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Milwaukee's Lifestyle Magazine

the
men's issue

Taking a **STAND**

THE OUTSPOKEN DAVID A. CLARKE JR.

SECRET CITY

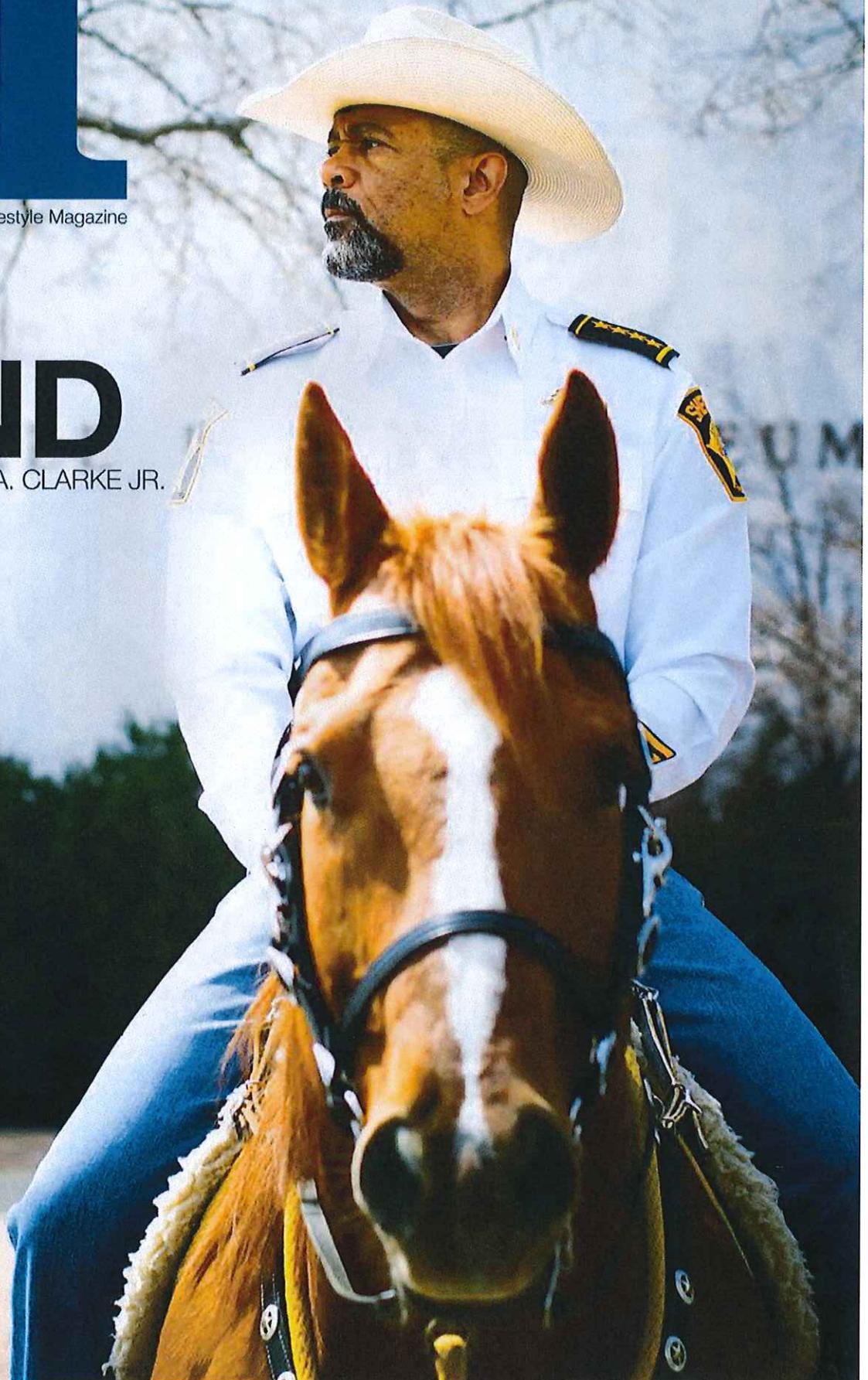
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Taking a STAND

