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Police chief shares highlights of his career

April 30, 2008 | Mitzi Bible

Liberty University's Chief of Police Randy Smith spent his last day at the reins Wednesday. On Thursday, retired Virginia State Police Capt. Howard Gregory takes over as the new chief.

Smith, who has been with LUPD for 15 years, has accepted a job as a deputy with Bedford County Sheriff's Office.

Smith started as a security officer while he was a student at LU, often working security for the Falwells' residence. He attended police academy in 1997, worked his way up through the LUPD ranks and became chief in 2001. He was also a bodyguard for the late Dr. Jerry Falwell when he went on the road for God Save America rallies and other speaking engagements.

"I traveled with Dr. Falwell and that was the best time of my life here," Smith said. "I got to see many places, many countries, went overseas. The biggest thing was just watching him and the people in awe of him and how respectful he was to everybody. ... He was a good father figure, a good role model for me to follow and I enjoyed that aspect of it [the job]. ... It was a shame we had to put security on him, but he was so outspoken about the right things that we had to."

Smith said he will continue to work part time at LUPD.

Smith and his family are members at Thomas Road Baptist Church.

"Our goals are to still be active here," he said.

Gregory, who has worked in law enforcement for 42 years, has been with LUPD for three years. He retired from a 39-year career with the Virginia State Police, where he commanded the 15-county Division 3, which is headquartered in Appomattox.

He was hired at LU's School of Government to recruit for the law enforcement program before starting work with LUPD.

He said he is looking forward to serving LU as its new police chief.

"Chief Smith has done a fantastic job with this department and has brought it so far in the years he has been here. ... If I can just take the baton and pick up where he has left off, I will be very grateful," he said.

Gregory said he is fortunate to work with a well-trained, quality agency.

"After Virginia Tech, everything in campus law enforcement changed in a flash and the challenges today are far greater than what they used to be for any campus law enforcement

agency and Liberty is certainly blessed to have the caliber of officers we have here in the department,” he said.

“I’m aware that, as is true at most campuses I think, some people don’t credit the department for what it does and don’t realize all the things a [law enforcement] agency does ... but officers here meet all Virginia requirements for police officers. If we were to have a tragedy anything similar to Tech, LUPD would be the first to respond. ... The bottom line is when seconds count, LUPD will have to be the first to roll in and confront the situation.”

Gregory is a graduate of the FBI National Academy at Quantico and a graduate of the United States Secret Service Dignitary Protection School in Washington, D.C. He earned an Associate Degree in Police Science from Central Virginia Community College, a Bachelor of Laws Degree from LaSalle University and a Certificate in Criminal Justice Administration from Virginia Commonwealth University.

He has held several major leadership positions in his career, including liaison officer with the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). He was also a legislative liaison to the Virginia General Assembly in Richmond. In 2003, Gov. Mark Warner appointed him to a four-year term on the Commonwealth Medal of Valor Review Board.

His honors include being named a “Leader and Legend” by the Children’s Miracle Network. He is past president and a member of the Virginia Chapter of the FBI National Academy Associates, the Central Virginia Law Enforcement Association and the Lynchburg Civil War Round Table. He is a Master Mason in Monroe Lodge, No. 301, A.F.& A.M. and a member of the Honor Guard of American Legion Post No. 104 in Appomattox. As a Civil War and railroad history buff, he has authored histories of the “38th Virginia Infantry” and the “53rd Virginia Infantry” and “The Wreck of Old 97.”

Gregory and his wife Linda have two children; their son Michael is a First Lieutenant in the Virginia Army National Guard and a Blackhawk helicopter pilot and their daughter Kimberly is a rising senior at Liberty.