

BPD ride-along: On patrol, Blaine officers look for things out of place

BY IAN HAUPT

As we drove on a warm Wednesday morning in August back into the West 99th Street cul-de-sac, with barely a ditch separating it from 0 Avenue and Canada, telling stories of minor border incidences, officer Timothy Richardson said, “This job is 90 percent boredom and 10 percent craziness.”

Sitting in the passenger side of his patrol car for a couple hours, covering every acre of Blaine city limits, I had a feeling I was getting the 90 percent.

When out on patrol, Richardson said most often officers are looking for obvious traffic violations, like speeders and reckless driving. “And then you’re looking for things that are out of the norm,” he said.

With seven years on staff, working four 10-hour shifts a week, Richardson knows the area

well and when something looks out of place. Driving on East E Street, he pointed out a fence around public property.

“If there was a backpack hanging on the fence over there – that’s public property – so it shouldn’t be there,” he said. “That’s something we would look into.”

Richardson is one of three public information officers at the Blaine Police Department; a field training officer for Taser, less-lethal weapons, active shooter and semi-automatic pistol; and a winner of a Lifesaving Award for talking a man down from the H Street bridge.

Another responsibility as a Blaine police officer, Richardson does follow-ups and interviews with witnesses and victims of ongoing cases, and is prepared for incoming 911 calls while on duty, he said, or to assist the Whatcom County Sheriff’s Office.

The department and sheriff’s

office have a mutual aid agreement that allows Blaine officers, if granted permission by a control sergeant, to respond to calls outside of the city limits. Richardson said Blaine officers could respond to many calls just outside the city limits much quicker than sheriff’s deputies, which is why he would like to see the city of Blaine grow.

Right now, the city limits include the downtown area and surrounding suburbs as well as Semiahmoo, but not the south end of Drayton Harbor. Officers have to drive out of their jurisdiction for about 2.5 miles to cross to Semiahmoo.

Richardson hopes the department will eventually cover the whole harbor. He said Whatcom County residents in that area could petition to contract the Blaine Police Department to serve their area – one of his goals as union chair of the Blaine Police Officers Association. Birch Bay also would be a candidate for coverage; with a larger population than Blaine, it has only one assigned deputy and has experienced an increase in burglaries and vandalism in the past



▲ Blaine police officer Timothy Richardson

Photo by Ian Haupt

six months.

Richardson said this is how the Semiahmoo Spit fell under department jurisdiction. In 1974,

according to the City of Blaine Comprehensive Plan, the city annexed the spit and surrounding area that has developed into a resort community with an 18-hole golf course, country club, 201-room hotel, 300-slip boat harbor and residential neighborhood.

Richardson said he’s grateful to serve a town like Blaine and have citizens who appreciate the work officers do. He added he would never want to live in Seattle, or even Bellingham, because of the treatment and attitude people have toward police, referring to the defund the police and Black Lives Matter movements.

Once in a while, he encounters people with some animosity toward him, like someone flipping him off. He said he usually responds with positivity so he can ruin their story for their friends.

“What did he do?” “Smiled and waved,” Richardson said, imagining the interaction later. “Cool story, bro.”

In Richardson’s eyes, Blaine is a nonracist corner of the U.S. He said working as a police officer, you encounter all different types of people and realize all humans are the same. They have the same motivations and thought processes, he said.

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