THE OUTSPOKEN DAVID A. CLARKE JR. OFFERS NO APOLOGIES FOR HIS NONCONFORMIST NATURE

BY REBECCA KONYA | PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT HAAS

On a clear morning in early May, Sheriff David A. Clarke Jr. sits astride his horse, his posture firm, in MacArthur Square in downtown Milwaukee. While a photographer snaps his picture, a news crew appears and begins filming. Shortly after the shoot wraps up, a reporter swoops in to ask Clarke how the photo session is benefiting taxpayers. Clarke looks the reporter squarely in the eye and says, "What kind of question is that?"

Later, seated behind his desk in his office in the Safety Building, Clarke shakes his head in obvious disgust. For him, the encounter is an example of how misguided the local media can be. "The media tries to make it about me, but it's not about me," he says. "They're worried about me on a frickin' horse when they should be interviewing (MPS superintendent) Dr. (Gregory) Thornton about low reading scores or Mayor (Tom) Barrett about the lack of development in the Park East corridor."

Career Cop

A career law enforcement professional, Clarke spent 24 years with the Milwaukee Police Department before becoming sheriff in 2002. At his father's encouragement, Clarke joined the police force in 1978, at age 21. "It's something he always wanted to do, but the Police Academy had different standards in his day," says Clarke. "You needed 20/20 vision without glasses, which he didn't have." For the senior David Clarke, a Korean War veteran, it was "an opportunity to live vicariously through his son."



Raised by strict parents, Clarke took immediately to law enforcement, spending 11 years as a patrolman before being promoted to homicide detective. After receiving his bachelor's degree in criminal justice management from Concordia University Wisconsin, Clarke was promoted to captain in 1996, and later to commanding officer of the Police Department's Intelligence Division. He also completed a leadership program at the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Va., and is currently

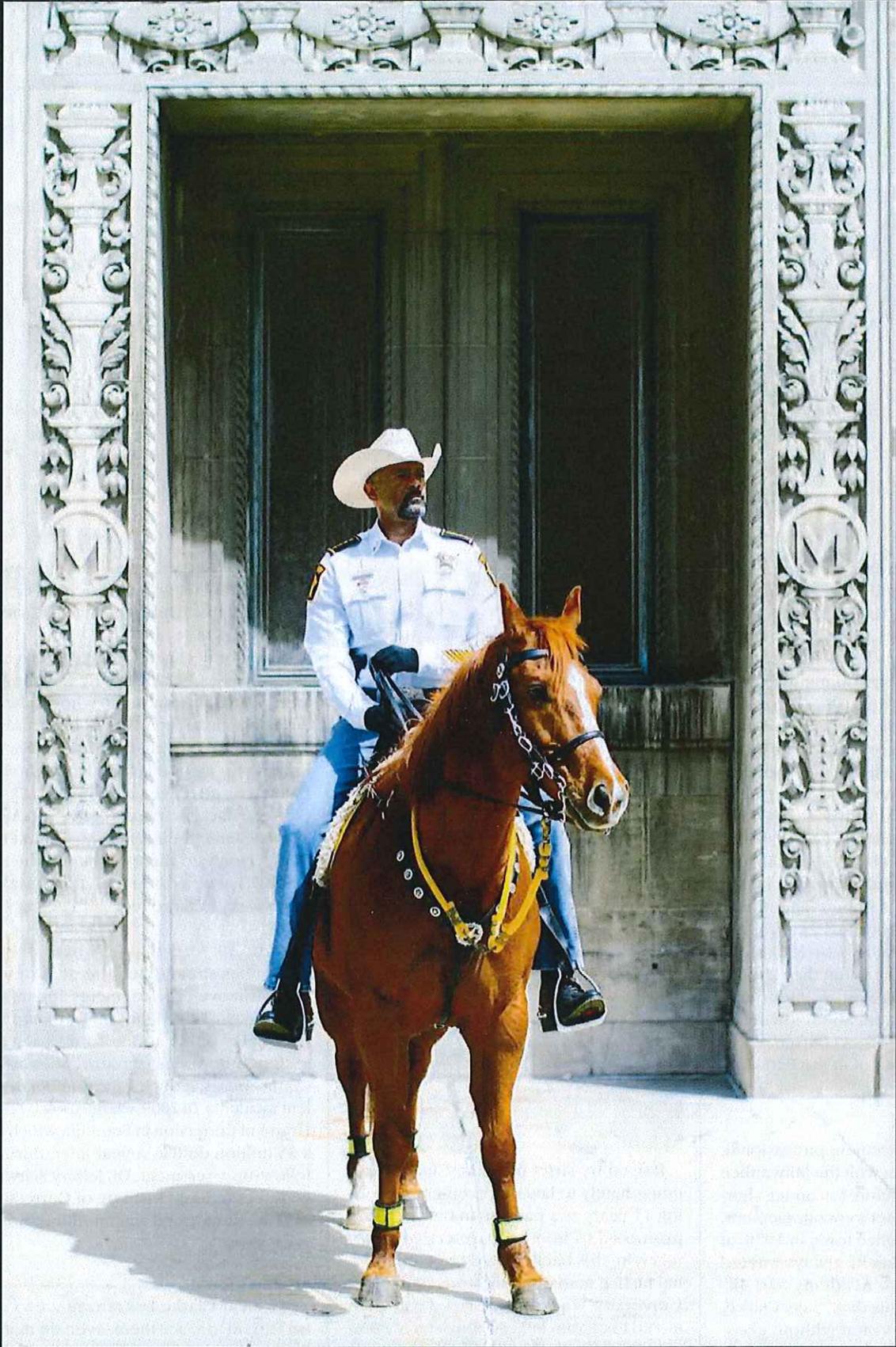
pursuing a master's degree from the prestigious Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security in Monterey, Calif.

