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## **Oakwood police clerk Wilson retiring after 32 years**

Wilson not ready to completely quit work



Chief Clerk for the Oakwood Police Department Charles Wilson will be retiring after 32 years on the job later this month. Wilson will embark on a second career with Lowe's immediately.

**OAKWOOD** — From his desk near the front door of the Oakwood Police Department, Charles Wilson could always expect the unexpected in his 32 years of service.

Visitors would walk in the Railroad Street building, sometimes calm and rational and sometimes irate beyond reason.

"When you come in (to work), you have to have an open mind," he said. "You've got to decipher every one who comes in, find out what their problem is and how you can help them.

"Some people you just can't help."

Wilson, 53, is about to leave behind 32 years of public service. The police clerk is retiring Wednesday as one of the city's longest-serving employees.

"I'll miss the city of Oakwood. I'll miss all the employees," he said. "... You have to have a pretty thick skin, but everybody gets along with everybody."

Starting a career with Oakwood was something Wilson, a Hall County native, hadn't planned to do.

He had been working as a tire changer when a steel door fell on his back, crushing his 12th vertebra.

"I've been in this wheelchair ever since," Wilson said.

A year later, he started with Oakwood and hasn't looked back.

Through the years, he seen his share of police officers come and go.

He has worked under five chiefs, the past 18 under Randall Moon, who has been with the department for 22 years.

"He has seen a lot of changes, and he has always adapted through them," Moon said. "We're going to miss him."

Wilson won't leave behind memories of his work.

One moment that particularly stands out is an incident from early in his career, when he was working dispatch.

"We used to have holding cells back here, and this lady came in drunk," he said.

"The officers were supposed to take her pocketbook and (other possessions) away from her whenever they go (into) the cell. The officer didn't."

While in the cell, the woman pulled some paper out of her purse and, with the flick of a lighter, set it ablaze.

Before long, the mattress caught fire and black smoke was pouring from the cell. Officers pulled her from the cell and called the fire department.

Firefighters had to put fans at the front and back doors to draw out the smoke.

"It was a mess," Wilson said.

Heather Thompson, clerk of court, said that when Wilson leaves, "he takes a lot of knowledge and experience with him."

"That's something we can never replace," she said.

Wilson said he isn't ready to give up working completely.

He has taken a job in customer service with Lowe's, a home improvement retailer in Gainesville.

"I want to start a second retirement," said Wilson, who is married, has a stepson and two grandchildren. "I want to work about 10 more years."