

the 1980's

The decade of the 80's brought new challenges to police work. It was the decade of the "Me! Me! Me!" mentality with binge buying, shop till you drop marathons, corporate takeovers and buyouts, and talk show programs. Video games, aerobics, minivans, and camcorders, all became part of our lives. There was double digit inflation, Reagan declared war on drugs, Kermit found it hard being green, hospital costs soared, many were lost to AIDS, and unemployment rose. The U.S. Constitution became 200 years old, ET phoned home, fast food places were everywhere, Cabbage Patch dolls were the rage, flash-dancing scandalized the older generation, cable was born, MTV drew in the teens like moths to a candle, tight jeans, tank tops, and leg warmers were the fashion. The Berlin Wall came down. The pace of life was accelerating and so was crime.

A new volunteer service was added to the department on August 14, 1980. The Chaplains Corps was born and chaplains were cruising with the SLO policemen. Reverend Stanley McGuire, coordinator of the Police Chaplains Corps, was pictured as he prepared to patrol with Officer Ray Barba. The Tribune ran an article on it.



Reverend Stan McGuire & Officer Ray Barba

"Church-going residents may see some familiar faces peering out of unusual places - like police patrol cars. Three ordained clergymen have been added to the roster of the San Luis Obispo Police Department as part of a Police Chaplains Corps initiated by Chief Roger Neuman. The chaplains completed a 16-hour training session in May and began patrolling with officers and dealing with law enforcement issues since then.

"The Rev. Stanley McGuire, minister of the Dynamic Prison Church and full time chaplain at the California Men's Colony, is coordinator. Assisting are Father Dennis Gilbert, associate pastor of Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, and the Rev. Dave Smiley, minister of the First Christian Church of San Luis Obispo. The chaplains work on call and participate in monthly ride-along and in-service training.

"The chaplains donate their services in a number of ways, said Sergeant Bart Topham, who drafted the program. In addition to other duties they make time to counsel personnel to reduce stress. Stress is the kind of thing that is so inordinately high in the law enforcement profession, stated Topham.

"Topham said there are a few similar programs in the state, but San Luis Obispo's is probably one of the first to actively involve ministers. Topham said the idea is to 'get to the root of the problems and solve them for both ourselves and the public.' It's an effort to provide the community with another resource, and at the same time reduce the time officers spend dealing with unresolved family problems. He hopes to recruit three more chaplains for the corps.

"The chaplains are available when an officer encounters a family disturbance. If the family needs counseling they can help. 'We try to assist the officers any way we can,' McGuire says. He said the chaplains do not get involved in arrest procedures and remain in the car unless they are asked to help. 'The officer is always in charge, no matter what the situation, but we will assist in any area our conscience says we can. That's a touchy role. Sometimes we help automatically by just being there.'

"McGuire told of an incident in which a heated situation was resolved almost immediately when the individual involved found a minister was present. 'He quieted right down,' McGuire said. Most of the chaplains' duties are as peacemakers. He said all the chaplains are trained counselors and feels that no matter what the size of a department, they can be a valuable tool."

Here is one man's recollection of the Flood of '83.

Friday – December 31, 1983, 8:00 a.m.

It has been raining steady for three days. The storm total is a little over three inches. This storm is the latest of a rainy season that began late in September. The season total is 19 inches. The major creeks are running high but "normal" for a major storm. The only flooding that has taken place has been on some low streets, which has not caused any problems.

December 31, 1983, noon

The rain has diminished slightly but continues to fall. Creek and street conditions remain about the same.

December 31, 1983, 3:00 p.m.

The public safety communications center receives a teletype from the National Weather Service advising of the possibility of increased rain during the next 12 hours, including thunderstorms with periods of intense rain.

December 31, 1983, 5:00 p.m.

End of the week and most city workers head home to celebrate New Years. Still raining, no new problems.

December 31, 1983, 8:00 p.m.

The communications center receives a teletype advising that the North Coast area of San Luis Obispo County is receiving heavy rains. CHP dispatch confirms that Highway 1 is closed at Ragged Point due to a rock slide.

December 31, 1983, 9:00 p.m.

The city begins to experience increased rain and the low-lying streets are beginning to flood. The creeks show a slight rise but are running unobstructed.

December 31, 1983, 9:30 p.m.

The city is struck with intense rain and all low lying streets and intersections begin to flood. A large tree drops into the creek just above the Andrews Street bridge and lodges on the bridge. As the rain increases, homes along upper San Luis Drive begin to take in water. The communications center begins to get calls from residents on San Luis Drive and other areas of the city. By 9:45 p.m. the waters are affecting most of the homes on San Luis Drive, some of homes have as much as 10-12 inches of water inside.