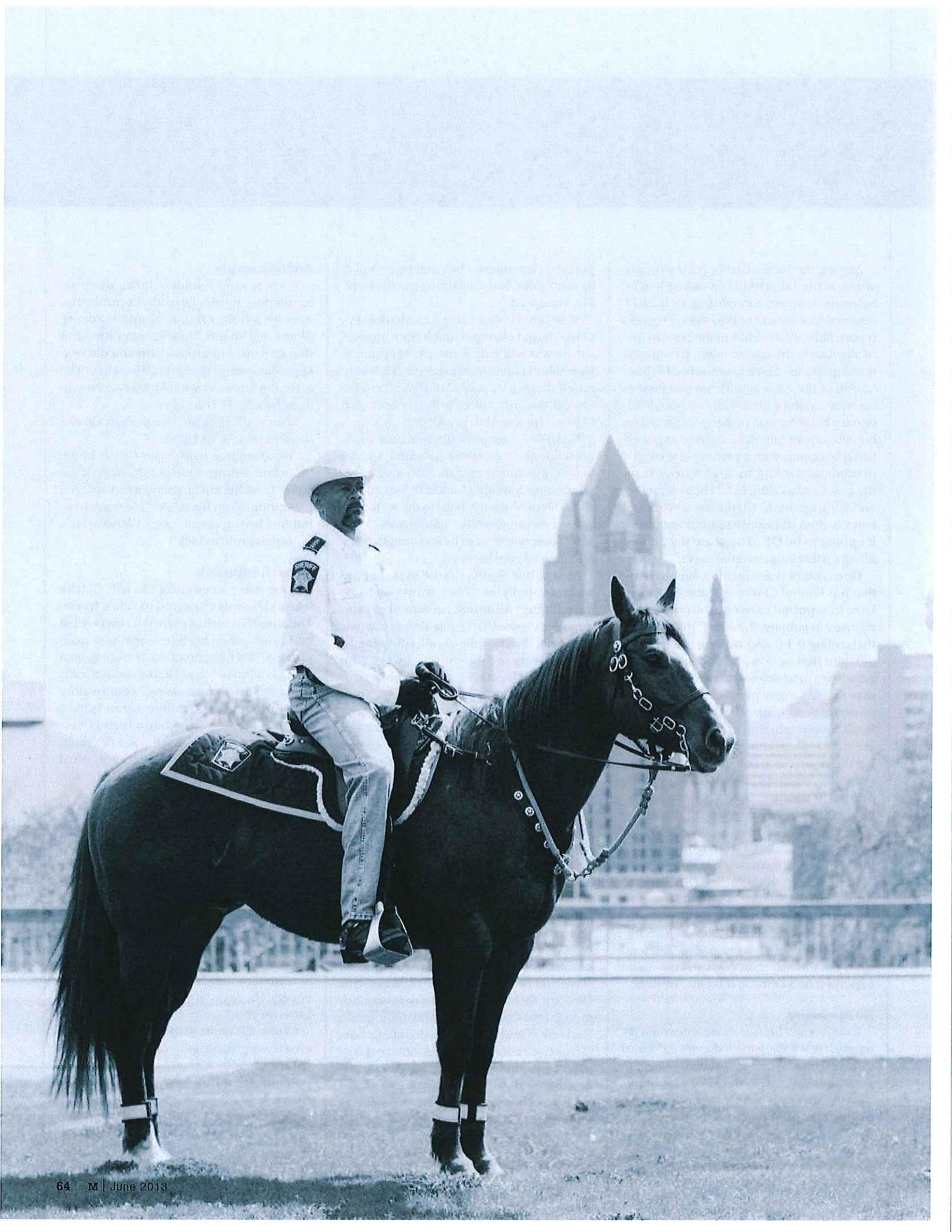
When former Sheriff Lev Baldwin retired abruptly in early 2002 before finishing his term, Clarke was one of 10 who applied to fill the position. Then-Gov. Scott McCallum appointed Clarke in March 2002. "He was looking for a good law man and thought I would be effective in this position," says Clarke. In fact, in a phone conversation just before Clarke took office, McCallum told him, "Don't go there and keep the seat warm. That office is in bad shape. Make a difference," Clarke recalls. "I've kept my word."

