

On The Beat

with the South Sioux City Heat

story by **Snapper S. Plöen**

One tends to look at police officers with a slightly different set of eyes. Some people see them as the brave men and women who patrol and protect our community, while others view them as individuals in serious need of an attitude adjustment. The truth is, law enforcement officers come from different points of the very same spectrum as you and I, the only difference being, we give them the authority to enforce the bills we've ratified into laws. In order to gain a perspective of this occupation, yours truly went on a police ride-along one Saturday night, to better grasp one of America's most misunderstood occupations.

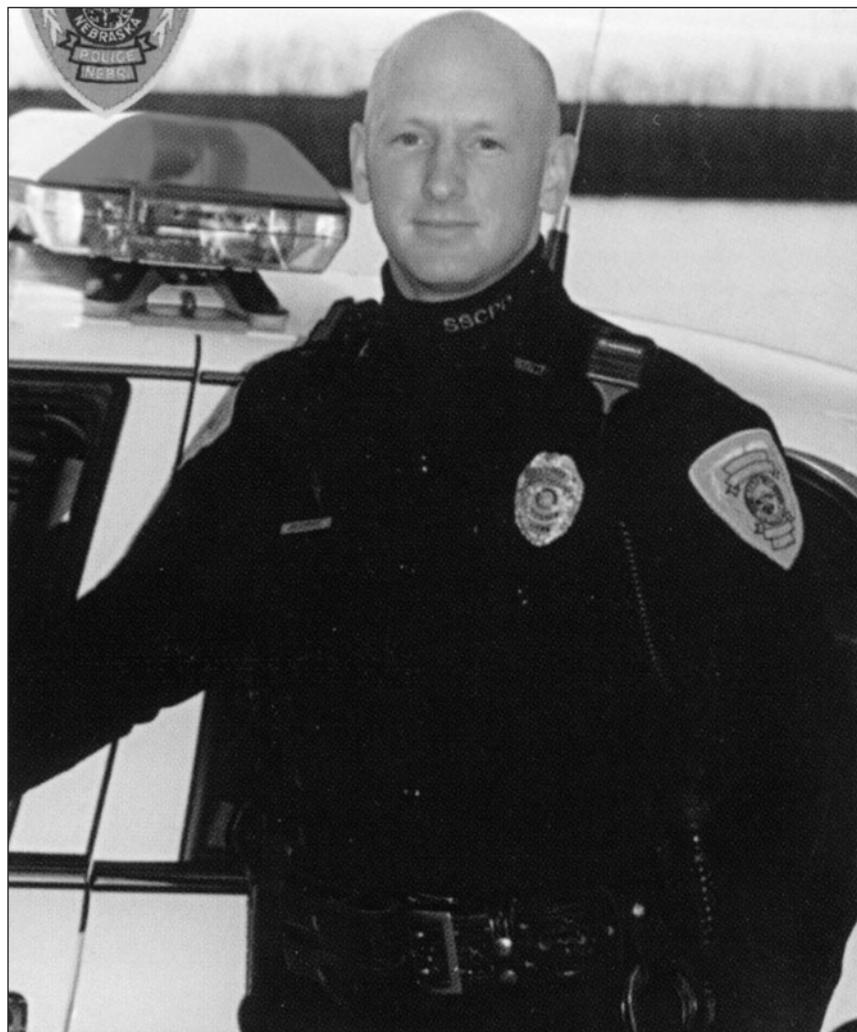
Jon Schmiedt, an officer for the South Sioux City Police Department, was my guide through the multi-faceted world of law enforcement. Schmiedt has served with the South Sioux City Force for about two and a half years and previous to his service, he spent his time earning a bachelors degree in criminal justice at the University of South Dakota. Having grown up in South Sioux City, he feels a strong sense of community loyalty and a willingness to protect it. When asked what attracts him to this particular profession, Schmiedt says, "I've always been interested in the area of law. The more classes I took in college, the more appealing the field became." He also feels comfortable with his occupation simply because it isn't a typical kind of job and every day has something different in

store.

Our evening ride-along started at 6:30 p.m. on a Saturday night. I was required to fill out the necessary liability-absolving paperwork in order to participate in the program; it outlined the rules and regulations I was expected to abide by during my time with the officer. After the legal window dressings, we proceeded to the police car. Schmiedt gave me a brief overview of the communication and weapons he uses on a daily basis. He performed a test of the radar system by using musical tuning forks, which resonate at certain vibrations to check the accuracy of the reading (and yes, they test it at the beginning of every shift). At this point, I started to pay attention to a unique characteristic of law enforcement: It is a field that overlaps into several other disciplines. Although it does not require someone to be an expert in any of them, it does demand an understanding of the city's layout, chemical science, the psychology of human behavior and the efficient use of technology. Each point presented itself at different times during the evening as we encountered both minor and serious infractions

of the law while patrolling South Sioux City.

The first call was a simple request to have someone turn down their radio. The next was a little more serious...a gasoline drive-off at a nearby convenience store. We spent the next half hour looking for a vehicle that matched the description given by the station attendant. While we kept our eyes peeled, I took the opportunity



Jon "Schmiddy" Schmiedt

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