Ryan Moser

Lab 2

Story 10 Rewrite

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Helping people is all a part of the job, but for Ron Thrasher, it’s what he was meant to do all along.

In 76 years, Thrasher has seen it all. The look on his face tells more than the stories he was reluctant to share. With a rolling of his eyes and a glance upward as if he were peering into the past, Thrasher said he had encountered countless incoherent college students during his time as a Stillwater police officer.

“I’ve been through it all,” Thrasher said. “I’ve been a deputy in the field, a deputy police chief and, my favorite, an internal investigator into officer conduct.”

Thrasher smiled and raised his eyebrows to indicate his sarcastic comment. For Thrasher, being an internal investigator was the most difficult part about his 33-year career at the station. Thrasher wanted to help people and investigating the misconduct of colleagues didn’t have officers thanking him for his work.

Fred Windle was friends with Thrasher in the 70s when Thrasher was an internal affairs investigator. Windle said Thrasher always performed his job well.

“He didn’t make friends; in fact, he was not liked at all when he left,” Windle said. “Still, the guys respected him because he did his job fairly and the investigations, no matter who it was, were done thoroughly.”

Thrasher did that job because he wanted the officers of Stillwater to do what was right and protect the residents accordingly. The police department laid off Thrasher after 33 years of service after the City Council cut $200,000 from the budget in 1994.

“I felt like I helped many people in my time there, but I didn’t make tons of friends,” Thrasher said. “At least I feel as though I did my job honorably, and some of the officers thanked me for that.”

When Thrasher was laid off, the University of Central Oklahoma called him and asked him whether he wanted to consider teaching. Thrasher said he hadn’t considered it until it called, but he realized how he could continue to make a difference.

Eighteen years later, Thrasher continues to teach students and makes a larger impact than ever. Steven Curtis and Philip Murdock are former students of Thrashers and have fond memories of their teacher.

“Thrasher was one of the best teachers I had,” Curtis said. “He knew so much and wanted to share everything with us.”

Curtis said Thrasher was never shy about digging into criminology and forensic analysis.

“He took the class out to uncover animals that you would get for dissection in biology and diagnose their injuries and collect evidence,” Murdock said.

Thrasher was all about getting his students to learn the same way he did, which was to get out and simulate real-world scenarios as real as Thrasher could create.

Curtis said Thrasher made a crime scene with dummies, fake blood and evidence and made the forensic team investigate the scene.

“He’s going to have them collect evidence and testify in a court room where third-year law students will be arguing the case,” Curtis said. “The forensic team will be cross-examined by the lawyers.”

Murdock said Thrasher is a great teacher shows his passion and desire to impact each student’s life.

Thrasher always wanted to help people and make a difference in someone’s life. He isn’t convinced he did when he was a police officer, but Thrasher is certain he’s making a difference teaching.

“I see people all the time when I’m at Walmart or somewhere just pushing the cart and following my wife when I’ll hear someone yell at me and tell me they were in one of my classes,” Thrasher said. “I never had that happen when I was a policeman.”

Thrasher credits his passion to help others to his great-grandmother who raised him and his brother, who is 12 years younger than he is. He fondly remembers his great-grandmother as a strong woman who was tough and could handle anything, but she also had a soft spot and loved her great-grandchildren.

“She was great,” Thrasher said. “I mean amazing. She raised us, but boy, she kept us in line.”

Thrasher had two parents and never asked them why they sent him and his brother to live with his great-grandmother. Thrasher continued talking about his great-grandmother even with tears spilling from his eyes.

Thrasher knew he wanted to help people ever since he was 12. He moved from Tulsa, Okla. to Kansas City, Mo. and found himself in a new world. Thrasher went to school on his first day wearing black rattlesnake cowboy boots, a cowboy hat and a large brass belt buckle that could match any of the Wild West’s finest cowpokes. Acting as if it were a normal day, Thrasher strolled into the school and discovered people in the city didn’t admire his outfit as much as he thought.

“I was made fun of for just about everything,” Thrasher said. “The way I talked, they way I dressed and everything. I remember thinking I wanted to go back to Oklahoma. That’s where I was born and raised and that’s part of who I am.”