In the 10 years that he's been sheriff, Clarke has streamlined the department, reining in overtime payments and misuse of sick days. He led the charge to improve the quality of life at Bradford Beach and assigned deputies to patrol Milwaukee County buses, reducing the number of violent incidents. In 2009, Clarke took over the House of Correction in Franklin, which had a \$5 million deficit. A year later, during a follow-up assessment, Dr. Jeffery Schwartz with the National Institute of Corrections said the turnaround was "nothing short of miraculous."

Strong Views

It's clear Clarke has strong views and isn't afraid to voice them, even on matters beyond the realm of law enforcement. "Being sheriff is a tremendous opportunity," Clarke says. "Shame on me if I squandered the opportunity to at least raise issues. I couldn't live with myself if I didn't."





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Among the issues Clarke feels strongly about is the faltering Milwaukee Public Schools system. According to a 2011 National Assessment of Education Progress report, Milwaukee ranks in the bottom five of all cities in the nation when it comes to reading scores. Clarke cites school failure as one of the most significant risk factors for crime, along with unemployment, inadequate housing and poverty (Milwaukee remains one of America's 10 most impoverished big cities, with a poverty rate of 29.4 percent, according to 2011 figures from the U.S. Census Bureau). “The risk factors are being ignored,” Clarke says. “We can't leave a class of people behind and think it's going to be OK. Those are the people filling up that jail across the street.”

Gun control is another hot-button issue that has landed Clarke in the media as of late. In a public service announcement released in January, the sheriff told viewers that calling 9-1-1 and waiting was no longer their best option and encouraged citizens to learn to defend themselves. Clarke says that too many people misidentify the causes of gun violence, making it more difficult for law-abiding gun owners. “Why are we hassling them, instead of hammering the people that use guns to perpetrate crimes?” Clarke says Milwaukee's approach to gun violence has been ineffective. “The city says they're treating gun crime seriously, but they can't demonstrate how they're doing it,” says Clarke. “I'm a bottom-line guy. Where are the results?”

