

L.A. SHERIFFS' MUSEUM

By Chris Miller

Los Angeles Sheriffs' Museum



Sheriff Block with the Explorer staff



Explorers working the San Dimas Rodeo

HISTORY OF THE LASD DEPUTY EXPLORER PROGRAM, PART 1

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's Deputy Explorer program was first created as a recruitment tool for future sheriff's deputies — a way of preparing teenagers to eventually become law enforcement officers. The stringent demands and requirements of the program kept the kids busy. Instead of possibly getting involved in drugs, gangs or crime, they participated in positive activities that taught life skills, built character and provided a sense of accomplishment. This firsthand experience allowed for an informed decision as to whether they wished to pursue a career in law enforcement.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG ADULTS

The Deputy Explorer program has changed and improved over the years. Qualified young men and women between the ages of 14 and 20



A modern-day Explorer directs traffic at a bicycle race.

are given an opportunity to learn the duties of sheriff's deputies by working alongside them and performing nonhazardous tasks, such as report writing and assisting the Juvenile and Detective Bureaus. The Deputy Explorers — more commonly referred to as simply "Explorers" — ride along as observers in patrol cars and, when needed, assist with traffic control, equipment security at parades and civic functions, and searches for lost children.

HOW IT STARTED

While working at Norwalk Sheriff's Station in 1967, Deputy Lee Rising wanted to find a way of allowing teenagers interested in a career in law enforcement to gain exposure and experience. After researching established programs and gathering sufficient information, Rising set out to create a Deputy Explorer program for the Department. Realizing he couldn't do it alone, he

contacted Deputy Tom Heller, who also worked at Norwalk and agreed to help.

Rising wanted the Deputy Explorer program to be part of the Law Enforcement Exploring Program affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America. However, Deputy Explorers would be patterned after the Sheriff's Reserve Deputy Program, making them more like law enforcement cadets than Boy Scouts.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

After compiling his material into a rough draft, Rising gave the manuscript to Mike Maxwell, an excellent writer, to review and make changes. The completed copy became the first Explorer Policy and Procedures Manual.

MALE EXPLORER UNIFORM

Originally, there were only males in the program, so when Rising first designed the Deputy Explorer uniform, he wanted it to resemble the one worn by deputies. This would give Explorers more confidence and a look of authority when they were directing traffic. After searching around, he found Green's Uniform Store, which carried wash-and-wear green pants and tan shirts similar to the deputies' Class A uniforms. He then designed shoulder patches and a metal cap piece. The shoulder patches had the same star and bear worn by the regular deputies, but instead of saying "Deputy Sheriff" across the top, they said "L.A. Co. Sheriff." In the center on the bottom was the Boy Scouts of America Explorer logo. On the left side of the logo was the word "Deputy,"



LASD Explorers speak to an Explorer from New York.

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and on the right side, "Explorer." Over the right front shirt pocket was the same name tag worn by the deputies: a gold framed rectangle with a black plastic center and the Explorer's last name in white letters. The green hat was the same as that worn by deputies except that, instead of a badge number, the metal cap piece had the word "Explorer." Explorers had to purchase their own uniform, including the hat and cap piece.

Explorers didn't originally wear cloth badges, but the type worn by uniformed civilians with the words "L.A. County Sheriff's Dept." was added around 1974. The design of the badge was later changed so that the word "Explorer" was at the top, with the Boy Scouts of America Explorer logo replacing the bear in the center.



Explorer Chris Miller with Sheriff Pitchess and Chris' brother-in-law (Class 3)

FEMALE EXPLORER UNIFORM

Explorer Academy Class 2 included the first female members, so it was necessary to create a uniform specifically for them. At the time, female deputies wore a white blouse with a green skirt and smooth black belt, while male deputies wore a khaki shirt with green pants and a black basket-weave belt.

Deputy Genevieve Stevens was a staff instructor for Class 2, and since her mother was a seamstress, she asked for her help in creating a uniform for the female Explorers. The design they came up with was a green skirt, a long-sleeved khaki shirt and a green vest with eight gold buttons down the front. The shirt had Explorer shoulder patches and the name tag was worn on the right side of the vest. They also developed a black crossover tie similar to those worn by women in the military. Driving to L.A., they found black material for the ties, khaki for the shirts and green for the skirt and vest. The pair then cut and sewed the material, individually tailoring it for each female Explorer.

In the mid-1970s, uniforms for women, both



Sheriff Peter Pitchess with Explorer class staff instructors



Station Explorers



Explorer cadets marching during Academy training

deputies and Explorers, began to evolve. Maintaining a feminine appearance took a backseat to dressing in a manner better suited for the demands of the job. A priority among the female Explorers was to get rid of the vest.

