," he said, explaining the roles of community watch groups.

In the past year, he said a major emphasis of his office has been on drug education in local schools. He said the program is aimed at students of all ages, teachers and parents.

"The main thrust of drug education must be between kindergarten and the fifth grade," he said. "If we don't get them (students) by the fifth grade, you've lost them."

This year, Gates has helped introduce primary school students to the Brunswick County Narcotics Squad's "best friend"—its new drug dog "Buddy."

"We've had a real good time, and we've been well received by students in lower grades," Gates said.

But he added that his reception by older students—especially in the county's three high schools—varies more from teen-agers sleeping through presentations to pupils being truly interested in fighting drug abuse.

He said an effective presentation he used last year was "Drugs and the Law," and it explained the penalties of drug dealing and possession.

"A lot of kids don't realize the penalties involved—that you can get sent to jail," he said. "You can get some heavy duty time."

Gates said he is currently working with the Brunswick County Drug-Free Schools Committee to establish workshops for teachers on the "symptomatology and pharmacology" of drug education "to make teachers more aware of what to look for in pupils, as far as drug abuse goes."

The workshops are scheduled to be held in December and January, he said.

His work reaches parents mainly through speaking engagements at churches and civic clubs.

"By educating the adults, you're in effect attempting to prevent drug abuse in the child," he said.



CRIME PREVENTION OFFICER Don Gates is busy setting up workshops to help teachers learn more about drug abuse in Brunswick County Public Schools—just one of Gates' duties in helping local citizens fight crime.

Holden Beach Commissioners Table Discussion Of Liability Insurance

BY DOUG RUTTER

Despite recommendations from Town Attorney Doug Ledgett, Town Administrator Tom Birmingham and the North Carolina Department of Insurance, Holden Beach Commissioners Monday refused to adopt a resolution establishing an uninsured claims and judgments trust fund.

The fund, which would have protected town officers and employees who have claims or lawsuits filed against them from actions taken within the scope of their employment duties, was recommended because the current liability insurance policy will expire Nov. 20.

The town's present insurance, which is carried through the National Union Insurance Company, will be replaced with coverage through the Clarendon National Insurance Company.

According to Ledgett, however, when the new policy goes into effect, it will not cover certain zoning matters which would be addressed by the planning and zoning board and board of adjustments.

He said most insurance companies in the state are either no longer pro-

viding liability insurance for these zoning matters or have raised the premiums so high that most towns cannot afford it.

According to the resolution, the trust fund was to be established with some or all of the balance of the town's unappropriated general funds.

Because there will be no liability insurance for town officers and employees after Friday, commissioners requested that the planning and zoning board and board of adjustments take no action after this week until the issue can be settled.

Planning and Zoning Board Chairman Alan Holden said a Nov. 19 public hearing concerning changes in the town zoning code dealing with development of lots containing marsh or wetlands will be held.

He explained, however, that action of the board is "not urgent" and could most likely wait for any decision of the town commissioners concerning insurance.

The zoning board of adjustments, which had scheduled a public hearing for Nov. 23 concerning variance requests for the construction of a porch

and deck at two residences, postponed its meeting until after the town board has made its decision.

According to Commissioner Hal Stanley, Ledgett's motivation to recommend adoption of the resolution may have been a paragraph which read: "All claims and lawsuits brought against the town, its officers and employees shall be promptly forwarded to the office of the town attorney upon their receipt. The town attorney shall take such steps deemed necessary to insure a timely and effective resolution of the matter."

Referring to the fact that Ledgett would most likely have handled all claims against the town, Stanley said, "This kind of stuff is what lawyers live for."

Ledgett, who was not present at the meeting, later said that he was not surprised that the commissioners did not adopt the resolution.

He added that although the town will be without liability insurance after Nov. 20, he does not anticipate any problems.

He explained that because of "governmental immunity," the town cannot be held liable if it doesn't have

insurance.

Ledgett added that "as long as they (town officers and employees) act in the proper fashion, they are not liable anyway."

The town board decided to table any further discussion until the Dec. 7 regular meeting when newly-elected commissioners Gil Bass, Bob Buck and Georgia Langley are ex-

pected to be present, and the entire board will be able to seek the advice of Ledgett in person.

Mayor John Tandy did not attend the meeting.

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A Letter to Marxist Nicaragua From Ten Liberal Congressmen

On March 20, 1984, ten liberal Democratic congressmen including the Democratic Majority Leader, Jim Wright, wrote the following letter of praise and support to Daniel Ortega, coordinator of Nicaragua's Marxist Sandinista junta. The letter was brought to light by Congressman Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), who inserted it into the Congressional Record for all Americans to see. It shows that there are many in Congress who simply no longer recognize freedom's enemies.

Commandante Daniel Ortega
Coordinador de la Junta de Gobierno
Casa de Gobierno
Managua, Nicaragua

Dear Commandante:

We address this letter to you in a spirit of hopefulness and good will.

As Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, we regret the fact that better relations do not exist between the United States and your country. We have been, and remain, opposed to U.S. support for military action directed against the people or government of Nicaragua.

We want to commend you and the members of your government for taking steps to open up the political process in your country. The Nicaraguan people have not had the opportunity to participate in a genuinely free election for over 50 years. We support your decision to schedule elections this year, to reduce press censorship, and to allow greater freedom of assembly for political parties. Finally, we recognize that you have taken these steps in the midst of ongoing military hostilities on the borders of Nicaragua.

We write with the hope that the initial steps you have taken will be followed by others designed to guarantee a fully open and democratic electoral process. We note that some who have become exiles from Nicaragua have expressed a willingness to return to participate in the elections if assurances are provided that their security will be protected, and their political rights recognized. Among these exiles are some who have taken up arms against your government, and who have stated their willingness to lay down those arms to participate in a truly democratic process.

If this were to occur, the prospects for peace and stability throughout Central America would be dramatically enhanced. Those responsible for supporting violence against your government, and for obstructing serious negotiations for broad political participation in El Salvador would have far greater difficulty winning support for their policies than they do today.

We believe that you have it in your power to establish an example for Central America that can be of enormous historical importance. For this to occur, you have only to lend real force and meaning to concepts your leadership has already endorsed concerning the rules by which political parties may compete openly and equitably for political power.

A decision on your part to provide these reasonable assurances and conduct truly free and open elections would significantly improve the prospect of better relations between our two countries and significantly strengthen the hands of those in our country who desire better relations based upon true equality, self-determination and mutual good will.

We reaffirm to you our continuing respect and friendship for the Nicaraguan people, and pledge our willingness to discuss these or other matters of concern with you or officials of your government at any time.

Very sincerely yours,

• Jim Wright (Texas)
• Michael D. Barnes (Maryland)
• Bill Alexander (Arkansas)
• Matthew F. McHugh (New York)
• Robert G. Torricelli (New Jersey)

• Edward P. Boland (Massachusetts)
• Stephen J. Solarz (New York)
• David R. Obey (Wisconsin)
• Robert Garcia (New York)
• Lee H. Hamilton (Indiana)

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