

Veteran police officer joins city force

"Things sure started out with a bang," police officer Jim "Bumper" Johnson said of his first shift on the Vernonia Police Department. That was expected, however, because his first shift in Vernonia was the night of July fourth, during the annual fireworks display.

A big man, with a twinkle in his eye and a warm smile, Johnson is always ready to break out a little humor.

The thirty-year veteran law enforcement officer seems to genuinely like people and admits that he likes the camaraderie of small towns, though his first 18 years of experience were in mostly urban Santa Clara County, California.

Johnson grew up in Los Gatos, just a stone's throw away from the county seat in San Jose, and he went to work for the sheriff's department there. It was also there, in his first day on the job, that he was named "Bumper" by a fellow officer.

The nickname referred to the role of Bumper Morgan, played by William Holden in The Blue Knight. Johnson says he still doesn't know why he got tagged with the name unless it was because of his gray hair (He's been gray since he was 18 or 19), but it stayed with him.

Johnson was a Detective Sergeant in Santa Clara

County, where he started and headed the crime prevention unit, but the desire to get out of the city got to him so he moved - to Oregon.



Jim "Bumper" Johnson

After 8 months running a sandwich shop, he says "The bug got to me so I joined the sheriff's office," in Lane County.

During his time there he spent about a year-and-a-half as a contract police officer in Veneta, a job he liked very much. While in Veneta he started a bicycle safety program and acted as liaison for the "Neighborhood Watch" program.

When the budget crunch hit in Lane County, he was transferred to the jail, a job that didn't really suit him, so he "retired."

Johnson, now 54, had

planned to start his own private investigation business, but decided his retirement pension wasn't sufficient so he un-retired.

This time, he said, he looked for a job in a small town, and ended up in Vernonia...where he'd like to start a Neighborhood Watch program.

Johnson's wife, Nancy, is a hairdresser and a "crafts" person. She is remaining in Lane County until they can sell their home there, but they plan to move to Vernonia, he says. They have six grown children.

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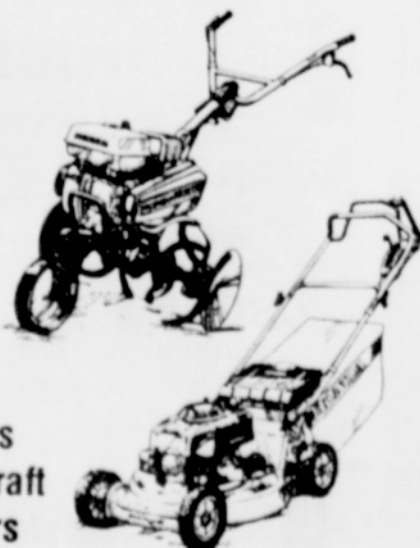
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