A nylon jacket with a black faux-fur collar had been approved for the deputies. Male Explorers were also allowed to wear it, but female Explorers were not, as the vest was longer than the jacket and created an unkempt appearance. Female Explorers were not allowed to wear the green sweaters worn by female deputies for the same reason — the vest hung below the bottom of the sweater. Needless to say, during the winter months, the female Explorers spent a lot of time

shivering. One from Norwalk Station recalls directing traffic at the corner of Sierra Madre and Sierra Madre Villa after the Rose Parade on January 1, 1972: "We were out there for hours and I was so cold, I was numb. I kept having to go back and sit in the radio car to get warm."

Fashion is no reason to freeze; it was time for a change. Rachael Nunez, an Explorer at Norwalk Station, borrowed a skirt and belt from Deputy Marilyn Brooksher. Nunez then had her picture taken wearing the skirt, belt and khaki blouse. The photo was presented for consideration at a meeting of the Explorer post advisors. The suggestion was approved; belts became part of the uniform, and by 1976, vests became part of history. Skirts, never practical in patrol, were eventually replaced with pants.

ACADEMY TRAINING

Deputy Tom Heller contacted the Training Bureau staff and arranged for the Explorer Academy to be held at the Sheriff's Academy at Biscailuz Center. The initial Explorer training curriculum was created by Heller, then reviewed by Sergeant Sam Marino and Deputy Lee Rising. Heller located and scheduled all of the instructors.

Class 1 consisted of a basic curriculum, and as additional training courses were added to future classes, the length of the Academy training expanded. Most Explorers were high school or college students. They were in class five days a week and then, on top of homework, sports and other school activities, attended the Academy every Saturday to receive the required



A deputy trains Explorer cadets.



Staff instructor Deputy Dale (Johnson) Zuber instructs an Explorer cadet.

hours of training. The subjects they had to master included police procedures, firearms safety, community relations, demeanor, defensive tactics and criminal law.

EXPLORER CLASS 1

Explorer Academy Class 1 began on October 4, 1969. It started with 22 male recruits and graduated with 12 on December 22, 1969. The Norwalk Station Explorer recruits were supervised by their post advisor, Deputy Rising, and the Newhall Station Explorer recruits were supervised by their post advisor, Sergeant David Harris. After the graduation of Class 1, the Deputy Explorer program was assigned to



Sergeant Sam Marino and Deputy Lee Rising with Norwalk Station Explorer cadets



Explorer Class 1 staff instructors Deputy Tom Heller, Sergeant Sam Marino and Deputy Lee Rising

Headquarters Community Relations and Rising was transferred from Norwalk Station to operate the program.

STAFF INSTRUCTORS

The staff instructors, all volunteers, were Deputies Heller, Rising and Ray Serna, along with Sergeant Marino as head drill instructor.

Explorer Class 1 was very small. Class 2, which had both male and female members, was much larger. Since it was now necessary to have female instructors, Deputies Dale (Johnson) Zuber and Genevieve (Stevens) Mika were added to the Academy staff. They were responsible for the safety and well-being of the female recruits.

CREATIVE TRAINING

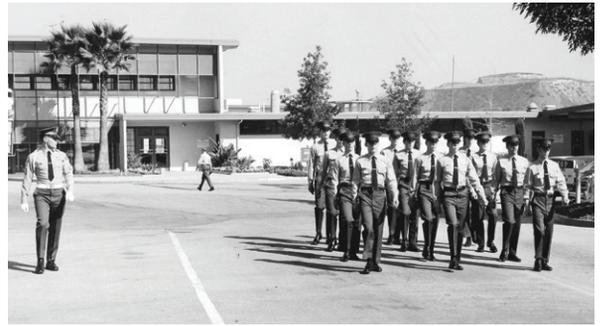
Marino had a problem: Several cadets couldn't tell their right from their left. When they were marching and he gave the order "right face," some would turn left. Marino had learned the value of creative ideas when he was in the Marine Corps. Instead of ridiculing the teens, he thought of a way to teach them so they would remember. He ordered the cadets to run over to the side of the road, pick up a rock the size of a golf ball and place it in their right front pocket. That rock, he explained, would remind them which side was their right. They resumed marching, but this time he gave the order as "rock face." With the rock in their pocket as a reminder, all of the cadets reacted to his order by making a right face. From that point on, the left/right problem was solved.

PHYSICAL TRAINING

In addition to classroom instruction, the recruits were required to pass stringent physical training. The pushups, sit-ups, pull-ups and long-distance runs around the steep hills of East L.A. were exactly the same as those done at the regular and reserve academies.