Thrasher had other experiences that made him want to help people. He wanted everyone treated respectfully and equally.

Thrasher is part Native American and remembers subtle ways where his elementary school discriminated against Native Americans. He always sat in the back row of the classroom and thought nothing of it at the time. After all, he was only a first-grader, and it wasn’t until he was about 11 when he realized why they had done that.

“It turns out it was easier to count us if we were all sitting together so they could get a sort of government grant,” Thrasher said.

He never considered it as discrimination and understands the teacher’s intentions but realizes how it could affect students later in life.

Thrasher began to think how great it would be to help people. He didn’t know exactly what he wanted to do, but he knew he wanted to live in Oklahoma and help people. When he enrolled at OSU for his freshman year, he was broke and needed to find a cheap place he could call home. His friend told him about a new fraternity, Pi Kappa Phi, which was offering rooms for $45 a month, so he rented a room. The building was one of the few buildings on and near campus that had air conditioning.

“It was a pretty good little deal,” Thrasher said. “I also made a few friends, and that was good enough for me.”

Most of the guys in the fraternity were going to be police officers and detectives. Because they were all broke and desperate to make a buck, they started a detective agency and made more than enough to pay the rent.

“We made good money,” Thrasher said. “Yeah, we made big bucks for a while there.”

Through these experiences, Thrasher realized what he wanted to do. It was as if he saw the light bulb go on, and everything clicked. That was the way he could make a difference and help people.

Eager to stand out from the crowd, Thrasher applied for the FBI Academy in Quantico, Va. Everything was set. With his experience in law enforcement at 23, applying for the FBI Academy was a formality. However, Thrasher had dropped out of college two hours short of graduating to work at the detective agency. The FBI told him he needed to graduate to enroll into the FBI Academy. Thrasher, being a determined individual, went back to OSU and discovered the requirements for graduating had changed, so he needed to take two classes instead of one to graduate.

“I probably shouldn’t have dropped out of college so close to getting my degree, but then I wouldn’t have had those great experiences at the agency that helped me get into the FBI Academy,” Thrasher said.

The FBI Academy changed Thrasher and made him who he is. Thrasher saw the importance of discipline, courtesy and respect. The FBI Academy was just as physically demanding as it was intellectually demanding. Thrasher studied at the University of Virginia while attending the FBI Academy and earned a diploma in criminal justice. Thrasher met many professors and students at the FBI Academy and talks to them from time to time. Ron Kemper was a student at the FBI Academy and friends with Thrasher.

“Those years changed all of us,” Kemper said. “I can’t even begin to tell you how much it changed Ron. He was more of a complete person after graduating from the academy.”

Thrasher is more than a man on a mission. Thrasher has several hobbies such as flying planes. He obtained his flying license to fly around the Stillwater area to find marijuana fields and find hiding criminals.

“I flew for the [Drug Enforcement Administration], the FBI, the Stillwater [Police Department] and many agencies, but I always loved to fly just to see Oklahoma from a different perspective,” Thrasher said.

Thrasher loves to be outside enjoying the Oklahoma countryside. He owns a 40-acre farm with five cows and one bull. He cherishes his family more than anything else, especially his grandchildren. Thrasher has a wife, two sons and two grandchildren. He sees his grandchildren, who live in Stillwater, every week.

“My sons are OK, but now my grandchildren are the greatest,” Thrasher said. “They’re the best part of being this old.”

Thrasher loves to see the difference he can make in people’s lives. His face lights up when he thinks about his grandchildren and the difference they make in his life.

Thrasher always thought he would miss being a police officer when he retired. He thought he would miss carrying a badge and gun, but he went home after his last day at the station, he kissed his wife, walked into his bedroom and placed his gun in a drawer next to his bed.

“I could still carry a gun,” Thrasher said. “I have a license. I just felt I didn’t need it anymore for some reason.”

Thrasher hasn’t opened the drawer in 18 years. He never missed it. He only wants one thing.

He wants to make a difference.

Source Sheet

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