

JOURNAL OF CALIFORNIA LAW ENFORCEMENT

APRIL, 1979

VOL. 13 NO. 4

PRISON GANGS IN CALIFORNIA

Neil Zinn and Brian Kahn

PHENCYCLIDINE AND OFFICER SURVIVAL

Eugene D. Rudolph and Robert G. Hassey

THE FORMING OF SAN FRANCISCO'S VIGILANTE COMMITTEE

Lee S. Cole

CALIFORNIA LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

MURDERED — 1978

Charles B. Moorman and Rich Wemmer

PURSUIT POLICY: CAN AN AGENCY BE WITHOUT ONE?

John B. Demarest

SURVIVAL: ENTRY AND CONTROL OF A RESIDENT

Bill Bishop and Ed Montgomery

COUNTERATTACK AT B.C.

Michael Guerin

THE USE OF JUVENILES AS POLICE INFORMANTS

Howard A. Katz

NARCOTICS TASK FORCES — AN INTENSIVE EVALUATION

Cliff Blagg

EXECUTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT SERIES

Lou Keiter

RECENT CASES OF INTEREST TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

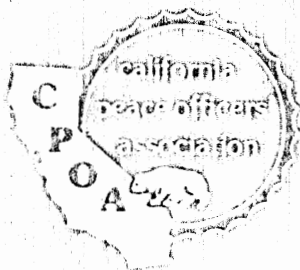
William W. Larsen

BOOK REVIEWS

Katie Zbinden

MAGAZINE REVIEWS

Robert Cancilla



CALIFORNIA LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS MURDERED — 1978



CHARLES B. MOORMAN

Charles B. Moorman is the Deputy Chief for Management Programs and an instructor in the Officer Survival Programs at the California Specialized Training Institute (CSTI), Camp San Luis Obispo, California. He received an M.S. in Police Administration from California State University, Los Angeles, 1969, and an M.S. in Education from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, 1974. He has been involved in law enforcement since 1958, having served with the Fullerton, California, Police Department, the California Highway Patrol, the University of Georgia system, and has been employed by CSTI since 1971.

RICH WEMMER

Sergeant Rich Wemmer is a nine-year veteran of the Los Angeles Police Department, currently serving as a field supervisor and an instructor in specialized schools at the Los Angeles Police Academy. In addition, Mr. Wemmer is an instructor in the Administration of Justice Programs at Golden West College in Huntington Beach and Pasadena City College. He specializes in officer safety and field tactical courses at the police academies of the Orange County Peace Officers, the Orange County Sheriff's, and Saddleback Police Reserve. He received a B.S. in Police Science and Administration from California State University at Los Angeles and an M.S. and M.A. from Pepperdine University in Public Administration and Public Communication, respectively.



Introduction

This article analyzes the murders of California peace officers during 1978. The authors have interviewed surviving support or backup officers, investigating homicide officers, and examined after-action reports in the majority of the 1978 California peace officer slayings in order to provide an accurate tabulation of these incidents. This data is incorporated in updating the Officer Sur-

vival Course offered at Camp San Luis Obispo by the California Specialized Training Institute and in police training classes within the Los Angeles Police Department. The data is being offered through this additional means in order to broaden the awareness among law enforcement officers that our occupation, neither individually nor collectively, contains room for carelessness, complacency, failure to plan, or failure to train.

Tabulated Information

Law enforcement agencies begin each new year determined to improve upon the goals and objectives established by our profession, such as reducing crime, cutting costs through increased efficiency, seeking improved equipment and facilities, updating training techniques, and STAYING ALIVE! The latter goal was not attained in 1978, when twelve peace officers were murdered in California, if compared to a yearly average of eleven murders from 1973 to 1977!

A tabulation of the twelve California peace officer murders in 1978 is given in Table I.

A brief chronological narrative of these ten factors follows.

By month of the year — the first four

months each accounted for one murder, followed by a two-month lapse in May and June. In both July and August, two law enforcement officers were murdered, but in September and October, no officers were murdered. The year concluded with two murders each in November and December.

By day of the week — it was noted that law enforcement officers were slain on every day, Thursday being the most lethal with three murders, followed by Monday, Friday, and Saturday with two murders each.

Tuesday, Wednesday and Sunday were the least Lethal, with one murder on each of those days. The three Thursday murders involved three different types of precipitating calls, while the two Monday incidents were robbery-related cases. The two Friday cases and two Saturday cases were all traffic stops.