DRILL AND CEREMONIES

Another part of the training involved drill and ceremonies. Recruits participated in inspections where they practiced proper grooming standards and uniform appearance. They also learned how to march and follow commands. Recruits were



Sergeant Sam Marino marches Explorer Class 1 during their graduation at Biscailuz Center.



An Explorer class during an inspection



Explorers march during their class graduation at the Hall of Administration.

taught basic drill and facing movements, which were used to move platoons or the class from one place to another in an orderly fashion. The purpose of drill and ceremonies was to instill honor and pride and promote camaraderie, while building precision and response to orders.

DEFENSIVE TACTICS

The Explorer recruits were taught basic defensive tactics, such as punching, striking, kicking and ground fighting, which they could use if they were ever attacked or needed to assist a deputy while participating in a ride-along. The use of impact weapons, such as batons, was not taught since they were not permitted to carry them.

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WEAPONS SAFETY TRAINING

Weapons safety was a no-nonsense course taught both in the classroom and at the range. Recruits received instruction on proper handling of the handgun, culminating in actually shooting the gun. In order to provide the safest environment during range training, one staff member supervised only three recruits at a time. They also learned how to properly dismantle and check the shotguns. To fire the shotguns, the recruits were taken either to the All-Purpose Range at Wayside Honor Rancho (now Pitchess Detention Center), or to the Trap and Skeet Range at Whittier Narrows Recreation Area. After completing the training, they received a National Rifle Association Hunter Safety Certificate.

ACCREDITATION

Sergeant Ken Clark, assigned to Headquarters Community Relations, was instrumental in obtaining credentialing through the La Puente Regional Occupational Program. He reviewed the tests taken by the Explorers to verify they were conducted properly, and he documented all aspects of their training to ensure that the Academy retained its accreditation and that the students received 10 units of high school credit.

GRADUATION OF EXPLORER CLASS 1

LASD Explorer Academy Class 1 graduated seven Explorers from Norwalk Station and five from Newhall Station. The ceremony was held at Biscailuz Center in East L.A. on December 22, 1969. Since Sheriff Pitchess was out of town, Inspector (later changed to Commander) Sherman Block attended in his place. Since cap pieces for their hats had not yet been manufactured, the Explorers had to borrow cap pieces from LAPD Explorers for their formal photograph.

LAPD EXPLORERS

LAPD began its Explorer program in 1962, and for several years, it consisted only of male members.



Sergeant Sam Marino inspects Explorer cadets during the Class 1 graduation.

Although ride-alongs were allowed, they could only be with the Explorer coordinator, and even then, they did not handle calls but only responded as backup units. The LAPD Explorers wore khaki uniforms with patches and a name tag, along with a cap and cap piece. The khaki differentiated the Explorers from the regular officers, who wore dark blue.

LASD Explorers wore the same tan and green as the deputies, with shoulder patches that were very similar, except they had the Explorer emblem and contained the words "Deputy Explorer." Feeling that the Sheriff's Explorers were more accepted by having a uniform that didn't make them stand out, some LAPD Explorers switched and joined the LASD program.

PAID STAFF INSTRUCTORS

Up until Class 3, the Explorer Academy staff were all volunteers. Sergeant Ken Clark, who was assigned to the Community Relations Bureau, taught classes in the L.A. City and La Puente school districts and had contacts who helped the Explorer Academy instructors obtain their teaching credentials. He was also instrumental in obtaining funding through the La Puente Regional Occupational Program to pay the staff instructors. Once the funding was available, volunteers were replaced by full-time instructors. As the personnel changed, so did the curriculum. Explorer Classes 1 and 2 were conducted when the Explorer program was just getting started, so they did not go on tours of any Sheriff's Department facilities. Class 3, however, visited the Hall of Justice Jail and Station B, which was the Sheriff's Department's Communication Center. Later classes did not visit patrol stations or the Hall of Justice, as the time required was deemed better spent in other areas.

BYPASSING THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

Following the chain of command could be frustrating. Since ideas or suggestions, no matter

how good, often failed to reach the necessary person, deputies found ways to circumvent the system. For example, Johnny Grant, radio personality, television producer and honorary mayor of Hollywood, was a good friend of Sheriff Peter Pitchess, so when Deputy Joe Offutt had an idea he wanted to suggest, he would simply tell Grant, who shared it with the Sheriff.

If done discreetly, the outcome of bypassing the chain of command could be positive, but if not, hurt feelings and stepped-on toes might mean discipline or transfer for the instigator.

