

This edition of the *Journal* features an article about a less-encountered responsibility for most road officers. This task involved a small, quiet dignitary protection assignment. Rather than a detailed “how to” article, this story presents a short overview of that assignment. Most Hoosiers probably do not know that the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court completed his preparatory schooling in Indiana. This is an article about Chief Justice John Roberts returning to Indiana to give the graduation address at La Lumiere school, located in La Porte county. This article was prepared by Mike Kellem, a career officer with the La Porte County Sheriff’s Department. ML

In April 2013 I received a call from John Boyd, the La Porte County Sheriff’s Department’s major and third in command. Major Boyd asked if I would be available to assist with the security detail when the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, John Roberts, came to La Porte County to deliver the commencement address at his alma mater, La Lumiere School, on May 24, 2013. Recognizing this as a great opportunity to hear a speech by one of the most influential people in the United States, I readily agreed to assist.

A week prior to the event I received my assignment: Escort the Chief Justice from a hotel in New Buffalo, MI, to the La Lumiere campus in rural La Porte, keep my police car ready to lead in the event of an “emergency egress,” provide crowd control following the graduation ceremony, provide a “loose escort” as the Chief Justice toured the campus, and stand by the headmaster’s house during a luncheon and until the Chief Justice left the area.

I quickly learned that there is an incredible amount of planning for such an event: road closures, standby ambulance and route planning. Having had the opportunity to work details when President Clinton visited Michigan City on two different occasions, I had a good point of reference for the event. Everything is planned down to the minute and there are several contingency plans in place. It came as no surprise when Major Boyd sent out a six-page directive to the officers assigned to this duty.

Friday morning, May 24, arrived and following a last-minute briefing, I headed to the hotel in New Buffalo. Once there I met with one of the agents assigned to the Chief Justice’s Protective Detail. The U.S. Supreme Court has its own police force to protect the Chief Justice.

We set up the vehicles for departure and stood by as we waited for the Chief Justice to exit the hotel. Within short order, we were notified he was on his way. As the Chief Justice exited the doors, he made direct eye contact with me as he walked up, offered his hand and said, “Good morning, [then] Sergeant Kellems, how are you today?” It proved to be one of the rare times I was caught off guard and nearly speechless! It wasn’t hard to figure out that his security detail had told him my name, but just the fact that he made the effort meant a great deal to me. It was interesting later as he delivered his commencement address to the La Lumiere graduates; he spoke specifically about the importance of saying hello to people they meet.

The security detail went off without any issues; a seamless effort brought about by planning and excellent cooperation among deputies from the sheriff’s department, the Supreme Court Protective Detail and the La Lumiere staff.

Our team’s goal was to provide security for the Chief Justice, while at the same time, allowing the focus to be on the ceremony of the day. Judging by the heartfelt thanks and words of appreciation from the Chief Justice as he departed, I’m confident the team accomplished its mission.

MIKE KELLEMS, Captain, LaPorte County Sheriff’s Office.