

L.A. SHERIFFS' MUSEUM

By Chris Miller

Los Angeles Sheriffs' Museum

HISTORY OF THE LASD DEPUTY EXPLORER PROGRAM, PART 2

In June 1974, the FBI publication *Law Enforcement Bulletin* featured a centerfold picture of the graduating LASD Explorer Academy class marching prior to receiving their



An Explorer receives her certificate from Sheriff Pitchess



Explorer class staff instructors with Peter Pitchess

Learning the Ropes . . .

"Deputy explorers . . . have made significant contributions to the overall operation of the sheriff's department and to the communities in which . . . [they] have served."

Academy graduation parade drill.



In an added effort to ameliorate the gulf of misunderstanding between police and the youth of today, young adults were invited to become actively involved with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department by joining the Law Enforcement Explorer Post (LEEP) program. This initial appeal in 1969 was the impetus for what is today an active and productive organization serving its members while providing them with the opportunity to serve.

LEEP is a sheriff's department youth organization which is affiliated with a special interest phase of the Boy Scouts of America. Although its primary purpose is to prepare young men and women to take their places in the ever-expanding and technical field of law enforcement, the program also provides the sheriff's department with additional human resources while it opens an avenue of understanding with an energetic, concerned society of young people.

By
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Exploring Law Enforcement

Article on LASD Explorer Class in the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin

certificates. After the first class graduated, the Explorer program expanded very quickly. Class 2 was comprised of more than 100 teens from many of the sheriff's patrol stations, as well as two participating police agencies. In a very short time, many police departments in Los Angeles County implemented similar Explorer programs, with most of them training at the LASD Explorer Academy.

EXPLORER POST AT EVERY SHERIFF'S STATION

Deputy Lee Rising knew that if he put out a teletype that appeared to come from the sheriff, instructing all unit commanders to establish an Explorer Post, no one would dare question it. The teletype went out, and by the end of Class 3, every patrol station had an Explorer Post.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EXPLORER SYMPOSIUM

After the graduation of Explorer Class 2, Deputies Lee Rising and Tom Heller, along with a representative from the Boy Scouts of America, organized the first Southern California Explorer

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Explorers looking at a photo display



Explorer captains with Undersheriff Downey



The Casado Sisters from Explorer Class 3

Exploring is our program for young adults

Exploring is our program for young adults designed by the Boy Scouts of America to meet the needs, desires, and concerns of the next generation of citizens. Challenging opportunities encourage . . .



Belief in America, whose strength lies in her trust in God and in the courage and strength of her people.



A look at career opportunities through contact with men and women in their life experience areas.



Practicing citizenship as active participants in the Democratic System.



A first-hand look at the American Free-Enterprise System.



The attitude that seeks truth in all things and adventure on the frontiers of our changing world.

Exploring Magazine article



Explorer Honor Guard



LASD Explorers talking to an Explorer from New York



Explorer Class 3 graduation photo

Symposium. The one-day event, which was held on a Saturday, had Jack Webb, star of the television show *Dragnet*, as the keynote speaker.

Many Boy Scouts, whose troops were being sponsored by law enforcement agencies, attended the symposium. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's Explorer Program manual was given to the officers/scout leaders as a guide to convert their scouting program into a law enforcement Explorer program. Many of the police agencies contacted Deputy Rising, who assisted them in making these changes. After that, Explorer conferences were held every year. The law enforcement agency sponsoring the event created the agenda, which included training, displays and competitions involving role playing while handling a variety of situations.

REMOTE STATIONS

At remote stations in the Antelope Valley, deputies could become involved in extremely dangerous situations and backup was often far away. If they had an Explorer with them, they would hand them their backup weapon or shotgun and have the Explorer back them up. More than once, the presence of an Explorer deterred a suspect from attacking or shooting a deputy.

EXPLORER SHOT

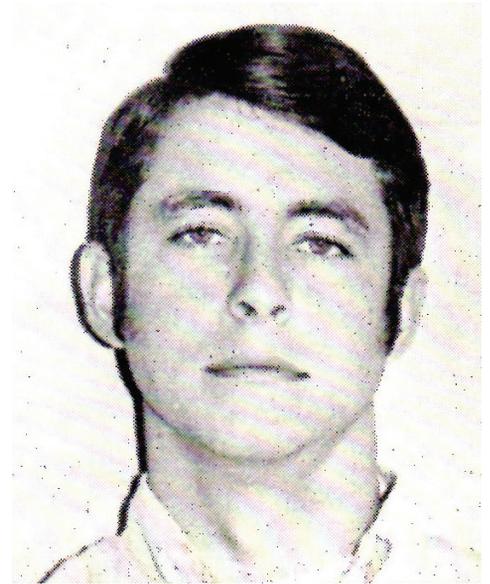
On March 25, 1973, Deputy Don Bear was patrolling in South El Monte when he observed four males in front of a house standing next to a car with beer bottles on top. As Deputy Bear went to arrest one of the subjects, he was met with resistance and requested backup. Unit 55, with Deputy Richard Filbin and 16-year-old Explorer

