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**RECYCLE**

# Retiring officers raise concerns

*The two officers said Eugene has become harder to police than it had been in past years*

By Tricia Duryee  
 Community Reporter

Two officers are retiring this month, marking a change in not only the Eugene Police Department, but also bringing to attention how police services have adapted to community concerns in the last 25 years.

It's not an early retirement according to standard practice, but for Lt. Ellwood Cushman, the end of the month will be an early departure from his 25 years of service.

"If I was asked several years ago, I would have expected to stay five years past eligibility," said Cushman.

Retirement eligibility for the Eugene Police Department normally comes after 25 years of service or at the age of 50.

Sgt. Dave Poppe has served the campus Oregon Public Safety division for the past three years and said it was time for him to take advantage of his retirement. "I've been on for almost 27 years," he said, "and I want to take advantage of that."

But for Cushman and Poppe, retirement doesn't come with an easy mind. They have noticed that over their years with the force, the community has become harder to police than in past years.

"Yes, it would be hard not to agree with the chief's comments about Eugene being a difficult place to police," said Poppe. "[The comments] were accurate. Some people have an unrealistic expectation on what the use of force really means. We can't afford to have officers injured."

Eugene Chief of Police Leonard Cooke addressed the city's policing needs before the Eugene City Club earlier this year.

Cushman announced his plans to retire at the chief's forum meeting early this month. He said that he has enjoyed the job and that the decision came after much reservation.

"It was a difficult decision," he said. He added that his departure wasn't because he was completely frustrated with the system.

However, his decision to leave was, in part, sped up by the aftermath of the June 1 incident. The incident sparked controversy regarding the department's conduct after police pepper-sprayed protesters who opposed the cutting down of trees.

Cushman found the backlash against the police offending.

"We know that we are accountable for everything that we do, that is not the issue," Cushman said. He said because of the June 1 incident, the police department is being brought to court under criminal charges, which Cushman said occurs in rare circumstances.

"It is a really irregular thing," Cushman said. "It doesn't feel too good."

Cushman, who was in a sup-

porting, not commanding, role during the June 1 incident, believes that the department is coming under such scrutiny because of the level of activism in the community.

"The city reacts to groups — and I'm not saying that they should be ignored — but we are operating under the squeaky-wheel syndrome," he said.

Cushman said the police department instead needs to respond to the community as a whole, even though everyone's opinion matters. He said a diverse group should be targeted, not just those that are particularly vocal.

Poppe finds this an issue, too. "A lot of problems have been a part of the controversial environment that we live in," he said. "Some activists believe they can break the law and blame establishment for the consequences. There is a price to pay for civil disobedience."

However, Poppe, who works with the University community, isn't as involved as Cushman in the city at large. He has more frustrations with some of the students and younger community members.

"During the last three years at the University, I've dealt with the chronic problem of young, intoxicated people," he said. "It is impossible to make a very big difference." Poppe, who graduated from the University in 1971, said the problems are not new, but they are on the rise.

"Thirty years ago, as a student, many of the same problems were present then," he said, "but now they are more bothersome."

He said the students have a more "in-your-face attitude" that is magnified when they are drunk or high. He finds that this makes the students more demanding or belligerent, which is a concern because this usually precedes illegal activities.

"No matter what [the students] are doing, they say, 'I have rights and mine are more important than yours, I can be as loud as I want,'" Poppe said.

Even though both Poppe and Cushman are noticing a change in the community, Cushman said his decision to retire wasn't because of the lack of support.

However, Cushman is critical of both positive and negative analysis from the public.

"I don't think it's healthy criticism. [It's criticism] without facts, just as I feel it is blind support without knowing what happened," he said.

When his retirement came up in September, he asked himself if this was the environment in which he wanted to work. "Do I want to continue being subject to that kind of thing in the future?" asked Cushman. "It's not worth it."

If anything, police spokes-

woman Jan Power said, Cushman is too committed to his work. "He probably cares too much," she said.

In order to work around these types of feelings, Poppe said he tries to focus on the positive. "Some people think I'm crazy when I say focus on the positive," he said. "If I focus on the worst hours — midnight on Friday and Saturday nights — I can get depressed."

Cushman said he believes the police department is on a positive path, and with a focus on community policing, the issues can be resolved.

He said it is hard, in general, to interact with the community if officers only come in contact with people when they are either, "enforcing the law or dealing with victims, which most of the time is stressful and not conducive to discussion."

He also said it is difficult to make the switch to community policing because it takes more personnel and money. But Cushman said he believes it is still possible. "It's a philosophy, and there are still things that we can do."

Cushman is hopeful that community policing efforts will entail preventative measures. "It's more than a program, it's a way of doing business more effectively by getting to know [the community members], instead of reacting to them," he said.

Poppe also said he thought community policing would send Eugene in the right direction. "Community policing is a positive move," however, "it is not a panacea — it won't change the problem."

What Poppe did think would work would be for friends to be responsible for friends. "Peer pressure can reduce the belligerence," he said.

Although Cushman and Poppe don't have definite post-retirement plans, they hope they will have more time to do the things they haven't had time for in the past. For Poppe that includes teaching and outdoor projects.

Poppe said the last thing he wants is to leave the job on a negative note. "It's been a good job; most of the people have been wonderful," he said. "When I graduated in '71, I had no idea I was going into police work. I thought I'd try it for a year, and now I feel like that year is just ending."

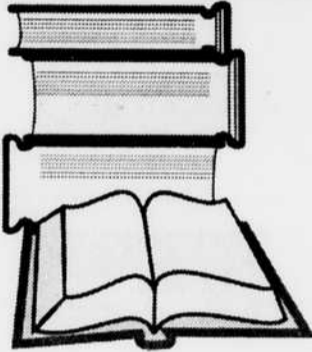
During Cushman's time with the force, he was responsible for developing and implementing both a K-9 unit and a civilian reserve program.

Power credited Cushman with always being a part of investigating and selecting new systems and methods for doing things. "He has outstanding accomplishments," she said.

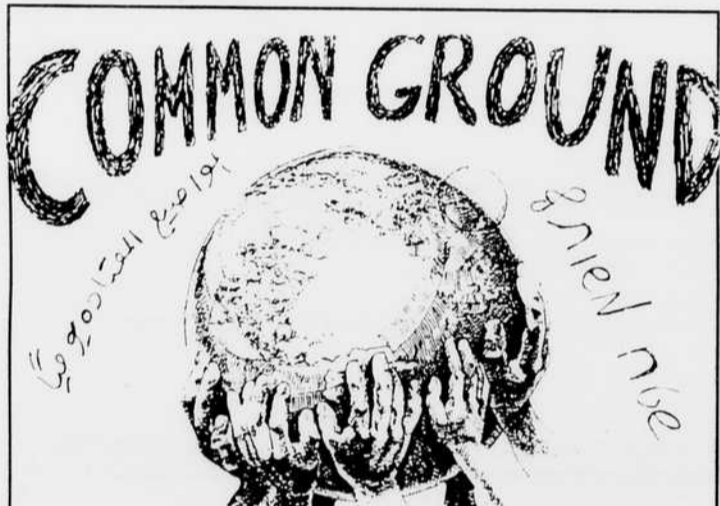
*"I had no idea I was going into police work. I thought I'd try it for a year, and now I feel like that year is ending."*

Sgt. Dave Poppe  
 Eugene Police Department

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**Thursday, Feb. 19<sup>th</sup>  
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Following the discussion, a presentation about a unique study abroad experience, Israel at the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, will be given by a former student. Earn credit while living and learning with students from Jordan, Israel—both Arab and Jewish, Egypt, the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and other students from North America.

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