



Ralph V Pendergraph Sr.

Retired Police Chief Ralph V. Pendergraph Sr. died Monday from pancreatic cancer. He was 70 years old.

Pendergraph was an officer with the Chapel Hill Police Department for 28 years, serving eight years as the chief of police before retiring in 2000. He is survived by his wife Toni Pendergraph, son Ralph Pendergraph, daughter Natalie Pendergraph and four grandchildren.

The funeral will be at 11 a.m. Thursday, May 7, at Cedar Grove United Methodist Church, at 2791 Jones Ferry Road in Pittsboro. Burial will follow in the church cemetery.

Pendergraph was the kind of chief who spent very little time behind his desk, said Jane Cousins, a retired police department spokeswoman. He would visit his officers, she said, asking how they were doing but also about their families and pets.

She had her first ride-along with Pendergraph, shortly after starting her first job with the department's crisis unit, she said. The Orange County native knew everybody and every place, she said, and was comfortable with everyone.

"He was just this wonderful person," she said. "It really was wonderful that (he) was my introduction to law enforcement."

Pendergraph was born May 21, 1944, at Watts Hospital in Durham to Thomas W. Pendergraph and Edna Lloyd Pendergraph. He attended Carrboro Elementary School, Chapel Hill High School and Mars Hill College, according to his obituary. He graduated from Durham Technical Community College, and joined the Navy in 1962, serving on the **USS Boston**.

After returning to Orange County, he worked for Technitrol in Research Triangle Park before joining the police department in 1973. He was promoted to chief in 1992 and, after retirement, taught younger officers going through the Criminal Justice Program at Alamance Community College.

A former Chapel Hill High football player, Pendergraph also coached community football teams in Carrboro and Chatham County, including his son's Carrboro league team, which went one year to the state championships.

Chapel Hill Police Chief Chris Blue recalled applying for a job with the department several times. He finally wrote a letter to Pendergraph, he said, explaining how much he wanted to work in his hometown. He may have even offered to work for free, Blue said.

While he never learned if that letter made a difference, Blue was hired in 1997, and they stayed in touch after Pendergraph retired. It was always nice when Pendergraph called to "ask how you're doing, is everything OK and give you a little piece of advice," he said.

"I always took that advice," Blue said.