December 31, 1983, 10:00 p.m.

A small fire breaks out in a home on San Luis Drive because of an electrical short circuit.

December 31, 1983, 10:05 p.m.

A drunk driver makes a wide right turn at Higuera and Nipomo to avoid the flooded area and hits a second vehicle, causing two minor injuries, one of which will require an ambulance.

December 31, 1983, 10:15 p.m.

As the intense rain continues and increases, the communications center is being overloaded with calls about flooded streets and citizens' requests for sandbags.

December 31, 1983, 10:30 p.m.

The drainage system off Foothill Boulevard becomes overloaded, cresting their banks and spilling into the streets and homes. Tropicana Village parking lot starts to flood approximately one foot deep. Foothill Boulevard near O'Conner Way is closed because it is 6 inches under water. Prefumo Creek at Los Osos Valley Road rises from its banks and covers Los Osos Valley Road with 6 inches of water. The Johnson Avenue underpass is taking in a lot of water, but the pumps are operating properly.

December 31, 1983, 10:45 p.m.

San Luis Creek has reached the stage where it has started cutting banks and damaging privately-built creek banks and improvements. In the Dana Street area a 10' x 12' storage shed and a small travel trailer are swept into the creek and snagged, causing the water to back up into residences and into the trailer park in the 500 block of Higuera. The communications center receives a call from Tortilla Flats that an intoxicated person had left the bar and it is feared he may have been swept into the creek that runs along their parking lot. The rains begin to taper off, but because of the run-off, all the creeks continue to rise slightly.

December 31, 1983, 11:20 p.m.

The creeks have started to drop slightly and the storage shed and travel trailer have broken loose and passed under the Marsh Street bridge. There is concern that they could wedge up against the Elks Lane bridge.

December 31, 1983, 11:25 p.m.

The communications center receives a 911 call from a woman who says her husband has had a heart attack at Descanso and Del Rio while trying to correct a drainage problem in his back yard. The woman's daughter and a neighbor are attempting CPR.

December 31, 1983, 11:30 p.m.

The shed and travel trailer strike the Elks Lake bridge. They wedge in for a few minutes then break up and pass under. Waters appear to be receding except at Prefumo Creek and LOVR where it is approximately 18 inches deep. A large tree falls into the creek just above the bridge at Nipomo and Brizzolara. It wedges into the bridge and the creek runs over its banks and starts to flood houses along Nipomo and Brizzolara streets.

December 31, 1983, 11:45 p.m.

The rains let up and the creeks, where unobstructed, continue to fall.

January 1, 1984, 00:05 a.m.

The communications center receives a teletype from the National Weather Service advising that the worst has passed but there is a chance of additional heavy rains anytime after 5:00 a.m. HAPPY NEW YEAR!

(C.R. Chelquist, Investigative Division Commander)

In 1987 a new chief was selected for the department, Chief James Gardiner. There was a write up in the Tribune 12-30-89 entitled "Long Hours, Hard Work and No Rest."



Chief Jim Gardiner

Chief Gardiner's career began in 1970 when he joined the Newport Beach PD as a patrolman at age 21. He was shot once in the stomach while on duty in Newport Beach in November 1970. He lost a kidney but returned to duty in a month. His 17-year career in Newport Beach included four years as patrolman, five years as sergeant, and three years as lieutenant. He was promoted to captain in 1981 and served

six years in that capacity. He was also named outstanding Police Supervisor of the year in 1975. The article reads as follows.

"Gardiner has worked 60-70 hours a week as the city's top law enforcement officer, overseeing 52 officers, 27 non-sworn officers and a \$4.5 million annual budget. Gardiner stated, 'I want to develop a rapport between the department and the community where the community comes to see the department as a service organization. Our first priority obviously is protecting the residents of this city and providing a professional police force capable of responding to any incident. But there should be a perception on the community's part that police officers, and the department as a whole, are open and accessible. We want to be a service organization that the public trusts and relies on.'"

Chief Gardiner served the department until 2002 when he retired after 15 years of productive and well-respected tour of duty. He is still very active in his service to the community.

In 1989 an article appeared about an outstanding woman who is still serving in the department. It's entitled "SWAT Women a Rarity." It reads as follows.

