

*Maxey sentimental about time on force*

# Death and domestic fights fill officer's day

By Henry Battistoni  
Staff Reporter

The first stop of the morning for Lt. Albert Maxey, duty commander for the Lincoln Police Department, was a house in south Lincoln. A "full code," meaning someone is dead, came over the radio. An elderly diabetic had been found dead in his apartment.

Maxey entered the building to coordinate the work of his officer already on the scene. He instructed his man and was back in the cruiser and on the radio in six minutes. No foul play was evident.

As duty commander, Maxey is in charge of about 30 officers. Most of his time, like Tuesday morning, is spent in a patrol car directing his officers' actions in the field. While he is out in the patrol car he rarely needs to leave it, commanding from his two radios and cellular phone. The remainder of his time is spent on paperwork.

He feigned not knowing that most police officers can be found at Dunkin' Donuts.

"I don't eat donuts or drink much coffee," he said. Shortly thereafter he passed a policeman with coffee and a bag of donuts.

Maxey does not usually make arrests. His car does not have a screen between the seats and he cannot carry criminals. But he does help out as he did in his second stop.

A call came over the radio that two men were causing a disturbance at 17th and P streets. Maxey was nearby and drove over. Another officer was already there and a third was on the way. Whenever an officer takes a call, it is Lincoln Police policy for a backup to be present. This is why from two to 10 cruisers are invariably present at any fender-bender.

The two men were obviously drunk.

"Look at that. That guy knew he couldn't stand up," Maxey laughed as the tall man sat on the curb.

Maxey and the other officer questioned the two men.

Then they frisked them, handcuffed and put them in separate patrol cars. The tall man didn't want to get in. Maxey put his hand over the man's head. The tall man swore "Get your hand off my goddamn head!" Maxey was getting annoyed and told him to duck.

The man had bloody hands from an apparent fall onto pavement. Some of it was on Maxey's hands. He said he worries about touching blood from others while on the job.

"They give officers gloves, but sometimes it's not convenient," he said.

Maxey has been on the force for 28 years. He said that he likes his job and Lincoln. Lincoln is a great place to raise kids, he said. He has four -- two are University of Nebraska-Lincoln graduates; his alma mater. He looks younger than his 51 years, possibly the result of pastimes like bicycling, marathon running and a former spot as a scholarship basketball player at

UNL.

While Maxey notes that Lincoln's crime rate is low, he said it is inevitable that crime will grow as the population increases. Larceny is now the most common crime in Lincoln, he said.

"I think the majority of our larcenies involve people stealing for their drug habits," he said.

Maxey said he thinks the gang rumors circulating in Lincoln are largely media hype.

"The news is in the business of making money," he said.

He said that the media sensationalize and people get sucked into the hype. Even fellow officers start believing the hype and stories of a few kids that are not truly gang members but wish to identify with a group receiving popular attention, Maxey said.

"They (the police) had calls for drive-by shootings out there (the 28th and Q streets area)," he laughs. "I think they (residents) just wanted us out there."

Though he downplays gangs, Maxey sees a drug problem in Lincoln. He said crack is in Lincoln, but information is only known about some users and small-time dealers.

"You gotta hide it in a place like this. It's (crack) here but you don't see it," he said.

Because of Lincoln's small size one doesn't find a large number of people idly hanging around selling drugs, he said.

"The Royal Grove is the only place I can give you for that kind of activity. Whereas Omaha might have ten places, we only have one and it's way out there," he said.

The worst crime Maxey said he feels most police officers in Lincoln face day to day is domestic assault. He said intervening in family affairs is touchy and full of pressure.

"If you don't watch out you could take that home," he said.

The pressure of involving oneself with personal tragedies became more apparent when a call came in from St. Elizabeth's Hospital. A three-day-old baby whose mother was determined to be incapable of caring for her because of mental and physical problems was waiting to be received by social services. An officer was assigned to the hospital. Maxey said he worried that the woman might not take the separation well. He pointed to her house as he drove down 27th street.

"She has no business having that baby," he said. "So now I have an officer out there waiting for the child protection people. This is work you do that hurts," he said.

Maxey is sentimental about his time on the beat. He said, "The best was when you were on the beat. It was like you had a little town you were in charge of. The bigger it was, the more territory you could cover and sneak around."

Maxey said when he started the force he was the only black officer. He said he would go into Bob's or Arnold's Tavern on Hav-

lock Avenue to remove drunks and hear "Get outta here nigger." Maxey smiled and said, "But

ears. "I used to carry them out on my shoulder and set them down on the corner to wait for the patrol

slow down or they're gonna kill you out there," he said, laughing again.

Maxey sees most bigotry as covert in Lincoln.

"People will be talking to you and then thinking something else," he said.

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Maxey spent the morning driving around Lincoln looking for a woman in a two-tone car with Colorado plates. She was suspected to be a bad check writer.

But most of his time was spent driving around and monitoring his radio. He said it's not boring riding around. He has a car radio he can monitor if he gets bored. Unfortunately, it's AM.

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playing basketball I could see out to here," and held his hands at the side of his head well behind his

car. I had three or four of them out on the corner at a time. They (officers) said 'Maxey, you've gotta



Eric Gregory / Daily Nebraskan  
Lt. Albert Maxey helps a suspect arrested for "creating a disturbance" into a police cruiser at 17th & P streets Wednesday.