



Richard Baron hails from a long line of heroic first responders. For him, it's all in a day's work.

Richard BARON

On Dec. 23, 1998, Richard Baron watched as the body of an elderly man, the victim of a brutal double-homicide, was pulled from the Mahoning River in Youngstown, Ohio.

Baron says it's a moment he'll never forget – and one of the many reasons his life, career, and degree have been about public service.

“We had apprehended one of the suspects, obtained a confession, and learned the body had been dumped in the Mahoning River,” he says. “There was a huge effort to find the man's body before Christmas, and the Youngstown Fire Department did absolutely everything they could, enduring bitter cold conditions, ultimately locating the body. It's why I do what I do – to try and alleviate suffering and bring closure to some of these terrible events.”

Being a public servant is in Baron's DNA; his great-grandfather was a fire chief, his father a firefighter, and two of his uncles were in law enforcement one a police chief and the other a sergeant. So it was no surprise that Baron became a firefighter-EMT in his hometown of Cocoa Beach, Fla. There he met his wife before relocating to northeast Ohio to be near his wife's parents and have three children.

His first job in 1982 in the Youngstown-Warren area was with an ambulance company. But Baron had his sights set on joining the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP). On April 1, 1987, he entered the OSHP 116th Academy Class, and began

what would be a 26-year career with the Patrol. Starting as a road trooper, Baron was promoted many times throughout his career, holding such positions as district investigator, district sergeant, lieutenant, staff lieutenant and captain.

With his 2005 promotion to lieutenant, Baron moved to Columbus, becoming the first Chief of Operations for Ohio Homeland Security's Primary Fusion Center, the Strategic Analysis and Information Center.

After a month following his promotion to Captain in 2011, he was asked to take over as Director of Ohio Homeland Security and the Homeland Security Advisor for Ohio. Baron officially retired from the OSHP in April 2012, devoting himself full time to his current role.

Although he'd graduated from the Florida Fire and Ohio State Highway Patrol Academies, the Ohio Peace Officer's Basic Training Course and the Southern Police Institutes Administrative Officers Course at the University of Louisville, it wasn't until 2006 that Baron decided to pursue his bachelor's degree.

“I chose Franklin and the Public Safety Management program,” he explains, “because it was comprised of a public safety curriculum with a heavy influence on management and leadership. Leadership is extremely important in what I do.”

Franklin's program was a good fit, too, with Baron's belief that government is a business, and that the business of

“
You're not going to be rich . . . but you will be a person who takes on the responsibility to protect and serve and do that with everything that's in you.”

government requires specific skills sets – like leadership and management.

In fact, Baron credits Franklin for altering the way he does his job, including how he hires Ohio Homeland Security personnel.

“Are we selecting them for today,” he asks, “or are we selecting them for tomorrow? Looking at the application of technology and knowing that the equilibrium of the workforce is at a point where you cannot exceed it unless you apply technology; that concept is taken directly out of a class I took at Franklin and applied in a real work environment.”

His philosophy about public service, however, while influenced by Franklin, comes pretty much from one place: his heart.

“A career in public service must be done with the greatest intent,” Baron says, “I've seen victims and I've held their hands. My job here is prevention. My goal here is no more victims. That's what I really work toward on a daily basis. Our every effort is directed toward contributing to a safer Ohio.”