

# Captain Chuck Carter retires after 30 years as policeman

Involvement in social causes will continue

By LANE WALLACE

STAFF WRITER

**WATSONVILLE** — Ask people who know Chuck Carter what he's like and they'll try to avoid using the words "not your typical cop" to describe the Watsonville police captain.

But no matter what words they use, their comments say Carter not only does things for the community not usually expected of a policeman, but that his contributions would be noteworthy no matter what he did for a living.

"I've never seen a police officer as involved as Chuck Carter is with a program like mine," said Celia Organista, program director for Adelante, a non-profit agency that helps farm workers and other poor people in Watsonville.

Carter, 54, who retires at the end of this month after 30 years with the police department, has done such things for Adelante as help students with a community survey and working on a project to help people become citizens.

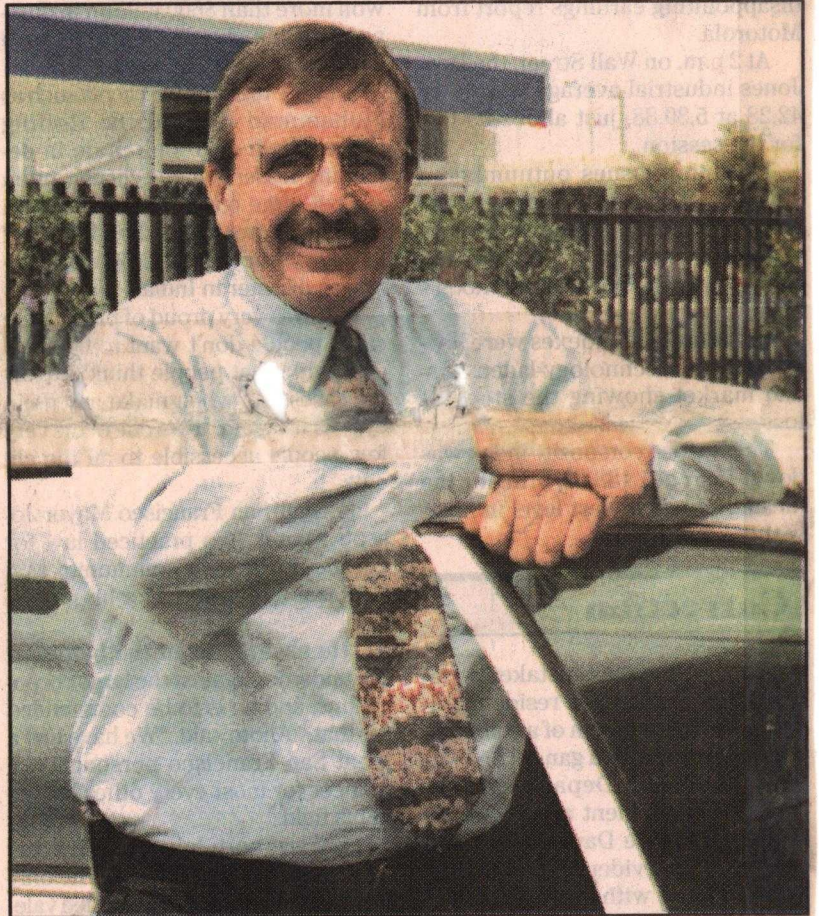
"He always offers. I don't have to pull his leg to help," said Organista.

In the last 10 to 15 years, Carter has become involved in a number of community projects, most of them with a social-service angle.

His activities include serving as a board member for the Radcliff Adult School, teaching reading to adults and being an advocate for welfare recipients. He's spoken out against Proposition 187, the anti-immigration measure. He's worked on a project to reduce racial prejudice and has worked on the police department's affirmative action goals.

All but the affirmative action program have been on Carter's own time.

Carter, who grew up poor in Watsonville, said his community involvement stems from wanting to help those "with no money, no



**Chuck Carter will retire at the end of this month.**

power and no influence."

Carter said he's grateful to Watsonville. "Everything I've gotten has come from the community," he said.

Carter said some of his efforts, such as his stand against Prop. 187 and helping welfare recipients, have not been popular with some segments of the community, but they haven't stopped him from continuing.

Frank Bardacke, an activist for liberal and social causes in Watsonville, said Carter "understands in his bones" that police problems come from social problems "rather than people who were born to be criminals."

"There's only a few policemen who understand that," Bardacke said.

Carter "has a real willingness to  
See CARTER, page 3



**Chuck Carter during his rookie year in 1966.**



listen to people," said Bardacke, who teaches adult education classes.

Watsonville Police Chief Terry Medina said Carter's community involvement "has helped us formed relationships with segments of the community" that otherwise might be difficult to reach.

Because people in social-service agencies know Carter, "we have an open dialogue," Medina said.

Carter's contribution comes at a time when the police department "is trying to be many things to all people," Medina said.

Carter "epitomizes the lifelong citizen of Watsonville" with his activity, said Lt. Mickey Aluffi, who not only works with Carter, but runs with him almost every day.

Carter said he's been "running, not very well, for 25 years."

Carter doesn't talk much about his community projects, Aluffi said. "I'm constantly learning about what he's doing from somebody else," Aluffi said.

Aluffi said Carter believes "there has to be education and crime prevention as well as enforcement."

Carter's involvement with social causes doesn't mean he's soft on crime.

"He's a tough-on-crime guy," Medina said.

Carter said he's become a bit more tolerant over the years, but

still believes there are people "who should not be out" on the streets.

He is proud of his first arrest, but he also likes to point out that one of the bad guys turned out good.

Shortly after joining the force, Carter was patrolling Main Street at night when he noticed a man with an armful of clothes inside the Daly Brothers clothing store.

By the time Carter turned his car around, two thieves had sped off in an old Buick. "It was my first pursuit, too," said Carter.

The chase ended when the thieves spun out on Beach Road, and Carter had his arrests. That teen-ager with the armful of clothes long ago became a productive member of society, said Carter, who occasionally sees him around town.

"He's done well," Carter said.

"Some of my most cherished memories are from my days as a beat cop," said Carter. "There's a camaraderie that I miss."

Carter said his stint as acting chief, beginning in 1980, was the

most challenging. The previous chief, Al Williams, did not have full support of the force. Carter held the acting chief's role for more than a year before the hiring of Ray Belgard, now a county supervisor.

Carter, who didn't seek the permanent chief's position, supported the hiring of Belgard, who is generally credited with improving the police department.

Carter said his "most painful time" as an officer was the 18-month frozen-food strike of 1985-'87. Police, he said, "were caught in the middle" between strikers and the companies.

Except for the first few weeks after his retirement, Carter doesn't plan to relax in a lawn chair. He will continue all his community involvement, and plans to teach at police academies.

"I'm not burned out. I just want to go on," he said.

Carter, who became a grandfather for the first time last week, has four children. He is married to the former Helen Bobeda.