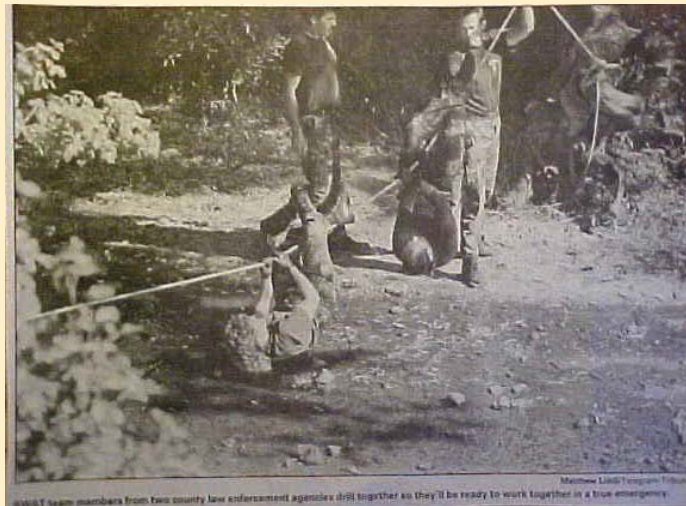


SWAT Officer

"Just like the guys, San Luis Obispo Police Officer Colleen Kevany had to pass a physical test to make her department's SWAT team. In two minutes she did as many sit ups as she could - 90. She did 50 pushups. She completed a three-mile run

in a time she's long forgotten. Whatever it was, it was good enough to help qualify her three years ago for the 13 member team that's called in on a crisis.

"Kevany knows she's one of a few female SWAT members in the state. As far as she knows, there are a couple of women on the Los Angeles Sheriff's SWAT team and one in San Jose. The lone female on the Special Emergency Response Team at the California Men's Colony was recently promoted to another position. Though she's a rarity, Kevany routinely declines requests for interviews. She doesn't understand what the fuss is about. 'I'm just part of the team,' she said with a smile, following a recent SWAT training workout. 'All the guys are real good. They know I can do the job, so there's no special treatment. I wouldn't want it any other way.' And like the guys, Kevany looks forward to the added training. Currently she spends most of her time in a patrol car working the graveyard shift. What is her favorite part of the job? 'Chasing after bad guys, going over fences,' she said with a laugh. 'The usual.'"



Colleen has served the department for many years and has excelled in marksmanship, been the first female in the SWAT team, and the first female officer in the role of traffic officer. She has also won many medals at the state-wide police Olympics. Though modest about all of this, she is an excellent officer and a role model for other women who will follow in her footsteps.



Mike Brennler, Pedro Vargas, & Colleen Kevany
Police Olympians



Dan Blanke & Dan Bresnahan



Communications Team

Top Row: Diana Davis, Linda Crass (nee Vlink), Bob Smalley, Ginny Vanderberg, Seema Benson, Durinda Carraway (nee Montoya);
Bottom Row: Kerri Rosenblum (nee Pounder), Wendy McKenna, Kris Dutra (nee Brown), Stacy Johns, and Melinda Kennedy



Cops & Donuts!

Sean Gillham, Colleen Kevany, Dale Strobridge, Tom Slawson, Mike Brennler Pedro Vargas & Dennis Johnson



Frank Goodwin & Gary Orback with Scout Master Keith George



Kris Brown in Dispatch



Lenora Gentry in Records

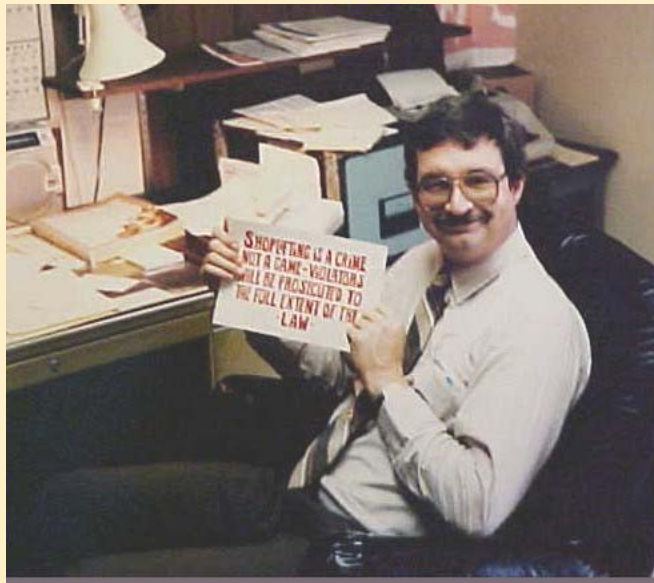


Sharon Olson in Detectives



Officers Ron Brown, left, and Al Webster prepare for patrol. Overtime and sick days have dropped with the 12-hour shifts. Tony Harris/Tribune.com Filephoto

Ron Brown & Al Webster, 3/12 Shift



Steve Seybold, Crime Prevention