Robert Hernandez, arrived. The owner of the house, along with several subjects, grabbed the prisoner from Deputy Bear and took him inside the house. Deputy Bear instructed Explorer Hernandez to request additional backup, then ordered him to a position of safety. Hernandez went immediately to the radio car and asked for additional units.

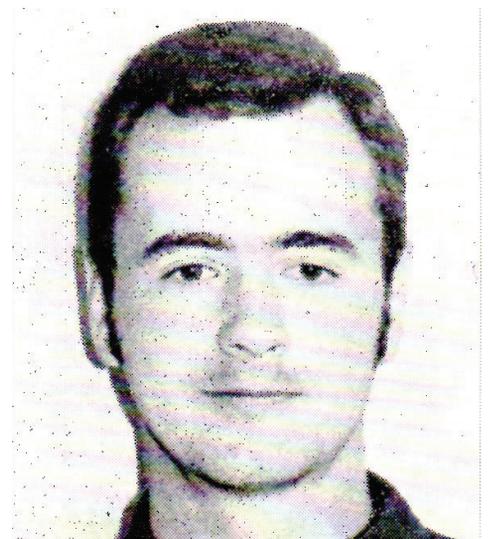
Deputies Bear and Filbin were able to enter the house and re-apprehend the handcuffed prisoner, but a struggle ensued between them and three of the other subjects. The holster used at that time was referred to as the "widow maker" because of its poor retention quality. When deputies were involved in a fight, chased a suspect or even just exited the radio car, the gun would simply fall out of the holster. It was also easy for a suspect to remove the deputy's gun from the holster, and that is exactly what occurred in this situation.

During the fight, one of the suspects took Deputy Bear's revolver from his holster and shot Deputy Filbin in the stomach. Another shot was fired, taking off the tip of Deputy Bear's right middle finger. The bullet kept traveling, piercing the thigh of Explorer Hernandez. Although shot in the leg, Hernandez was able to make his way to the radio car and broadcast a call for help, yelling into the radio, "998! Officer involved in a shooting!" This was an urgent call for help, and deputies responded by rolling as fast as they could with lights and sirens.

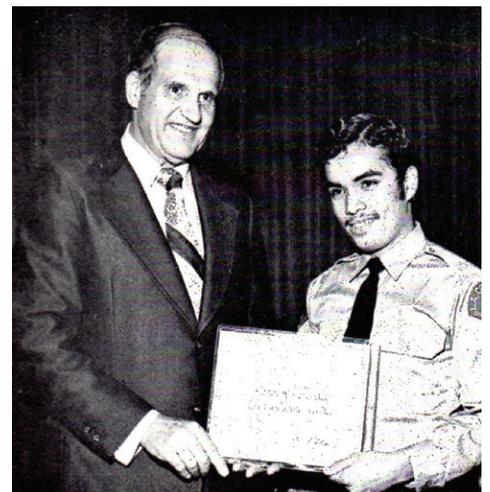
Dropping Deputy Bear's gun on the porch, all of the suspects ran into the house, slamming the door behind them. Deputy Bear, who didn't realize his fingertip had been shot off, picked up his gun and fired several rounds through the



Deputy Donald Bear



Deputy Richard Filbin



Explorer Hernandez receives Sheriff's Department's Distinguished Certificate from Sheriff Pitchess

front door, hitting three of the suspects. Assisting deputies arrived and transported the wounded deputies and Explorer to the hospital, while other deputies surrounded the house and took the suspects into custody.

Deputy Filbin was forced to retire after the gunshot wound resulted in limited mobility of his left leg. Deputy Bear returned to work and eventually retired as a homicide lieutenant in 2003.

