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## Riding shotgun with Hudson Black, O'Hare security officer

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Hudson Black, 57, patrols one of the remote parking lots at O'Hare Airport on his Egyptian Arabian, Ali Baba, between May and October. He works for IDOT doing snow removal in the winter.

Before coming to O'Hare three years ago, Black, who owns a ranch in Knox, Ind., was a CTA bus operator and a transit police officer.

O'Hare has had mounted patrols since 1994.

Why patrol on a horse?

You can see more on horseback than you can in a car. Now and then, we've caught one or two undesirables trying to take tires off of SUVs. Most people ask me where they can find parking or they need help finding their vehicle. Then they want to pet the horse. It really electrifies the kids.

How do you train horses for this job?

You have to get them used to the ATS [People Mover], burglar alarms and doors opening -- anything that would spook them if they've only known farm and ranch life.

How long have you been riding horses?

My uncle got me into horses when I was 8 years old. I would go with my brothers and cousins to spend the summer with him in Pembroke [near Kankakee]. The first time he put me up on a horse, I knew I'd found something I loved.

Why do you like them so much?

It's like riding a motorcycle -- the freedom, the wind blowing on you. But you have to have it in your heart. It's hard to describe.

What do you do for fun?

I teach line dancing at a place called the Rockin' Horse Social Club. I used to do rodeos, but I'm past that. These old bones don't mend like they used to. I have five other horses: Don, Sleeper, Whiskey, Max and Sundance.

So you're a real urban cowboy. Get any funny looks from your neighbors in Matteson?

When I'm not in this uniform, I'm in western clothes. Some people are sarcastic, but I just tell them they shouldn't laugh or make fun of something they don't understand. Most of them admire it, though.

What happens when horses have to go to the bathroom?

All the riders do their own code brown detail. If the horse has an accident out here, we keep a truck with a shovel in it and clean it up. But Ali Baba always goes in the trailer.

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