TABLE I
CALIFORNIA LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS MURDERED — 1978

DATE	DAY	TIME	NAME*	RANK	AGE	YRS. EXP.	TYPE OF INCIDENT	WEAPON**	SUSPECT**
Jan. 14	Sat.	0230	W. Covina PD*	Ptm.	29	5	Traffic Stop/Pursuit	.38	MW/26***
Feb. 9	Thu.	2005	San Francisco*	Ptm.	42	14	Veh. Storage/Disturb.	.41	MW/35
Mar. 19	Sun.	2000	L.A.S.D.	Dep.	51	19	Sus.Per./No I.D.	.38**	MN/31
Apr. 18	Tue.	1035	L.A.S.D.*	Dep.	27	5	Drug Arrest (PCP)	.38**	MM/29
Jul. 13	Thu.	1930	Placer Co. S.D.	Dep.	30	4	Mental Deranged/	.357**	MW/30***
Jul. 17	Mon.	0145	Yreka PD*	Ptm.	27	2	Robbery Pursuit	Rifle .22	MI/23
Aug. 3	Thu.	1556	Stockton PD*	Det.	26	5	Search Warr./Drugs	.357	MN/27
Aug. 7	Mon.	1940	Ventura PD*	Det. Sgt.	32	9	Robbery/Warr.	Shotgun 12 ga.	MW/22***
Nov. 4	Sat.	0110	San Diego PD	Ptm.	30	4	Traffic Stop	.38	MM/17
Nov. 29	Wed.	1843	San Clemente PD	Ptm.	30	2	Med. Assist./ Mental Der.	.38	MW/23
Dec. 22	Fri.	0350	CHP*	Ptm.	51/35	21/12	Traffic Shop	.38**	MM/23
					Avg.	Avg.			
					34.2	8.5			
									Avg. 26.0

*Two man unit or back-up(s) at scene (8 cases).

**Own service weapon or partner's was murder weapon (5 cases).

***Killed at scene of murder or shortly thereafter (3 cases).

By hour of the day — eight hours of the twenty-four-hour clock accounted for the twelve killings, with 1900 to 2000 being the deadliest with three murders, followed by 0100 to 0200 and 0300 to 0400 with two murders each. The hours of 0200 to 0300, 1000 to 1100, 1500 to 1600, 1800 to 1900 and 2000 to 2100 are represented by one murder each. Examining the hours of 0600 to 1800 as daylight, note that only two of the murders occurred then, while the other ten slayings occurred during the hours of darkness.

By type of agency, the murdered officers represented seven police departments, three sheriff's departments, and the Highway Patrol. Two of the police officers and one deputy sheriff were from rural areas, while the remainder were from metropolitan areas. The agencies ranged in size of sworn personnel from 11 to 5448.

Note that in eight of the twelve murders, other officers such as a partner, backups or members of an arrest team were present at the time of the slayings. Five of those incidents involved police departments, one a sheriff's department, and one the Highway Patrol. In the latter case both partners were murdered.

By rank — ten of the victims were patrolmen or deputies. One police detective and one police detective sergeant, each involved in a team warrant arrest effort, accounted for the remainder of the total. The murdered officers were all males.

By age — the average age of the twelve victims was 34.2 years, with their ages ranging from 26 to 51 years. By five-year increments, seven of the murder victims were 26 to 30, two were 31 to 35, one was 41 to 45, and two were 51 to 55 years of age. The latter two were a deputy sheriff and a Highway Patrolman.

By years of law enforcement experience — the victims averaged 8.5 years and ranged in experience from two years to twenty-one years. In five-year increments, the majority of the murder victims, seven, had 2 to 5 years' experience, one had 6 to 10, two had 11 to 15, one had 16 to 20, and one had 21 to 25 years of law enforcement experience. The latter, together with a partner of 12 years' experience, was killed on a traffic stop.

Their combined experience amounted to 33 years of experience.

By precipitating call — in four of the murders, was a traffic stop, while drug-related cases, robbery cases, and mentally deranged persons each accounted for two slayings. Two additional peace officers were killed while handling a vehicle storage-disturbance and suspicious person incident. Only the two drug-related murders occurred during the hours of daylight.

By murder weapon — in ten of the twelve cases was a revolver and involved seven .38 caliber, two .357 caliber, and one .41 caliber revolvers. In five killings, the murder weapon was the victim's or his partner's service revolver. In two incidents a long weapon, a .22 magnum rifle and a 12-gauge shotgun, 00 mini-magnum, was used to kill a policeman and a detective sergeant. Both of these cases were robbery-related matters.

By subject description — eleven male murder suspects, who averaged 26.0 years of age, were identified in the twelve slayings. The suspects ranged in age from 17 to 35 years. By five-year increments, one suspect was 16 to 20, four were 21 to 25, four were 26 to 30, and two were 31 to 35 years. Three Caucasian suspects, ages 22, 26, and 30 years, were killed at the scene of the murder or shortly thereafter in incidents of a traffic stop, mentally disturbed, and serving a robbery warrant. By ethnic background, five suspects were White, three were Mexican, two were Negro, and one was American Indian.

