

Capitola's retiring chief anxious to begin sailing

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CAPITOLA — By this time next month, retiring Capitola Police Chief Bob Allen hopes to be sailing in the Sea of Cortez in Mexico.

The 51-year-old Allen will officially retire Sept. 30 after 8½ years as head of the Capitola department. Patterson Police Chief Don Braunton was named Tuesday to replace him.

During Allen's tenure, the city took advantage of his management skills — obtained during a 21-year career with the San Jose Police Department. Allen was named interim city manager in 1979 during a time when Capitola was plagued with administrative turnovers. Allen juggled dual roles as city manager and police chief for four months.

In his most publicized role, however, Allen received nationwide publicity in 1979 by starting up the acclaimed code enforcement unit. That unit, affectionately dubbed the "Quad Squad," still makes use of the handicapped in motorized wheelchairs as meter attendants.

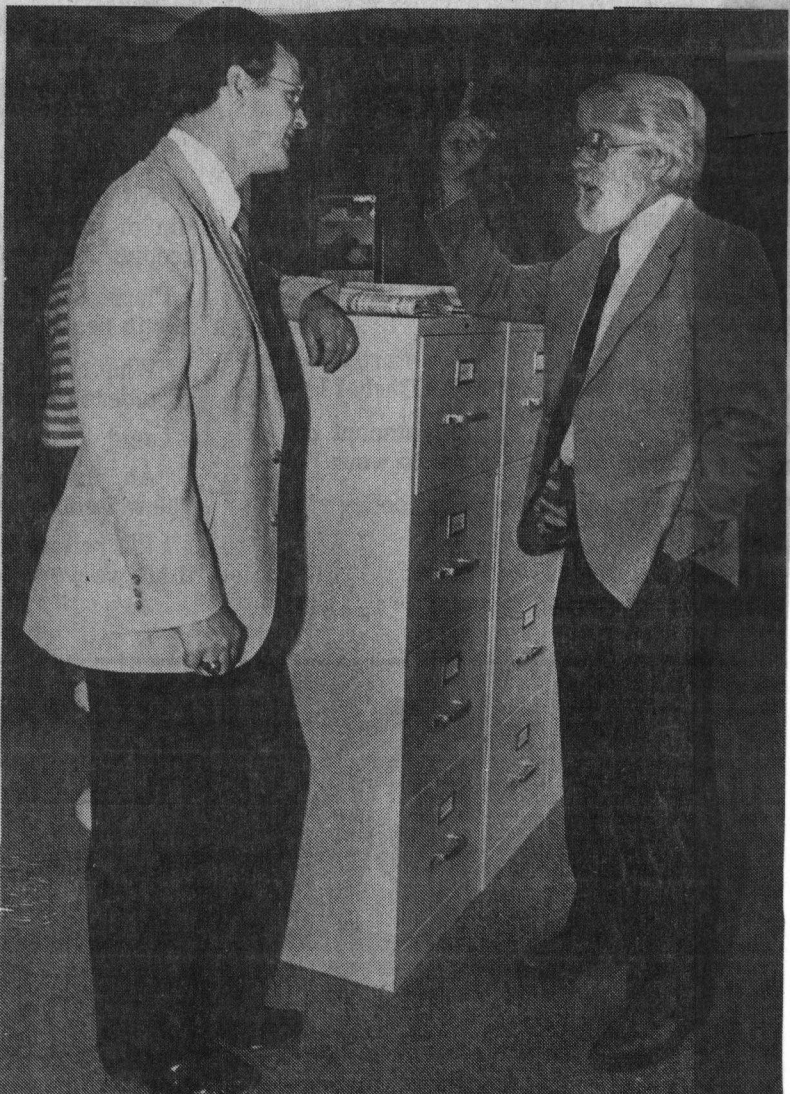
"I don't have any specific reason for retiring," he said. "This is my 30th year in law enforcement and there were just other things I wanted to do. If I had waited until I had 40 years in, I may not have been as anxious."

And, what Allen is anxious to do is to sail his 41-foot gaff-cutter south of the border. He plans to spend the winter in Mexico, returning to Capitola next spring. Allen will continue to make his home in Capitola.

Allen concedes it was a "big adjustment" upon being named chief in April, 1978. "I came from a job where we had more secretaries than I had police officers here," he said. "Capitola had 11 officers when I arrived, while San Jose had 1,000 at the time."

But, Allen is quick to point out, "We don't want to be like Hill Street or even San Jose here. When police do a real good job, it almost becomes mundane and can be boring."

Allen arrived in Capitola during a time of turmoil in the police department. His hiring followed a series of accusations involving strife. He immediately reorganized the department, instituting more management controls and opening communications.



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Allen, right, with Capitola's new chief, Don Braunton

During his tenure, there have been five murders, involving two separate incidents. In both instances, the suspects committed suicide.

"I guess that gives us the shortest amount of time spent investigating homicides than any other department in the world," said Allen, smiling. "Literally, it only took us minutes to clear the cases."

One of the biggest uproars for the former chief came when the Chamber of Commerce received complaints that police were issuing too many traffic tickets, discouraging the tourist trade. He said his department was "doing too good a job."

"I don't believe we were overzealous in our enforcement," he said, pointing to the fact that Capitola's city limits are only two square miles for fewer than 10,000

residents and police presence is very visible.

His most innovative move was the organization of the handicapped code enforcement unit — which goes a long way toward strict enforcement of parking. Allen started the unit with money from surplus department funds. The unit has since attracted national attention and even garnered an award from Goodwill Industries.

Typically, Allen downplayed the innovative program. "Why should it be of so much national interest to know that handicapped people can think and perform a job even though they can't use their legs?" he asked.

Allen's retirement dinner will be held Oct. 4 at the Coconut Grove. Cost will be \$12 per person. For reservations, call 475-7300, extension 41, or 475-4242, extension 24.