

Schenck & Schenck vs. crime... Twins together again with State Patrol in Grand Island

By Carol Bryant

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Towering twins Harold and Jerry Schenck are together again as Nebraska State Patrol officers based in Grand Island. Harold, 6 foot 3, was named Troop C's captain in December. Jerry, a 6-foot-6 trooper, has been stationed in Grand Island since December 1977.

The Schenck (pronounced Skank) tradition in the State Patrol doesn't stop there. The twins and retired brothers Dan and Earl have 111 combined years of service.

The Schencks have been kind of a dynasty in the State Patrol," said Col. Ron Tussing of Lincoln.

The brothers' interest in law enforcement started with their late father, Dan, Howard County sheriff in St. Paul for 24 years.

He was the type of sheriff who had a very good relationship with the State Patrol," Harold said.

Dan Schenck was the first brother to join the State Patrol, in 1959. He retired after 30 years with the agency. He lives in St. Paul.

He led the way," Harold said.

Earl Schenck began with the State Patrol in 1964 and retired 28 years later. He was stationed his entire career in Ogallala and is now Keith County sheriff.

Harold Schenck started with the State Patrol in 1968, spent more than 17 years with Troop A in Omaha and moved to Scottsbluff in 1986 when he became a lieutenant. He's been with the Patrol for 28 years and previously served in the Army.

He earned \$425 a month when he joined, which was enough to get by."

His schedule prevented him from attending some of his children's activities.

When you first come on, you're at the bottom of the rung," he said. You work nights, a lot of weekends and holidays."

With seniority, his schedule improved.

It's a job with a lot of gratitude and a lot of stability," he said.

Tussing described him as someone who's able to work with people. He resolves conflict rather than causes it."

Jerry Schenck spent the first five years of his career in South Sioux City after joining the Patrol in 1971. He's been stationed in Grand Island for 20 of his 25 years of work and also served in the Navy.

Jerry completed training with patrol dog Nero in May 1992.

Since then, Nero and I have accomplished multimillions in drug seizures and forfeitures of property," he said.

The most memorable property seized was a Lear jet. After a Nebraska bust, he made a controlled delivery of drugs in Washington, D.C. A drug dealer flew in the jet to pick up money for the transaction.

Jerry's the man when it comes to drug interdiction," Tussing said. Jerry seems to like the street work. He's really good at what he does."

The trooper has the biggest volume" of any drug interdiction officer the Patrol has.

The twins have four brothers and six sisters. Their mother died in 1954 when they were 7.

The boys helped their father as sheriff, doing everything from feeding prisoners to assisting him at accidents. Their father emphasized the importance of helping others.

He was a very strong-willed, honest man," Harold said. He was also our mother for most of our lives."

The twins mentioned that they grew up using 10-code" signals, part of law enforcement communications. They didn't have to worry about learning them when they entered the State Patrol.

Troopers stopped by their boyhood home in St. Paul regularly.

There were so many officers who would take the time to talk to you," Jerry said.

The Patrol to me always was a unique organization," Harold said. Over the years, it has gained a lot of respect from the citizens of Nebraska. The Patrol always seemed to be a step above as far as training, equipment and uniforms."

The brothers agree that one of the most difficult aspects of their jobs is handling fatal accidents. Harold has investigated 13 fatal crashes in his career.

I can remember every one to this day," he said.

Jerry and his wife, Sandra, have two daughters, Elizabeth and Sara. Both attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Harold and his wife, Gail, have a son, Jeff, and a daughter, Callie, a Hastings College senior. Jeff is studying nuclear radiology in North Carolina.

Jerry said he was tickled pink" when he learned that Harold would be moving to Grand Island. Harold and I are the kind of twins who are close."

Harold quipped that he hasn't made Jerry do too many pushups" since arriving in Grand Island.

I basically don't supervise him," Harold said. Instead, a sergeant and a lieutenant oversee Jerry's work.

The twins turned 50 on Feb. 4, the first time they'd spent their birthday together in 20 years. Although they're eligible for retirement, they plan to remain with the Patrol for a few more years.

Both enjoy hunting, fishing and sports. Harold referees basketball games and is a baseball umpire. Jerry attended Chadron State College. They believe he was the first freshman there to letter in three sports basketball, football and baseball.