Summary

An analysis of the California peace officer murdered in 1978 continues to disclose a significant number of relevant learning points. The identification of these issues suggests that the vulnerability factor in law enforcement may be reduced through the acknowledgement and understanding of the facts surrounding the deaths of the twelve California police officers slain in 1978. The recognition of factors accompanying the peace officer deaths is an attainable goal, particularly in the academic atmosphere of post-examination.

However, the ultimate success in preventing police officer murders lies in the recog-

tion and incorporation of these learning points into training programs so that the police officer is armed with an equalizer to reduce this threat — awareness.

This role falls upon the shoulders of many — the individual officer, the training officer, the front-line supervisor, and the Department. The authors present the following identifiable learning points for consideration and evaluation.

1. On a national scale, the felonies killings of law enforcement personnel have steadily declined since 1973. Although this is an encouraging trend, an examination of the 1978 California peace officer murder statistics revealed an increase, exceeding this state's annual averages over the same period.
2. In 1978, no significant patterns were established for the day of the week or the month of the year of officer murders as California police officers were slain every day of the week and in eight of the twelve months of the year. Traditionally, state and national statistics covering law enforcement officer murders reveal that the majority of police officers are killed during the "hours of darkness." The 1978 "hours of darkness," from 1800 to 0600 hours, accounted for ten deaths which represented 83% of the California peace officers murdered in 1978. Officers must remain cautious as no day of the week, month of the year, or time of the day renders them invulnerable.
3. The size of the agency and the area policed — urban versus rural — did not grant the officers immunity from a death situation. During 1978, small, medium, and large California police agencies, as well as urban and rural areas, were affected.
4. With 66%, or eight of the twelve California police officers murdered in the presence of a partner, a responding unit, or additional members of an arrest team, a concerted effort must be directed toward the examination of tactical situations involving multiple personnel. Although "safety in numbers" seems a logical theory and remains to be advocated at all costs, police personnel must address the issues that create a false sense of security and relaxation among officers. They need to identify the physical and verbal teamwork tactics that are not being properly utilized to reduce the lethal threat of a tactical field situation.
5. Patrol duties within a law enforcement organization remain the most hazardous assignment. The fact that field officers are the most frequent targets for the police killer substantiate the perils of police patrol; however, officers employed in other capacities may be confronted with equally tense and dangerous circumstances. This was evident in the 1978 murders of a Detective and Detective Sergeant while serving search and arrest warrants. In-service training must continue at all levels, with an additional emphasis toward those units involved in the apprehension and service of arrest and search warrants.
6. An analysis of the ages and length of police experience among the twelve officers murdered in 1978 demonstrates that the older and more experienced officers constitute the majority of the deaths. The issues of complacency, routine, and the attitude that experience and tenure removes an officer from danger are still prevalent. Training programs must be developed to combat the attitudinal changes that accompany increased age and time on the job and realistically develop training situations that will maintain an officer's safety perspectives.
7. Physical fitness must always remain a highly sought commodity in the field of police officer safety. In nine of the twelve 1978 death incidents, a suspect younger than the officer was responsible for his demise. It is worth considering that the older officer's physical condition, as well as the general tendency to feel less threatened by a young or female suspect, might increase the threat of injury or death.
8. During field duties, law enforcement personnel have frequent contact with suspicious and dangerous individuals who constitute a threat to the officer's personal safety. The police officer is an aggressive individual who actively represses crime. He constantly places himself in situations where he must deal with an individual's unknown background and determine quickly and accurately the person's involvement in a criminal act. The aggressiveness required in police work must be tempered with sound decision-making and solid tactics as eight of the twelve slain officers were killed during officer-initiated activities.
9. A peace officer cannot relax in any pedestrian or vehicular situation, as highlighted by the deaths of six officers in 1978, two during pedestrian approaches and four during vehicle pullovers.
10. The concept that an officer shall be aware of an individual's hands remain obvious, as handguns were utilized to murder 83%, or ten, of the twelve slain peace officers.
11. During 1978, five of the twelve officers, or 42%, were murdered with their own or their partner's service weapon. Training programs must concentrate on weapon retention and protection of the officer's danger zone.

In conclusion, the authors and the Institute express their appreciation to those agencies and individuals who assisted in the collection and evaluation of the data contained in this article. Our efforts were directed towards the identification of issues that will enhance the safety of all law enforcement personnel.

Charles B. Moorman, "Peace Officers Murdered in California 1973-77; Awareness and Learning Points Survey," *Journal of California Law Enforcement*, (October 1978) pp. 62-69.