On April 13, 1973, after recovering from his gunshot wound, Hernandez was honored during the graduation ceremony of Sheriff's Academy Class 158 in the Board of Supervisors Hearing Room at the Hall of Administration. Sheriff Peter J. Pitchess honored Deputy Explorer Hernandez with the Sheriff's Department's Distinguished Certificate for his bravery and heroism. Sheriff Pitchess also nominated Hernandez for the U.S. Secret Service's Law Enforcement Assistance Award, which recognized Explorers who assisted law enforcement agencies through meaningful and exceptional service. The Secret Service chose Hernandez as that year's award recipient, which meant an all-expenses-paid trip from the National Council, Boy Scouts of America, to Washington, D.C., where he met with James J. Rowley, director of the Secret Service, who presented him with a plaque and certificate.

On New Year's Day 1974, Explorer Hernandez was the guest of President Richard Nixon at the annual Rose Bowl Game. When Hernandez arrived at his seat, he was greeted by President Nixon, who said some kind words about his heroic deed. Hernandez was very proud and honored to have been recognized by the sheriff of Los Angeles County and the president of the United States. Explorer Hernandez recovered fully from the through-and-through wound to his upper leg, but ultimately chose not to pursue a career in law enforcement.

NATIONAL EXPLORER CONGRESS

For several years, the National Explorer Congress in Washington, D.C., hosted nearly 1,000 law enforcement Explorers from around the country. Two or three Explorer captains from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department would be selected to attend this major event, where they spent a week participating in seminars and visiting many historic and exciting places.

Explorer Captain Jan Jenkins, who attended in April 1975, recounts: "For a girl who grew up in Pico Rivera, being in the nation's capital was amazing. We went to Arlington National Cemetery and visited the Smithsonian, Pentagon and FBI and Secret Service Academies. While at the Secret Service Academy, we were shown one of the vehicles in which the president would ride in a parade. You can imagine our surprise when the



Explorers receiving an award

material on the back of the front seat was pulled down and revealed an arsenal!

"When we went to the White House, I was so busy looking around, I wasn't watching where I was going and didn't notice the two steps down. Oops! Luckily we were packed in like sardines and I was on my feet before anyone noticed. We then gathered in the Rose Garden and President Ford came out and addressed the crowd. Later, we went to the Kennedy Center and the Navy Band performed, playing, among other things, John Denver's 'Thank God I'm a Country Boy.'

"Sights like the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial and cherry trees in bloom left a lasting impression. It was truly an honor and privilege to have been able to attend, and even after 44 years, the memories are still very special."

PACCC (POLICE ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR CAR CLUBS)

In 1980, Temple Station Explorer Advisor Max Bickley approached Deputy Lynn Helbing and asked if he would be willing to be the unofficial Explorer activity advisor. In this role, he would be responsible for coordinating activities for the Explorers. Since Deputy Helbing owned a boat, the first thing he did was plan a waterskiing trip to Lake Havasu. Bickley, along with other deputies from Temple Station, assisted with the Explorers. Over the years, they made several trips to Lake Havasu, during which many of the Explorers learned to waterski.

In 1982, Deputy Bickley asked Deputy Helbing to be Temple Station's representative with the

Police Advisory Council for Car Clubs (PACCC). The PACCC was started by Lynwood P.D. Motor Sergeant Art Senior in the 1950s, when street racing was becoming popular. Wanting to offer teens in car clubs a safe way to drive, Sergeant Senior created an annual Youth Safety Run, where local dealerships provided vehicles for the participants to drive to Las Vegas and back. The new, American-made cars had very low mileage and were usually rented or loaned out as courtesy cars. Vehicles of similar design were assigned to categories so the competition for miles per gallon would be fair. Employees of the Truxign Truck Lettering Company painted the cars with the names of the dealers that donated them, along with the names of additional sponsors that paid all other needed expenses.

Along with chaperons, details such as rest areas, meals, gas stops and checkpoints, as well as the mileage at each checkpoint, needed to be planned. They also had to create illustrated maps so no one would get lost. The runs were completely free for all participants. Each car was sponsored by a business that paid for food, housing, the awards banquet and trophies. Gas was provided by Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO), and insurance was provided by the American Automobile Association (AAA).

When the popularity of car clubs began to fade around 1970, PACCC participants changed from car clubs to Explorer posts. The destination was

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changed from Las Vegas to Yosemite, thus keeping the run in the state of California and avoiding any conflicts with traveling out of state. Two Explorers from the same post would ride together, taking turns driving to avoid fatigue. A third Explorer from a different post acted as an observer and monitored the two drivers to make sure all rules were obeyed. The observer filed a report at the mid-point and at the end of the run. The purpose of the competition was to determine which group of drivers could get the most miles per gallon.

