

Rochford resigns

By Robert Davis
and George Bliss

POLICE SUPT. James M. Rochford resigned Tuesday, one day after his 30th anniversary on the force, to accept a job in private industry.

Mayor Bilandic immediately appointed Michael A. Spiotto to serve as acting superintendent until the Chicago Police Board can review candidates for the job. The board is to submit the names of three possible successors to the mayor, who will choose the new superintendent.

Rochford, 56, headed the department since Nov. 1, 1973, when he replaced the ousted James Conlisk as superintendent.

In response to questions, Rochford denied he was under pressure to resign in a reorganization of the Bilandic administration, saying: "The decision was exclusively mine. It was not an easy one to make, and I made it myself."

LATER TUESDAY, Rochford told a Tribune reporter, "I didn't make up my mind until this morning. My wife didn't even know about it. Lois was in the shower when some reporter called her and asked if it was true."

Spiotto, who reached the mandatory retirement age of 63 last Jan. 30, had stayed on as a civilian, serving as first deputy superintendent at Rochford's request.

Although Rochford expressed strong support of Spiotto to be named permanent superintendent, Spiotto said he will leave the department "as soon as a new superintendent is named."

For the interim, he promised to "do my utmost, in the brief time I will be superintendent, to uphold Supt. Rochford's fine record."

AT AN emotional press conference in the mayor's office, where Bilandic made the initial announcement of the superintendent's departure, Rochford said he was leaving "with a lump in my throat and a very heavy heart."

He refused to discuss his future other than to say he was weighing "three offers... in private industry."

Although Rochford denied it, close associates said he was scheduled to become a \$55,000-a-year vice president of Bally Manufacturing Co., the Chicago-based firm that is the world's largest manufacturer of pinball and slot machines.

William O'Donnell, Bally president, said in a telephone interview, "I cannot deny that Supt. Rochford is coming to Bally, but I cannot make any further statement at this time."

ROCHFORD REITERATED in a private interview with a Tribune reporter that he was considering three offers and added, "Trust me; it isn't Bally."

Both Rochford and Bilandic stressed that his departure from municipal service was amicable, with Rochford remarking that his reason for leaving was "purely financial." Early this year, after Mayor Richard J. Daley died and was succeeded by Bilandic, there were rumors that Rochford wanted to resign. Other rumors surfaced, as long-time Daley aides like Kenneth Sain left city government, that Rochford and other Daley cabinet members were on the way out.

As superintendent, Rochford's salary was \$44,000 a year. His pension, with 30 years of service, will be \$24,908 a year.

Rochford celebrated his 56th birthday Oct. 1. He said he believes he did a "pretty good job" as police superintendent.

"I LEAVE with a sad heart, but I

think I was successful in a lot of things," he said. "I came here in turbulent times. There was corruption, brutality, and all those suits against the department. But I think most of them have been resolved."

Tuesday afternoon, Rochford sat in his office reflecting on his many years in the department with his longtime friend and golfing partner, John Killackey, a deputy superintendent of police. Noticing the newspaper headlines announcing his resignation, he laughingly said to Killackey:

"This is like reading your own obituary. But it is better to see a headline that says Rochford resigns than one that says Rochford dies or is fired."

His resignation touched off immediate speculation as to his successor.

ROCHFORD SAID he believes bringing in an outsider would create controversy and "affect past gains" and added that it would take an outsider at least two years to "get a grasp of the department."

He made it clear he favors Spiotto as his replacement, saying his top aide is "in excellent physical condition... and should be given the opportunity."

Spiotto hedged during the press conference, saying, "The mayor believes in a policy of youthful leadership. I am an anachronism in that respect."

Bilandic quickly intervened, saying he did not want to offend senior citizens, and said, "I think age is a consideration... but it's not the only consideration."

POSSIBLE SUCCESSORS under discussion in police circles were:

● Killackey, 56, deputy superintendent.

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Tribune Photo by George Quinn

Shortly after making his surprise announcement that he was resigning, Police Supt. James Rochford leaves City Hall on the La Salle Street side. He said Tuesday the resignation decision "was exclusively mine."

Rochford quits after 30 years on force

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ent in the Bureau of Investigative Services. Killackey said he does not want the job but will "stay around for a little while."

● Patrick V. Needham, 44, deputy superintendent in charge of the Bureau of Administrative Services. He said he will "talk to Spiotto" before making any plans.

● Samuel Nolan, 58, deputy superintendent in charge of the Bureau of Community Services and one of the highest-ranking black officers on the force.

● Victor Vrdolyak, 45, deputy chief of detectives, who has strong political

sponsorship. He is the brother of Ald. Edward Vrdolyak (10th) and, like Bilandic, is of Croatian ancestry.

