From guarding Elvis Presley to chasing streakers in the Quadrangle, Connie Swain's career with LSU Police provided many memories.

Watching over LSU

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In almost 25 years with LSU Police, Connie Swain saw it all — from presidents to protests to the king of rock and roll.

Swain joined LSU's police force in 1969 as a patrolman, working his way up to major when he retired after the fall semester. It was a period of tremendous change. ROTC was still mandatory for male students. Vietnam protests were not long in coming. Pete Maravich was dazzling fans who packed the Ag Center.

The Assembly Center, which later was named for Maravich, was still in the construction phase. Swain, 55, remembers how much Maravich's father and coach, Press Maravich, wanted the new facility to be completed in time for his son to play there.

One day, Swain saw Press Maravich walking near the police headquarters.

"I said, 'Hey, coach, how are they doing with the building?" Swain said. "He looks at me and says, 'Well, I really don't know. Apparently one of them came to work this morning and left his lunch at home, and everybody went with him to get it.' I burst out laughing. He was wanting to get that building done so bad."

He would not get his wish. The arena would wait for future basketball stars — and entertainment superstars.

The most famous was Elvis Presley, who made three concert visits to LSU while Swain was on the force. On the day of the concert, Swain was assigned backstage, where he met The King himself.

Presley didn't play the part except when the music was playing, Swain said.

"He was, to me, just a down-to-earth guy," Swain said. "He'd sit there and talk just like, 'I'm not anybody. I'm just coming out here letting people enjoy my singing.' He talked a lot about his mom and his dad.

"To me, the thing that really got my attention is the mode that he put himself in from five minutes until it was time to go on stage. He moved off into an area all by himself, and he just started mentally getting ready to go on stage. And when they started his theme that he used to go on stage it really got tense. When he hit that stage, it was something, boy! He was something to watch."

It was something when he couldn't be watched, too. On a later concert appearance, Presley was too sick to perform and flew back to Memphis after the crowd had already filled the building. The fans were told their ticket stubs would provide admittance when Presley held another show there, but that didn't satisfy many.

"How many people when they get in their seats are worried about that stub?" Swain said. "I said, 'Lord have mercy.' I told all the officers, 'Get ready. These people are going to raise some hell.' They did, but it wasn't to where it got out of control."

Swain said he was often fortunate in that regard. Fans occasionally got rowdy — the famous 17-16 victory over Ole Miss in

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1972 was particularly wild, Swain said—but never out of control.

Visits by dignitaries like former President Ronald Reagan, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and First Lady Barbara Bush went off without a hitch, Swain said. On those occasions, the Secret Service guarded the dignitaries, but LSU Police maintained security around campus and the buildings during their stays.

There was no violence, but things were similarly tense when a future politician—David Duke—attended LSU. Duke would espouse his racial views at LSU’s Free Speech Alley and at other rallies, and Campus Police was present to make sure things stayed in hand.

“I got to know him on a personal basis because it seemed like I had to deal with him every time something came up,” Swain said. “But I tell you something, that was one of the most intelligent individuals I’ve ever talked to in my life. I’m telling you, that boy was something else.

“He knew just where to draw the line as far as what he could say and get away with and what he could say and somebody was going to jump down his throat and come after him. He was something.”

Swain’s duties allowed him to watch some of LSU’s greatest athletes, but he said he only dealt with one personally. That was official business, too.

LSU Police seized star quarterback Bert Jones’ car and chained it to a tree because of unpaid tickets. Swain was on duty when Jones came to headquarters to check on the car.

“When I told him the amount of tickets he had on it, he just looked at it and said, ‘It ain’t worth it. You can have it,’” Swain said. “And he just walked out of there.

“Like a trip with the football team the year before last. Bert was already at the game and flew back with us. He sat next to me on the plane, and he looked at me and said, ‘I know you. You chained my car up to a tree.’ I said, ‘No, I just happened to be in the office when you came to get it.’ He said, ‘What did y’all do with it?’ I said, ‘I don’t know!’ But he remembered I was the one he talked to.”

Protecting the famous and handling parking problems were only small parts of Swain’s job. In recent years, crime has become more of a problem at LSU. Most of the crimi-