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Man brings passion for radio dispatch to Hoopeston police

For Tom Bookwalter, police dispatching isn't just a job, it's a passion, one that he's bringing to Hoopeston for the second time.

Bookwalter, who worked at the Vermilion County Communications Center for 18 years, brings his skills to the Hoopeston Police Department.

The former Wellington resident began his new duties April 3.

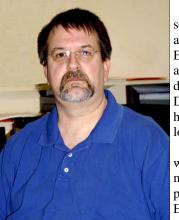
Bookwalter's career in front of a microphone goes back many years. After graduating from Wellington High School, he joined the Army, serving at Doveway Proving Grounds in Utah. He then attended Danville Area Community College where he

received an associate's degree in law enforcement.

While taking classes, volunteered for Milford Emergency Management and got his first chance to dispatch. He decided he liked it. Then, when he interned at the Iroquois County Sheriff's Department, he got more exposure dispatching under Communications Director Nita Duble. "She said I took to it like a baby taking a bottle." he said.

In 1985, Bookwalter got his first dispatching job with the Hoopeston Police Department. In 1988, he went to Vermilion County Communications, where he and co-workers dispatched not only for the sheriff's department but also Danville city 10 ambulance services and all village police and fire departments except Hoopeston and Rossville.

Approximately six years ago, Bookwalter was named a supervisor and while he enjoyed the challenges, the duties took him away from his first love. "My love, my passion is radio dispatch," he said.



BOOKWALTER

Although he will have some supervisory duties here - he will be the agency coordinator for LEADS (Law Enforcement Data System) and will also provide quality control for the department's Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) - Bookwalter will have more time to do the job he has loved for more than 20 years.

As LEADS coordinator, he will work with the other dispatchers to meet criteria for reporting missing people, license plates and vehicles. As EMD quality control person, Bookwalter, who is certified as an Emergency Dispatch Quality Assurance Officer will review tapes and provide

training to other dispatchers. "I'm not there to find fault," he said. "I'm there to provide guidance and offer suggestions."

Bookwalter is known to some as the former Hoopeston building inspector and compliance officer, positions he held for more than three years.

Besides getting the opportunity for more hands-on dispatching, Bookwalter had other, practical reasons for his job change, namely the cost of gas and the amount of time he spent away from home. "As you get older, the little things become more important," the 49-year-old said.

Bookwalter's hours vary among three shifts: seconds, from 2 –11 p.m., the "power" shift from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. and thirds, from 10 p.m.-6 a.m. Changing hours will not be a problem, said the former second-shifter. "I'm finding it interesting," he said. "I won't get stale."

See DISPATCH on other side

Blooming with the lilys in the greenhouse: azaleas, cyclamen, violets, jonquils, tulips, hyacinths, hydrangeas, hibiscus, Ruella, pansies, Duronia Easter is a time for flowers!

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An employee of Silver Brothers Inc., 105 E. Washington, reported Monday that someone damaged heavy equipment at McFerren Park.

Jennifer L. Schramm, 49, of 626 S. Fifth St. Was arrested at 11:30 a.m. Monday at the police station. Schramm, wanted on a Vermilion County warrant for failure to appear, was released on \$84 cash bond.

Briefly

Gardening program

Master Gardener Sara Johnson will present "Body Smart Gardening" at 9:45 a.m. Wednesday at the Hoopeston Multi Agency, 206 S. First Ave. Everyone is invited.

King, Queen of the Hill set

Pla-Mor Lanes and the Hoopeston Bowling Association will host the King-Queen of the Hill on Friday,

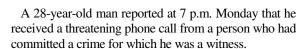
Dispatch continued from other side

He especially likes the hours of second shift. At Hoopeston. At Vermilion County, he got off at 11 p.m., then had the drive back to Hoopeston. "Getting off at 10 p.m., you can still do things at home," he said.

When not working, Bookwalter said he enjoys photography, a hobby that comes in handy with five grandchildren. He and his wife, Edye, are the grandparents of Grace, five, and Faith, three, daughters of Lucas and Lisa Burge and five-year-old Rylee, Karlee, two, and Emmalee, three months, children of Steve and Samantha Bruens.



Police News



A 26-year- old woman reported Monday that someone against whom she has an order of protection had called her home demanding to speak to her.

Paul A. Nowicki, 39, of 441 Jackson Blvd., Hillside,

April 14, starting at 6:30 p.m. Sign-up will start at 6 p.m. Bowling will be three games with the finals tournament style. Entry fee for the event is \$20.

Those interested should contact JoAnne Gress at (217) 283-5195 or Doug Wagoner, 283-6541.

Obituaries

LONGEST—Rhonda L. Longest, 43, of Milford died at 6:57 a.m. Saturday, April 8, 2006 at Carle Foundation Hospital, Urbana. Funeral services will be at 11 a.m. Wednesday at Knapp Funeral Home, Milford. Burial will be in Iroquois Memorial Park, Watseka. Visitation will be 10-11 a.m. Wednesday at the funeral home. Memorials may be made to a charity of the donor's choice.

Weather



Chance of thunderstorms today. High 72. Tonight, partly cloudy. Low 49. Tomorrow, partly cloudy. High 75, low 54.

For current weather conditions, call Hoopeston Weather Service, (217) 283-6221.



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was arrested at 10:44 p.m. Monday in the 800 block of South Third St. on a DuPage County warrant for failure to appear/aggravated assault.

He was taken to the Public Safety Building in Danville.



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