

Gary Norseen retires as Dawson County deputy sheriff

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 21 July 2011 13:44 -



GARY NORSEEN

Career choice reconsidered after tragic fatality.

On Gary Norseen's first day with the Hall County Sheriff's Office, he wasn't sure he wanted to stay after investigating a triple fatality.

A semi-tractor trailer slid sideways on an icy highway near Cairo and a Volkswagen, carrying a woman, her daughter and the daughter's baby, slid under the trailer.

No one survived.

"I had to tell a grandpa and his son that their wives were not coming home," Norseen said. "It was one of the hardest things I've had to do and it sticks with you the rest of your life."

Nonetheless, Norseen continued in law enforcement, a career that spanned 38 years.

The end of June, he stepped down as the chief deputy sheriff for Dawson County.

Since then, the 63-year-old transports prisoners and performs court security. He also provides security at the Dawson County Fair this week.

The part-time work will probably continue, he said, until the new chief deputy—former Cozad

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police chief Mark Montgomery—takes over Aug. 5.

A Loup City native, Norseen received an ag business degree from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and moved to Grand Island where he was employed by Chief Industries before becoming a Hall County deputy sheriff.

After five years as a road deputy, Norseen was hired as a civil process road deputy in Dawson County but couldn't start—because grant money hadn't arrived—for six months.



In the meantime, he took a job as a police officer in Gothenburg—a place he decided to live because of the friendliness of the people.

Added to his job of serving legal papers as a sheriff deputy was training other deputies in areas like firearm and defensive tactics training.

A highlight of Norseen's career was assisting the Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center in teaching recruits how to use firearms, serve legal papers and perform defensive tactics.

"I've trained more than 1,000 people in 20 years," Norseen said.

Throughout his career, Norseen has enjoyed older adults, noting that law enforcement tries to work together with citizens to combat crime—such as scams—like a neighborhood watch group.

Interestingly, he said an organized effort with senior citizens in Gothenburg discontinued because they feel safe.

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Norseen also likes working with children and the gleam in their eyes when they're noticed.

Two of his own children have followed in his footsteps. Son Jared is a deputy sheriff in Polk County and daughter Heather Miller is a criminal investigator in the Dawson County Sheriff's Office.

Another daughter, Jennifer Norseen, is a substitute teacher while she looks for a full-time job.

Spending more time with his three grandsons is one reason the chief deputy retired as well as a desire to step aside and "let younger people take over."

Norseen plans to golf more, work on cars and tractors and travel, preferably to a warmer climate during winter.

His wife Jane Norseen works for Nebraska Salt & Grain Co.

Once he leaves the sheriff's office for good, Norseen said he'll miss the employees the most as well as day-to-day contact with people.

ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com

308-537-3636