

The president's volunteer

Former dairyman donates thousands of hours to Chino

By Richard Block

Gus Wybenga, a volunteer with Chino's Community Support Team, patrols Chino two or three times per week, writing parking citations and checking houses whose residents are on vacation. These are duties he has carried out for almost 20 years, beginning not long after he sold his Eucalyptus Avenue dairy. He has dedicated thousands of hours to the benefit of the city, and for them, he's received an award from the White House.

The President's Call to Service Award is given to volunteers with 4,000 or more hours of service. This year, the Chino Police Department nominated Mr. Wybenga.

His supervisor at the Chino police department, Chris Wolff, said Mr. Wybenga has probably donated more than 10,000 hours.

"He's just a great guy," Ms. Wolff said. "This is one of the most important things in his life, I know that for a fact. He enjoys it very much. He's very good at what he does. We can always count on him. He goes out on patrol three times a week, and it's like clockwork."

He is not a large man. He wears spectacles and a neat mustache, and he speaks evenly, with an accent that reveals his European homeland. He said he dreamed of doing police work since the end of World War II. The work he does with the Chino PD is "fulfilling," he said. "As long as I'm still healthy, I'll keep on doing it."

Mr. Wybenga was born April 9, 1928, in Lollum, Holland. The family moved a couple of times when he was a child. When he was 10, the family settled in Tzum.

During the war, his family's home was near a crucial road connecting the northern and southern parts of Holland, Mr. Wybenga said. When the Nazis invaded, the Germans took control of the road.

Mr. Wybenga at one point went to work as a farm hand.

In the fields, he found weapons from time to time. That and other things he heard and saw made him suspect resistance activity. The farmer, his uncle, eventually asked him if he could be trusted.

He thought hard about it, and responded, "Yes."

He was put to work by the Dutch resistance as a courier, escorting "divers" — Jews, resisters and others hiding from the Nazis — from place to place.

"My folks never really asked questions," he said. "Maybe they knew better, not to ask questions."

"Deep down, I think they knew that I was involved," he said.

After the war, Mr. Wybenga said, he left home and joined the army, intending to become a military policeman and then, after his discharge, a state policeman. He was 17.

But his parents did not want him in the army. His father spoke to his commanding officer, who let Mr. Wybenga choose whether to stay.

Mr. Wybenga went home out of respect for his parents.

But there was no opportunity for a young man in postwar Holland, he said.

With sponsorship from an uncle in California and a preferential visa from the U.S. government, he immigrated to the United States without speaking a word of English.

He worked for his uncle, milking cows, to pay him back for the plane fare.

He married in 1948, became a citizen in 1950, worked in the dairy industry, and joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1952, during the Korean War.

While Mr. Wybenga was aboard ship bound for Korea, the cease-fire was signed. His ship was diverted and he spent nine months in Japan.

After he got back, Mr. Wybenga and his wife, Corie, adopted two daughters, Loretta and Loraine.

The Wybengas started a dairy in Cypress in 1962, and moved to Artesia after that. They moved to Chino in 1970. They sold the dairy around 1985, he said, and he joined what was then called the senior volunteer patrol. Several years later, volunteers were scarce, and Mr. Wybenga kept with the program as it became the present-day Community Support Team.

Now, he and his partner, Bill Sutton, go out two or three times a week. They call tow trucks, tag possibly abandoned vehicles, and check vacationers' houses to make sure they have not been burgled.

"The country's been real good to me, and I just want to give something back to the country," he said.

He has moved with his wife to Inland Christian Home, in Ontario.

But he does not intend to retire from his volunteer work: "I'll just keep on going with it as long as I can get in and out of the car."

"It's nice to be retired," he said. "But you've got to have cause to get up in the morning. Otherwise, you'll soon get old."

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