

Beloved retired Austin police captain dies

Polk best known for nabbing hijacker in 1990.

By Joshunda Sanders
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Lloyd C. Polk, a retired Austin Police Department captain best known as the department's historian and an old-fashioned cop who apprehended a hijacker by clobbering him over the head with a flashlight, died Sunday evening. He was 59.

Polk died unexpectedly while working in his yard, his daughter-in-law Michelle Polk said. The cause of death has not been determined.

Polk was well-regarded throughout the department as a devoted public servant and collector. He joined the department in 1966 and retired in 1995 after more than 30 years of service, his friends and colleagues said Monday.

He was a history buff who loved to collect police badges from different eras, old license plates and arrowheads. He also was known as a friendly storyteller who liked to invite his co-workers to his Pontotoc ranch every fall.

"He was an excellent leader," said Dennis Farris, a patrol officer in the North Central area command who started working with Polk in 1991. "He was a cop's cop. He cared about his people, and he led by example. He wasn't afraid to get out there and stomp the weeds with us."

A good example of that was Polk's famous rescue Jan. 16, 1990, when the veteran street cop helped defuse a potentially deadly hijacking of America West Flight 727.

The flight made an unscheduled stop in Austin when a man who claimed that he had a bomb started choking a flight attendant and demanded that the plane fly to Cuba.

After the plane landed and the passengers safely disembarked, Polk climbed up a slippery gray chute and pummeled the hijacker with his fist and flashlight, according to an Austin American-Statesman article. He subdued the man by

pinning him face-down on the floor with his knees.

Even though blood stained his brass nametag and jacket, he downplayed his role in apprehending the criminal.

"I just did my job; that's all," he told the American- Statesman.

Sgt. Jim Coleman, a patrol supervisor at Central East command who often would hunt and fish with Polk, said Polk received a special flashlight from the department as recognition for his efforts.

Assistant Police Chief Robert Dahlstrom said Polk was instrumental in planning the North Central substation and was one of the first captains involved in the department's community policing program. He sent the department's condolences to the family.

Retired senior patrol officer Robert Mauck said he would hunt for arrowheads with Polk when they were off-duty, and he said Polk had helped him restore an antique police car.

"He was probably the best historian that the Police Department ever had. You work at a place, and you never collect the things from your job, but he did."

Polk would have been 60 on Oct. 6. In addition to being a beloved and respected man, he was "excited about his not-so-surprise birthday party," Michelle Polk said.

Polk is also survived by his wife of 39 years, Doris, and their two sons, Kyle and Kevin.

"He's the last of a dying breed, one of the old-school captains," Coleman said. "You didn't find people who had something bad to say about him, and that's typically not true among police people."

Visitation will be from 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at Cook-Walden/Davis Funeral Home in Georgetown. Services will be at 2 p.m. Wednesday at the funeral home.