

the 1950's

The 1950's ushered in a new and booming way of life for the country. World War II had ended and men began to return home. There was a tremendous growth in jobs and industry. Baby boomers were born and many families moved to the suburbs. Racial segregation was ruled unconstitutional and in 1955 Dr. Jonas Salk created the polio vaccine, which saved many lives. Drive-in movies became the rage and blue jeans and poodle skirts were the uniform of the young. During this decade the department also grew with expanding responsibilities and work.

An article appeared in the Tribune on July 21, 1952, reporting another tragic death of an officer in the department.

"Courtney Bond, 35, was accidentally shot by a fellow officer at 12:45 AM. They were in the lobby of police headquarters when the accident occurred. The bullet penetrated Bond's heart, according to Dr. Joseph Middleton, the physician summoned by the police department. The officer who shot Officer Bond thought his gun was unloaded but there was one bullet he was unaware of in the chamber of his .38 caliber police special revolver which he had purchased only a few days before the incident."

On April 19, 1955, police sergeant exams were noted in the paper. It's interesting to read what applicants then were required to know to attain that position. Per William Burns, the Police Chief, applicants for sergeant should know:

- Criminal law
- Rules of evidence
- Interpretation of crime data
- Procedures of interpretation and investigation
- Have the ability to write accurate reports

The ability to "get along with others" was also of prime importance, the Chief indicated. "All patrolmen of the present force have indicated a desire to take this test, Chief Burns reported. The exam was to be given by an independent authority, the state personnel board."



In April through December of 1957 the police department was struggling with a string of malicious mischief, burglaries, vandalisms, and outright destruction in the city. On December 6th the Tribune reported that "Police Break Up Vandalism Spree." The subtitle was "Youth Says 'fun' Was Worth The Risk". It reads as follows.

"The spree ended this week with the apprehension of three youths, all from San Luis Obispo. Their ages are 14 and 15. Topping their nine month series of escapades, all done for 'fun,' was a nocturnal entry into the Mission school, where they left a dismal trail of damage which amounted to \$1,000. The youths poured paint over nine typewriters, down a stairway, and on the gymnasium floor. They scattered paper and debris all over the place.

"At the E.C. Loomis & Co. grain store, which they raided twice, they ripped barley and grain sacks open, pouring the contents on the ground. On their first spree they ripped 50 sacks and on their second 35 sacks. 'I don't believe they realized the seriousness of what they were doing,' Detective Ray Vaden reported. 'All of these reports indicate felonies.'

Detective William Sperio, who listened to the confessions, said that one youth told him, 'The fun was worth it.'

"Police know they have cleared up at least 14 cases involving burglary and malicious mischief. They believe more cases are involved. The first reports started coming in last April. For no apparent reason other than 'fun,' the youths poured sand in the radiator of a car belonging to J. Boyle parked in the 600 block of Higuera Street. Ignition wires were ripped out also. Besides preliminary repair, the damages also required the purchase of a new engine. Next came the entry into the home of Lucilla Brown where \$3 in small change was taken. The Monterey Market came into the 'treatment' of the trio next. They left the place a mess after taking merchandise valued at \$46. They took \$5 from the Del Monte Market.

"Rifled was the office of the Kyle Co., where office equipment was tossed about and numerous items stolen. The wave of vandalism also struck the Wilson grocery store where a rear door was forced open and \$25 in merchandise taken. The premises were again assaulted.

"Police described the youths as 'normal kids' who have maintained average records in high school."

The article ends with no information as to what punishment the boys were given. Up until this time there were no records of any incidents having to do with minors in this area. It was the beginning of upheaval in the younger generation, leading up to conflict with the authorities everywhere, especially in the large cities.

