



# DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff Scott Mittelstadt Chief Deputy

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Date: April 15, 2019

Sheriff Dale J Schmidt

Office: 920-386-4115

[dschmidt@co.dodge.wi.us](mailto:dschmidt@co.dodge.wi.us)

## **Dodge County Sheriff's Office Dispatch 75th Anniversary**

To pay tribute to National Telecommunicators Week this year research was done to dig into our history in Dodge County. In 1944, our first dispatcher was "Red" Beneditz. He was also our only one working dayshift. Once Red went home, there was no one to help the public or any law enforcement officers out there. This is before squad radios. If an officer was needed to call dispatch, he would trigger a light by the police department and when an officer drove or walked by the officer would call in by telephone. Slowly other dispatchers were hired but they also tended to the needs of the inmates as a jailer. The dispatch center did not move until the mid-1970's.

Red, amongst others worked thirty plus years before retiring. Slowly staff was added, however dayshift and third shift only had one dispatcher on duty. When a dedicated phone line was added around 1970 we could get a license plate or a person's driving status back maybe fast and sometimes not. Submitting this info was completed by punching holes into a paper tape and then feeding that into a reader that sent it to the state. Progress then came by one terminal and feeding a ten-pound roll of yellow paper. There were not any windows that you filled in on your screen. A specific sequence of characters and numbers had to be followed up until the late 1980's. If you needed to go to the bathroom, you had better run fast down the hall or try to get someone from the road to come in. Paging a fire department was complicated, selecting specific towers and then a cryptic sequence, one at a time. When an ambulance was needed, the sheriff's department had a station wagon based in Juneau that a deputy would have to drive. We have certainly come a long way.

Red installed the first police radios in our squad cars in the early 1940s. He had 32+ years with Dodge County. He was the radio technician and first dispatcher. He worked 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM, went home for lunch and then worked 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM. He would come back in at 9:00 PM for a short time to see if the squads had any needs and then he would go home. There was not any dispatch on weekends. The sheriff's house was attached to the old jail. The phone rang there after hours and on weekends. The sheriff's wife also cooked the meals for the prisoners.

New squads could not be used at higher speeds until they had 1,000 miles on them so Red was allowed to drive them until they had the proper mileage. He also had to take people out for their driver's license exam.

License plate lookups were completed from a book that was updated annually. If the plate was too new, a call to Madison might get the information you needed but the phone line was usually busy on weekend nights. The dispatcher had to monitor Point at 6:00 PM and hand copy the stolen cars list and other bulletins.

Counties and cities surrounding us were all on the same radio frequency as Dodge County so everyone had to wait their turn to use the radio. If you called for "Car 1" several cars would answer as each county had a Car 1.

Each fire department had their own numbering system so the fire numbers were duplicated many times in the county.

Roads were mostly all gravel. Many accidents were not found out about until the next day. Many of our officers used motorcycles and were killed in accidents while responding due to the gravel roads and high speeds. The motorcycles did not have radios.

For many years, officers drove station wagons that were used to take accident victims to the hospital as there were not ambulances. Sometimes ambulances were available from Portage, Slinger, Fond du Lac or Oconomowoc.

Today communications officers still deal with people in their time of need. Sometimes they deal with mental health issues or more frequently intoxicated persons. They strive to be professional and give unequalled service to the public, other law enforcement and fire and EMS personnel.

Our Communications Officers have a very difficult job to do and it has changed through the years becoming more and more complex. They answer 911 calls, non-emergency calls and page our fire departments and ambulances. They dispatch our law enforcement officers, set off the tornado sirens, make notifications to the medical examiner's office and request assistance from our human service partners. They are the ultimate multi-taskers who must also deal with the traumatic incidents that they are answering the phone for. Imagine how difficult it must be for a dispatcher to talk someone through CPR or comfort someone who has just lost a loved one. They must do this over the phone, even though all they really want to do is reach through that phone line and give them a hug.

The next time you have the opportunity to speak to one of our communications officers, please thank them for their work. Red Beneditz had a tough job and that has not changed, except that it has changed completely. Thank you to all of our communications officers during this 2019 National Telecommunicator's Week. Finally thank you to Peter Kaczmariski for doing this research into our history at the Dodge County Sheriff's Office.

Questions may be directed to Sheriff Dale J Schmidt.

###