● Carl Dobrich, 48, assistant deputy police superintendent, also a Croatian. He is considered a "rising star" on the force.

● James Grady, 46, chief of detectives, who was reportedly being primed by Rochford to eventually succeed Spiotto.

● Mitchell Ware, 43, deputy superintendent. A black civilian, he was superintendent of the former Illinois Bureau of Investigation.

CLOSE ASSOCIATES of Rochford said

his resignation came as "a complete shock."

Rochford spent Monday afternoon golfing with his three closest friends, Killackey, Spiotto, and Edward Neville, commander of the Bomb and Arson Unit. He then walked into the Police Headquarters press room in his golfing clothes and chatted amiably with reporters.

Several top police commanders in the building expressed surprise that Rochford would leave without filling four major vacancies in the department—assistant deputy superintendent, crime laboratory director, a district commander, and an administrative assistant.

However, William G. Redden, president of the Confederation of Police, said he knew Rochford was "fed up with the job" and commented, "I figured he'd go sometime in August."

IN ANNOUNCING Rochford's resignation, Bilandic described him as "head and shoulders above any police superintendent anywhere."

The resignation brought an immediate reaction from James W. Compton, executive director of the Chicago Urban League, who called upon Bilandic and the Police Board to make "every attempt to seek a black law-enforcement official for the position of police superintendent of this city."

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As the commander of the police unit assigned to the Conrad Hilton Hotel during the 1968 Democratic Convention, James Rochford confronted radical leader Abbie Hoffman. The Yippie was leading an anti-war march on the International Amphitheatre, site of the convention.

Rochford: Tough cop calls it quits



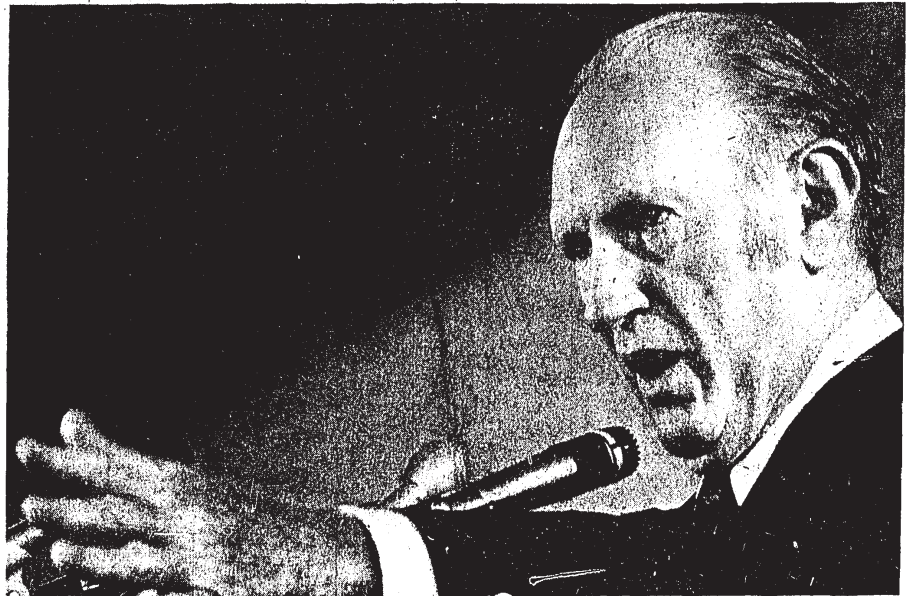
Police Supt. Rochford shared intimately in Chicago's grief on Dec. 23, 1976, as funeral services were held for Mayor Daley, the man who appointed him. Daley's widow and one of his sons stand behind Rochford outside Holy Name Cathedral. At right, Rochford gathers with his wife, Lois, and daughter, Elizabeth, 13, in 1974. Another daughter, Joan, is married, and the couple's third daughter, Jeanne, was killed in an auto accident in 1967. Coverage of Rochford's resignation begins on page 1.



Rochford was obviously pleased on Nov. 1, 1973, when Mayor Daley announced his appointment as acting police superintendent. At right, Rochford attends a policeman's funeral in 1973 with the man he would replace, James Conlisk (in middle), who resigned under pressure. To Conlisk's right is Michael Spiotto, a close friend of Rochford's, who was named acting superintendent on Tuesday.



Not content with a desk job, Rochford went out on patrol with his men and attended community meetings to learn what law-enforcement problems were facing the city. Above, Rochford presents a police citizens' award to William Gilmore III in 1974. At right, Rochford gives his reasons for cancelling a march by blacks into Marquette Park last July.



Tribune Photo by Heide Willems