Instead of eviscerating the Second Amendment, Clarke wants to see gun crimes turned over to federal authorities. He points to cities like Boston, which has had success with such programs. “We need to send a message that you can't use a gun to perpetrate a crime in this city,” he says.

No Apologies

Clarke says he is a nonconformist by nature. He's willing to challenge the status quo and look for new and better ways to get things done. On his office wall hangs a poster that says simply “Git'r done.” He makes no apologies for who he is. “I'm comfortable in my own skin,” he says. “The

political class doesn't like that I won't play by their rules, but they didn't put me here. The voters did.”

West Bend Police Chief Ken Meuler says Clarke hasn't changed much from the person he was when they attended Marquette University High School together. “He's very much the same,” says Meuler, who also served as a Milwaukee police officer with Clarke. “He was always a leader.”

Despite — or perhaps because of — his willingness to speak his mind, Clarke was re-elected sheriff in 2006 and 2010, after being initially elected in November 2002. “People want a ‘balls to the wall’ law-enforcement executive,” Clarke says. “They want someone who exhibits strength, confidence and consistency.”

As a public figure, Clarke says, people want to label you. “They want you to be monolithic.” Although he espouses conservative views, Clarke has always run as a Democrat. Yet, he's never officially joined a political party and says he never will. “Who cares if it's a Democrat or a Republican in office?” asks Clarke. “I'm a 35-year career cop, first and foremost.” Although Clarke believes there's nothing partisan about law enforcement, he knows he'll never escape questions about his political affiliation.

Clarke says the best compliment he ever received was while having dinner at Rock Bottom Brewery a few years ago. “A gentleman came up and told me he didn't agree with a lot of my philosophies and policies, but he liked what I was doing.”

In April, Clarke was named 2013 Sheriff of the Year by the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association. “Instead of going along to get along, Sheriff Clarke has stayed true to his oath, true to his badge, and true to the people he promised to serve and protect,” says CSPOA Executive Director Richard Mack. The organization recognized Clarke for demonstrating true leadership and courage to do what's best for his constituents despite enormous pressures to go along with the political correctness of the day. “I'm proud of this award because I was selected by my peers,” Clarke says. “What they said about me was very humbling.”

Good Example

A voracious reader, Clarke devours nonfiction, particularly about public figures he admires like Rudolph Giuliani, Clarence Thomas, Condoleezza Rice and Ben Carson, a neurosurgeon and director of pediatric surgery at Johns Hopkins. “The common thread of what I read is overcoming adversity,” Clarke says.

Above all, though, the person Clarke admires most is his father.

“He's tough as nails,” says Clarke of the one-time airborne ranger. Photos of his father from his military days are displayed prominently on his desk. “He was strict, but in a loving sense,” says Clarke. “He's my biggest role model.”

Horse Enthusiast

Soon after becoming sheriff, Clarke learned he was expected to ride a horse. The sheriff, who has owned a cowboy hat and boots since his late teens, was nonplussed. “My first pair of boots were iguana skin Dan Posts,” says Clarke, who recalls coveting his Texan cousins' Western attire growing up. Clarke's interest in horses began at an early age when a friend of his father's gave him two small horse figurines. “I thought that was the neatest thing.” He'd long wanted his own horse, but his wife vetoed the notion until he retired.

Fate intervened a couple of years ago when an acquaintance told Clarke about a ranch in Washington County that was selling off its horses. Promising his wife he was only going to look, Clarke visited the ranch and instantly fell in love with a solid black paint horse named Ranger. Since becoming a horse owner, Clarke has devoted himself to learning all he can about the gentle creatures. He uses nonverbal commands to communicate with Ranger. “It's all about energy,” he says. “It's about getting them to focus on you.”

Clarke has realized that learning to communicate nonverbally applies to human nature as well. “With voice, there so much potential for misunderstanding,” he says. “If we learned to communicate in other ways, I think we'd be much better off.” **M**