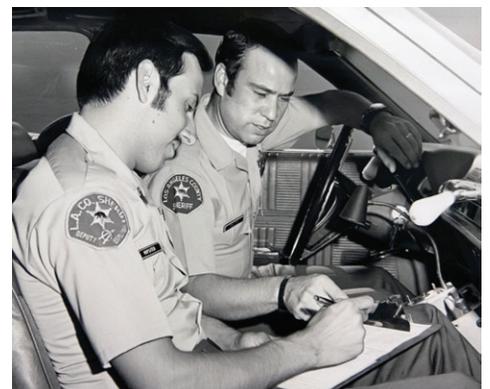
At Headquarters Community Relations, the lieutenant in charge of the Explorer Program told Rising that Explorers would no longer wear uniforms when participating in ride-alongs; instead, they would wear civilian clothing. Rising disagreed and knew the Sheriff would disagree as well. Instead of following the chain of command, which he felt would accomplish nothing, he shared the policy change with the head of the Mechanical Department, whose son was an Explorer at Temple Station. The mechanical supervisor went directly to Sheriff Pitchess, who had his staff inform Community Relations Bureau that the Explorers would wear their uniforms on ride-alongs. Shortly thereafter, the lieutenant had Rising transferred from Community Relations.



An Explorer goes for a ride on an LASD helicopter.



Class 1 marching



An Explorer being taught how to write reports

RESPONSIBILITIES

After graduating from the Academy, Explorers were assigned to a sheriff's station in the area where they lived. They assisted regular deputies by performing nonhazardous duties, such as report writing, bicycle licensing, fingerprinting and compiling statistical information. Under the supervision of a deputy, Explorers at some stations would clean tear gas guns and shotguns. They also worked special assignments, assisting other sheriff's stations or police departments with crowd control and directing traffic at parades, air shows, conferences and expositions.

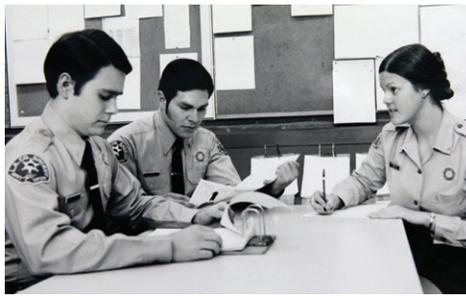
Many Explorers assisted at the front desk by answering phones and helping people who came to the counter. Some of the more experienced Explorers were taught to write vandalism and petty theft reports, Emergency Aid Plan (EAP) forms and patrol logs. Explorers were instructed in traffic control so they could direct traffic around an accident scene, thus freeing deputies to investigate the collision. If an Explorer witnessed a crime, such as an assault or something they saw a suspect do while they were on a ride-along, they were sometimes called to testify in court. When Rising worked a traffic car, he would have Explorers ride with him so he could train them on how to write traffic citations and investigate collisions. Through this experience, they learned how to be a good witness, how to write reports and, ultimately, how to be a good deputy.



Explorers take care of a child at a station.



An Explorer fingerprints a woman.



Explorers reviewing paperwork at a station

OTHER ASSIGNMENTS

Explorers were (and still are) a dedicated group of young people, more than willing to take on any task, anywhere, from washing airplanes at Aero Bureau to leading tours at a station open house. Each year, hundreds of spectators arrived from miles around to attend the Torrance Air Show. In order to avoid congestion and keep traffic moving to parking areas, the Torrance Police Department requested help from Explorers throughout Los Angeles County. LASD and Torrance P.D. Explorers, along with those from other agencies, such as Hawthorne P.D., spent the entire day, from briefing at 6:30 a.m. to cleanup at 7 p.m., working in the dust and heat. No one ever complained.

During the Christmas holiday, Explorers with binoculars and handheld radios were placed on top of buildings at shopping centers and malls, notifying deputies if they saw any suspicious activity, such as potential auto burglars.



An Explorer works crowd control at a parade.



LASD Explorers talk to Torrance P.D. Explorers.



Explorers working at a golf tournament

Former Explorer Jan Jenkins recalls assisting LAPD Explorers at the Hobo Kelly Toy-a-Thon in December 1972: "I was assigned to a hallway right outside the door of the room where the celebrities waited to go onstage. As female Explorers were still wearing vests and not allowed to wear jackets, I was freezing. A very nice man who introduced himself as Jason Robards Jr. invited me to come in and have some hot chocolate. As tempting as that was, I politely refused. This was, after all, an assignment, and I would not leave my post. It was fascinating to see so many well-known actors. I was a major *Hogan's Heroes* fan, so the highlight of the night was seeing my teenage crush ... Bob Crane! Mr. Crane looked at me and said, 'Hi.' I returned the greeting. He had no idea that he had just left that 17-year-old Explorer with a memory she would never forget."

This story will be continued in the next issue of *Star News*.

Edited by Jan Jenkins (ret. LASD) ☆



Explorer Jan Jenkins (center) working the Torrance Air Show with a fellow LASD Explorer and Torrance P.D. Explorer