



CAPT. WILSON BROUSSARD

So, he put his policeman's badge on his service hat, put on a pair of khakis and went off to work — crossing school children at the corner of Jefferson and Vermilion Sts.

BIG BRUCE' RETIRING.

From the Lafayette Daily Advertiser of July 30th, 1967:

CAPTAIN WILSON BROUSSARD

By Jim Bradshaw

Advertiser Staff Reporter

They call him "Big Bruce" - and it isn't hard to see why - he's a big man. When he joined the police force 20 years ago, he weighed close to 250, he's gained some since then, but still looks fit enough to handle whatever might come along.

Tomorrow will be his last day on the city police force he joined April 1, 1947. After 20 years and four months, Capt. Wilson A. Broussard will retire.

Sitting in the chief's office last week, he looked quite different, with the two captain's bars pinned to a neat khaki uniform, from the way he must have that first day on the job back in 1947.

He didn't have a uniform then, but had just been discharged from the Marines.

So, he put his policeman's badge on his service hat, put on a pair of khakis and went off to work - crossing school children at the corner of Jefferson and Vermilion Sts.

Since then, he's answered every kind of call that can imaginably require police assistance . . . not always a simple chore.

When the captain became a police officer, Lafayette had only three patrol cars, "and you had to push them to get them started." There was no regular patrolling of the streets then, officers used to simply wait at headquarters for a call to action.

YOUR MOVE

"We used to just sit around the station playing checkers or something until we got a call," he reminisced.

He recalled, too, the streets in Lafayette could present officers problems, particularly when it rained. It was not uncommon for a patrolman to have to wade several blocks in water as much as three feet deep to answer a complaint.

The officer noted an equipment shortage on the force when he first went into service. Each patrolman had a pistol, he said, but equipment such as shotguns, rifles, bull horns, searchlights, and other aids were practically nonexistent.

He said the force did have a small tear gas gun, "but the shells were usually so old they didn't work."

This didn't seem to present any insurmountable problem to the former judo instructor, however, as he recalled only one instance in his career when he removed his gun from its holster, and does not remember ever hitting anyone with his nightstick. The only time in his recollection he pulled his gun, he was facing a man who had a knife in one hand and a club in the other, and, as he puts it, "there wasn't much else to do." The man surrendered peacefully, he said, and the gun remained unfired.

GOLDEN RULE

"I've always had the philosophy that it is the primary duty of the police officers to help those who could not help themselves - not to hurt anyone," Broussard explained. It would probably have been easy for him to inflict pain on whomever he wanted.

He was an All-State fullback with the Lafayette Senior High School football team in 1939, the same year he was state amateur heavyweight boxing champion. He lettered in football, baseball, boxing, and track at the University of Southwestern Louisiana (then SLI), where he lacks only three hours of acquiring a degree in physical education. And he played professional football for two years.

He was called away from the university and into the service in 1942, serving 43 months as a physical training instructor. One of the things he plans to do after his retirement is to pick up the one course he needs for a sheepskin.

The native of Milton is married to the former Louella Angelle and is the father of three children, Janet, 22, now employed by Southern Bell in New Orleans; Judith Ann, 20, who will this year complete work at USL, and Wilson A. Jr., 10. He lost two other children in their infancy.

The officer talked with enthusiasm about his police career, even noting that once, after a collision in a patrol car, he was suspended from the force.

A mental patient had escaped from a local hospital, and the captain, hurrying to the scene in a squad-car with both the blinker light and siren broken, was involved in a minor accident, as a result of which he was suspended for three days.

GONE FISHING

"They couldn't spare me at that time, however," he said, "so I got suspended suspension. I did finally get my three days, though, and went fishing."

The captain, in his reminiscence, referred often to other police officers who helped him in the beginning of his career. He spoke particularly of the influence of three long-time area peace officers: Albert Trahan, Alphonse Peck, and Cas Chargois.

He said one of the things he remembers most about his career was receiving a compliment from Mr. Peck after

Broussard chased a thief on foot for about an hour, bringing him back in.

The officer has an endless supply of stories about his work, recalling and reciting names and events just as any other man recounts the tales of things he has enjoyed doing.

He described his part in capturing a man who had barricaded himself inside a barroom with three weapons and dared anyone to get him out, vice-raids on taverns, fights, robberies, criminals large and small.

His enthusiasm became subdued as he spoke of fellow officers killed in a shoot-out on Spring St. several years ago.

And it picked up again when he talked about his work with juveniles and the countless school intersections he patrolled - even after becoming a captain in 1950 - or the four years he chauffeured handicapped children to and from special classes in a patrol car.

His wife and family will be glad to see him retire, he says, and their feelings are easily understood.

DEMANDING JOB

His job has been a demanding one, he was expected to put his health, his life, on the line for not much pay, for little, really, except the satisfaction he got from serving his community and doing the work he enjoyed. His hours have been long, the circumstances often difficult.

They have improved a great deal during his tenure as an officer - but they still have a long way to go.

The captain, at 48, is looking forward to embarking on another career. He hasn't decided just what he will do yet, chances are pretty good it will be related to what he has been doing.

He will be wearing a gold watch presented by fellow policemen this week - a token of their esteem and of the service he has rendered the city and force. He'll take with him, too, a "Thanks, Bruce," from a citizenry well served and much appreciative.