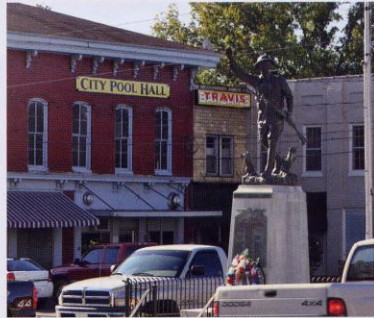




# Monticello Police

## Chief Through Changes



/Article and photos by Elizabeth Thomas, Public Information Officer

**P**olicing Monticello for more than 30 years, Chief Ralph Miniard has seen both Monticello and law enforcement change over the past three decades.

Monticello lies near Lake Cumberland, with commercial lake access at Conley Bottom and Beaver Lodge docks, and many other non-commercial boat landings.

In a town where directions are given in reference to the “Doughboy” statue – which pays homage to infantrymen and sits just outside the

Happy Days Soda Shoppe and City Pool Room – you might expect to find a quiet town with occasional petty crime.

“As we like to say in Monticello, ‘We’ve got most of what the rest of the world has, just a little less and five years later,’” chuckled Miniard.

But much like other communities of its size, Monticello’s 10 full-time and two part-time officers, along with the area’s other law enforcement agencies, are in a war against drugs and all the crime that follows.

“At least half, if not more, of all criminal activity relates back to drugs

and other intoxicants,” Miniard said. “If you eliminated the intoxicants from society – that’s just me daydreaming – you’d have no need for law enforcement. Domestic violence, traffic accidents and theft occur most often because someone is intoxicated.”

Miniard noted the change he’s seen since 1977 in crime influences.

“When I started, it was alcohol – but not anymore,” he said.

Miniard recalls drug trafficking coming south, most often from Michigan.

“Drug traffickers realized that Oxycontin had a larger profit margin down here. They could purchase it at \$8 to \$10 per tablet in Michigan, but sell it for \$100 or more here.”

But in this 6,500-person town where “you know everybody and everybody knows you, we’re policing in our own community,” Miniard said. “We share the results of what we do. Who you work with, whether it’s the victim or the accused, they’re not a stranger.”

But now, Oxycontin issues have become methamphetamine issues throughout most of the region.

Six-year Monticello patrol officer Allen Braden said that the manufacturing of meth has been a major issue in the town until recent weeks. Where they were seeing five meth-lab busts per week and many meth-related arrests, it has slowed to just a couple busts in weeks, a testament Braden said to the interagency cooperation throughout the area, including Kentucky State Police, Wayne County Sheriff’s Office, Monticello Police Department and the FBI.

“We tend to take pride in working together with all the law enforcement agencies in this county,” Miniard said. “As a matter of fact, all those agencies have been in here this week working on a big drug campaign.”

At a routine road block just outside the downtown area Braden worked alongside uniformed and undercover troopers as you might often find in this area.

### Ten years of change

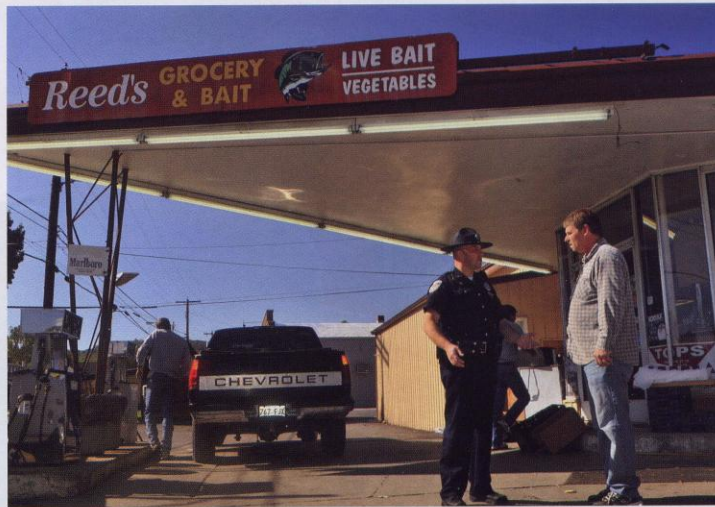
Miniard recognized the changes that law enforcement has seen in his tenure as chief, but particularly the past 10 years after the Peace Officer Professional Standards took effect.

“Officers today are better trained and tend to be in better health and physical condition,” he said. “They are held to a higher standard. POPS made officers feel more professional and gave them more pride in what they do. It eliminated the upper class and lower class officers; it put us all on a level playing field. Our officers are as good as anybody’s.”

Miniard said that although there is more record keeping involved and more training to continue, the POPS Act made it easier to be a police chief and made the actual job of policing easier.

“Thanks to POPS, [Kentucky’s] officers can stand against the rest of the country,” he said. “I think the general public would be surprised at how well our officers would stack against those in bigger states and bigger cities.

“They can move from writing a traffic ticket in the morning to investigating a felony offense in the afternoon,” Miniard added. “We may not have all the issues of larger cities, but we have just enough to keep us on our toes and to be competent officers. It’s



- ◀ Chief Ralph Miniard, with Officer Allen Braden and Sgt. Joe Bybee, stands outside Happy Days Soda Shoppe. (top)
- ▶ (Bottom Left) Officer Allen Braden assists Kentucky State Police with a routine road block.
- ▲ (Above) Braden makes a visit to one of the most popular stops in Monticello.

just the right place to police.”

And the Kentucky Law Enforcement Foundation Program Fund helps with what the department can offer to attract these better officers, Miniard said.

“The increase in pay gives you a better selection,” he said. “You can attract better people and once you get them, you tend to keep them. It’s always helpful when you have more to offer.”

Poorly paid officers, Miniard said, tends to result in officers who are tempted by corruption.

“I’m a real believer in high standards,” Miniard said. 🐾