

Alton Police Department loses a man who was truly 'one of their own'

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - The Alton Police Department lost a man – **Rory Michael Rathgeb** - who had a deep passion and conviction of being an officer on Wednesday morning.

Rathgeb, 60, died suddenly at age 60 at 10:40 a.m. on Wednesday in Alton. A memorial visitation is set from 1 p.m. until time of memorial service at 3 p.m. Saturday, October 3, 2015, at the Bridge Church in Alton. Reverend Steven Helfrich will officiate.

Alton Police Chief Jake Simmons said he was taking the death of his long-time colleague “very hard.”

“I have a lot of friends, but I can only call four or five people my closest friends and he was one of them,” Simmons said. “He always stood up openly for what he believed in and he was very dedicated to police work and making the City of Alton better for everyone.

“He was a heck of a person. He did a lot of trout fishing and worked part-time on Saturday at the Olin Gun Range. He trained and familiarized quite a few officers with firearms. When we would have a new officer having difficulty with firearms, we would put them with Rory and he would straighten them out.”

Rathgeb started his career as a police officer in 1987 at the Carlinville Police Department. Then he was a patrolman and later chief with the Benld Police Department. He was also Police Chief of National City.

He joined the Alton Police Department Patrol Division in 1996. He was assigned to the Patrol Division, the Special Community Area Target Team (SCATT) Unit, the Investigations Division, the Narcotics Unit and the FBI Safe Street Task Force throughout his tenure with the Alton Police Department.

He was named Alton Police Department’s Officer of the Month twice for outstanding work in his field and received numerous letters of appreciation, commendation, and recognition from the Alton Police Department, Alton community members and the United States Department of Justice. In addition to his work with the police department he was an instructor at the Olin handgun range and he loved to trout fish.

His wife, the former Theresa Louise Dugan, survives. Also surviving are four daughters, one son, a sister and many nieces and nephews. Simmons said Rory deeply loved his wife, Theresa.

“It is funny whenever he would talk to Theresa at work on phone we knew who he was talking to because he always called her ‘sweetie.’ He has a wonderful family.”

The Alton Police Chief said he shared a lot of time with Rory.

“I worked a lot of cases with him when we were detectives on the street,” he said. “I learned a lot from Rory. He served as police chief of both Benld and National City.

“He was union president for two years and when we last negotiated the contract I sat across the table from him negotiating. He negotiated a very good contract for our officers.”

Simmons said most of the Alton Police Department thought Rathgeb reminded everyone of actor Wilford Brimley.

“He had a soft spoken demeanor, but he was never afraid to talk to anybody,” Simmons said. “He had a story for everybody. When he would walk his dog down Henry and around town, he would often sit and talk to people. He will be greatly missed.”