SCANDAL CAUSES CHANGES

A scandal at Cerritos Station triggered changes throughout the entire Sheriff's Department's Explorer Program. Between April 29 and May 1, 2011, Deputy Manuel Perallon, a 10-year veteran, became sexually involved with a 16-year-old female Explorer. The Explorer, who had been the honor cadet in her Academy class, met Deputy Perallon while she was on a patrol ride-along, and he took advantage of her. Pleading guilty to one count of oral copulation of a person under 18, the former deputy was sentenced to three years probation, required to perform 200 hours of community service, receive six months of sex offenders counseling, pay restitution and register as a sex offender.

Shortly after this incident occurred, Sergeant Ken Roller became the supervisor for the entire Sheriff's Department's Explorer Program. Aware that ours wasn't the only law enforcement agency dealing with scandals and other issues involving Explorers, he looked at problems encountered by other agencies as well. After reviewing the Sheriff's Department's Explorer Manual, which had not been revised in years, he determined that additional safeguards needed to be put into place to prevent scandals like this from happening again.

The original manual was written prior to cell phones, texting and social media, so Sergeant Roller had to take all of the new technology into account. Texting or emailing between Explorers and deputies not directly involved in the Explorer program was prohibited. The manual also explicitly barred any unprofessional or romantic interactions between Department personnel and Explorers, including spending time together off-hours or at unauthorized social gatherings.

The former policy on ride-alongs was very general and did not have specific restrictions regarding interactions between deputies and Explorers. The new policy, while still allowing Explorers to ride in patrol cars, discouraged placing female Explorers with male deputies when a

female deputy was available. Explorers were prohibited from riding with the same deputy more than twice in the same calendar month, could not request to ride with a particular deputy, and were not allowed to ride along with a patrol deputy after midnight.

The manual did not have any guidelines for the adults and teenagers involved in the Explorer program, so Sergeant Roller created an instructional course for Explorer advisors. The eight-hour class covered policy and procedures involving Explorers, the Learning for Life Program, recruitment, fundraising, managing money, risk management and liability issues.

Sergeant Roller convinced Department executives to make the Explorer Advisor Training mandatory. Every Explorer advisor attended the training and, in addition, was required to sign for a CD that contained the new Explorer Policy and Procedures Manual. They were told to familiarize themselves with the manual and that they were responsible for training personnel at their station.

Once all the Explorer advisors on the Sheriff's Department had been trained, Sergeant Roller opened up the program to outside police agencies. He conducted Explorer Advisor Training for the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department and at Stanford University. Requests continued to pour in, and Explorer Advisor Training was eventually presented to more than 80 law enforcement agencies throughout the state of California. In addition to law enforcement agencies, he trained members of the Los Angeles City and County Fire Departments.

The Explorer Advisor Training developed by Sergeant Roller is given three to four times each year so that new personnel at patrol stations are informed and up to date. Emphasis is placed on the importance of one adult and one minor never being alone. Even if an Explorer requests to speak to an adult in confidence, two adults or multiple minors should always be present. The presence of witnesses helps protect against unfounded accusations.

CHANGES TO THE EXPLORER ACADEMY

One of the first things Sergeant Roller realized after taking charge of the Explorer Program was that recruits in the Academy were spending too much time marching in formation and



Commander Sherman Block observes Explorers being inspected during Class 1's graduation.

performing physical training. He wanted more time in the classroom. Taking his new responsibilities seriously, Sergeant Roller became certified to teach Franklin Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, so he could teach it to Explorers in the Academy. California Highway Patrol officers were brought in to teach their teen driving program, Start Smart. During this four-hour class, students learned about traffic laws and vehicle and road safety, as well as the consequences of driving under the influence or while texting.

Regardless of what agency they were from, all Explorer recruits were required to learn the Sheriff's Department's radio codes. This may have been convenient for the instructor, but it didn't help Explorers from outside agencies. Roller changed that, so recruits now learned their own agency's radio codes.

It can get cold standing in formation at 7 a.m. on a winter morning. The Academy staff, snug in warm jackets, took their time doing inspections while the cadets shivered at attention. Roller made it clear that the Explorers would not do anything the staff wasn't willing to do themselves. So, if Explorers couldn't wear jackets, neither could the Academy staff. Also, instead of shorts and a T-shirt, the staff had to wear the same uniform as the Explorers. If the recruits were required to polish their shoes, the staff had to do the same. Corfam shoes, which were synthetic leather with a high gloss that didn't need polishing, were no longer allowed. Sergeant Roller wanted the recruits to understand the purpose of everything they were required to do and what outcome the staff expected from them.

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

Edited by Jan Jenkins (ret. LASD). ☆