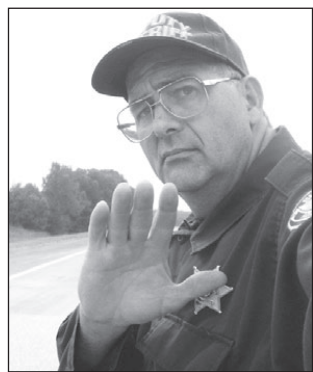
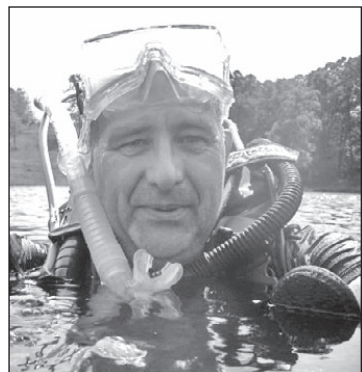


All eyes on

Ray Jagger is man of many hats

“I’ve got a badge or two with me most of the time, but I’m not much into uniforms.”



Photos submitted by Ray Jagger

Ray Jagger, director of Telephone Services, is also a volunteer firefighter, an Adair County Deputy Sheriff and moonlights as a photographer.

BY NATHAN BECKER
Editor in Chief

Ray Jagger leans back in his chair after placing his mug on the desk, letting go of the telephone handset-shaped handle that tells the tale of only one of his professions.

And although he isn't wearing a hat at the time of this interview, Jagger is the proverbial man of many.

Jagger is the current University director of telephone services, but he also moonlights as an Adair County deputy sheriff, Novinger Northern volunteer firefighter and serves on several local and state emergency management boards.

“I have a sheriff's uniform and a fire department uniform, but you seldom wear them,” Jagger said about what's in his closet. “I've got a badge or two with me most of the time, but I'm not much into uniforms, basically because you've got to switch back and forth too quick.”

But Jagger, whose degree is in forestry from the University of Missouri-Columbia, didn't begin his career at Truman as anything involving phones, emergency management or forestry, and he wasn't even looking for the job.

In August of 1980, Jagger got a call from Tom Shrout, the University's director of external affairs, because he had seen Jagger's photos published in Mizzou's student newspaper. Jagger had been studying photojournalism at Mizzou after completion of his forestry degree.

“Somehow or other, [Shrout] saw some of my pictures and he said, ‘Ray I'd like for you to come shoot pictures for me,’” Jagger said.

Jagger said that during his tenure as the University photographer, he wrote scripts for videos that eventually led to him collaborating with then University President Charles McClain on some speeches McClain would give.

When McClain left, Jagger's tenure as the campus photographer was cut short. He said taking pictures is still something he loves.

“If you didn't have to travel, I'd do it for a living,” Jagger said. “Most of the folks I went to photojournalism school with, they're traveling all over the world, and they've been a whole lot of places I haven't for at least an hour.”

After the University cut the full-time photographer position, Jagger was asked to map out campus vegetation and create a cooling interface for the library.

He became involved with emergency services in Adair County in the early 1990s when he was hired as a dispatcher and jailer for the Adair County Sheriff's Department and volunteered at the Kirksville Fire Department.

He said that when he was in college, he dealt with fires because of his forestry degree, and he said an accident hit home with him when he was young, causing his interest in emergency services.

“My father was killed when our house burned down on him,” Jagger said. “And that left me with the realization that you really do need a fire department. At that time, they didn't have fire departments, at least in the rural areas. I became very aware of the whole concept that it's really nice to have a fire department.”

Jagger said his time in the emergency business has provided him with several good — and sometimes dangerous — stories to tell. One of them happened when he was trying to get livestock to one end of a burning building so firefighters could squelch the blaze.

“I looked at this great big black cow in there,” Jagger said. “[Then] she started pawing the ground, and I realized he wasn't a cow. Directly he comes running over there, ... catches me with his head and flips me out of the pen, and I'm diving for all I'm worth.”

Jagger also said he had been on the scene of the plane crash just outside of Kirksville in 2004 that killed 11 as well as helped emergency land a commercial-sized Boeing at the Kirksville airport.

When Jack Magruder became president in 1994, he offered Jagger the job as director of telephone services even though he had no experience in the field.

“But he knew that I was pretty good computers, and ... he wanted me to computerize telephone services,” Jagger said. “At that time, they looked up people's names on paper. We got our phone bills in great big huge boxes, and what I did was computerize that.”

So how does he balance his emergency management side with his day job?

“You try,” Jagger said. “The good news is that there's a lot of hours in the day that you're not working. ... Bad things aren't always happening. You can deal with a car wreck in an hour most of the time.”

He said he uses most of his vacation time on emergency training and sometimes he even has to head to the scene during the day.

“If ... someone's in danger, I do,” he said. “I try to be sure that I get my 40 hours. Or I end up using vacation time for it.”

Jagger said he hopes to see more Truman students and faculty volunteering to help in emergency services.

“Without volunteers, you can dial 911 all you want and it just really doesn't do you much good,” he said. “You get some lady that will ask you, ‘What's your emergency?’ 911's just a phone number without volunteers.”

And as if there was anything left that Jagger hadn't done, he's also dabbled in politics, running for District 2 State Representative in 1994.

“I lost, but we put up a pretty good fight,” he said.

“Directly he comes running over there, ... catches me with his head and flips me out of the pen, and I'm diving for all I'm worth.”

Ray Jagger
Director of Telephone Services

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