

# Police chief has more than four decades of service

By Sam Bari

When Chief of Police Thomas P. Tighe joined the Jamestown Police Department in 1967, only four full-time officers were on the force. Tighe and Roger Bennett were hired at the same time to expand the staff to six.

"We were the first off-islanders to be hired," the chief recalled. "We were given six months to move onto the island. That was the law back then. Department personnel had to live on the island. Fred Smythe was chief. James Pemantell was the lieutenant, Arthur Spadoni, was the sergeant, and Richard Botelho was the only patrolman."

Chief Tighe is a native Rhode Islander who grew up an only child in East Providence. After graduating from high school, he immediately enlisted in the Air Force and served from 1962 to '66. "I only joined for one reason," Tighe said, "to join the military police, which I did. As far back as I can remember I wanted to be a police officer."

Tighe worked hard to make his dream come true. He only had one other job in his life where he wasn't a policeman. For a short time after he was discharged from the Air Force, he worked at Coro's Jewelry Company. He packed orders there until he started at Bryant College in the fall of 1966 to major in law enforcement. He used his GI bill to finance his education.

He also married his high school sweetheart, Anne, who has been his wife for 41 years. "After we got married, I remember my father-in-law giving me a newspaper clipping. It was an advertisement for a job with the Jamestown Police Department. I got an interview with Chief Smythe, and a couple of days later, he called and offered me the job," Tighe said.

"I finished my first year at Bryant, and that summer, the Jamestown Police Department sent me to the police academy in Warwick. The state didn't have its own academy until the 1970s. All Rhode Island police officers are required to attend that academy now to get certified. After graduating, I went to work as a full-time police officer on the Jamestown police force. Anne and I moved to the island, and I've been with the department ever since," Tighe said.

While working as a full-time officer, Tighe transferred his credits and attended Salve Regina University as a part time student, earning a graduate degree in criminal justice. He has continued to further his education throughout his career by attending classes to keep abreast of modern techniques and technology used by police forces across the country.

In the late 1990s, Tighe, who was promoted to acting chief in 1992, and official chief in '93, attended a course in criminalistics (another term for forensic sciences) at University of Rhode Island. Sgt. Frank Watson, head of the detective division, and Lt. William Donovan attended the course with him.

"The department has grown quite a bit since I joined," Tighe said. "We're up to 15 full-time employees including officers and dispatchers now. That's why we're expanding the building, to accom-



Chief of Police Thomas P. Tighe

modate the additional personnel.

"Things have also changed a lot," Tighe reminisced. "We worked 12-hour shifts back then. We didn't even have our own radio frequency until 1968. We were connected to the State Police radio. Any calls went to them and their dispatcher contacted us to respond to incidents on the island."

"I remember when Mrs. Lyons was the dispatcher from 3 to 11 p.m. All calls were patched through to her house. Then from 11 p.m. until the next morning, we had a dispatcher and one patrolman on duty."

He said that things changed quickly after that. By 1968, the department had full-time dispatchers, their own radio frequency, and they worked normal eight-hour shifts.

Although Jamestown has remained mostly peaceful throughout the years, Tighe remembers a few incidents that were worthy of national news. "In 1970, we boarded the sailboat, Sojourn, and found a boat full of drugs. People in the crew rented a house on East Shore Road and were seen by neighbors unloading packages on a conveyor belt. They reported the suspicious activity to us, and we started an investigation," Tighe said.

"There was a similar incident on a big ship anchored in West Reach, called the Dorchester, in 1977. We found hundreds of pounds of marijuana on board. That was an interdepartmental case. Everybody was involved, us, the DEA, the State Police, and I think the FBI," Tighe said.

He said a few other cases were worth mentioning. "In the late sixties, a youngman murdered

his grandmother, and we caught a group of people producing pornography near Beavertail. Another incident that happened in 1993 right after I was made chief was also at Beavertail," Tighe said. "A man's body had been dumped off and burned at the state park. We had to involve the State Police, and Detective Sgt. Watson headed up a big investigation. We never did find out who did it though."

Chief Tighe has been with the police department for 41 years, longer than any officer in its history. He remembers when Town Councilman Robert Sutton helped write the Town Charter, he said. Tighe moved his family to the island before the Newport Bridge was built, when the only transportation to Newport was by ferry. Back then, the island had a population of 2,500 residents.

Tighe says that he occasionally thinks about retiring, but not often. "I haven't ever considered a date. I still like to go to work in the morning. It's an interesting job and I have a great group of well-trained men and women in the department. I see no reason to quit. I think I'd be bored," he said smiling.

Chief Tighe and his wife Anne have raised three children since they moved to the island in 1967. Their daughter Rosanne, 40, works for Roger Williams State Park and the Pawtucket Red Sox in the summer. Thomas Patrick, 39, graduated from Bridgewater College and works in communications. His youngest, Howard, 35, is the Deputy Fire Chief and the fire marshal. Howard and his wife, Jill, gave Chief Tighe and Anne their first grandchild, Ellie Grace, 10 months ago.



## Where in the World is the Jamestown Press?

Jackson Hawkins, 9, of Jamestown, took the Press to new heights when he visited the CN Tower in Toronto, Canada. The tower is the tallest observation tower on land.

## Non-profit groups can apply for grants from community fund

The Jamestown Community Fund, established seven years ago at the Rhode Island Foundation, is seeking applications for programs and projects developed by nonprofit organizations located in and working for the benefit of the Town of Jamestown.

Last year, the fund awarded three grants to benefit the island's inhabitants through projects proposed by nonprofit organizations, bringing the total allocated in six years to more than \$23,000. Last year's grant recipients and projects include: Jamestown Education Foundation, \$1,000, for its Save the Bay Camp; Jamestown Emergency Medical Service, \$2,300, for supplies for the "File of Life" project; Meals on Wheels, \$689, to provide program support to the Meals on Wheels program. There is approximately \$4,200 available for grants this year.

An organization interested in being considered for funding from the permanent endowment should submit the two-page application form, a 500-word project description that answers the "who, what, why, where, when, and how much" for the project, and a copy of its 501(c) determination letter. Application forms and additional information are available in the Receive/Grant Opportunities section of the foundation's website, [www.rifoundation.org](http://www.rifoundation.org) or by contacting Beverly Guay at the foundation at 274-4564 or [bguay@rifoundation.org](mailto:bguay@rifoundation.org).

The application deadline is April 1 at 5 p.m. Decisions will be announced by May 18.

Jamestowners (and others) can also grow the fund. Prospective contributors may contact the Rhode Island Foundation's Gift Planning and Stewardship Department at 274-4564 for additional information.

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