



STOCKTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

BLUE NOTES

OCTOBER 2008

Thomas T. Morris, Chief of Police

Bradley L. Steele, Department Historian & Editor

PROFILE: Deputy Chief Lester J. Novaresi by Bradley Steele

Introduction - A "Rookie's P.O.V."

It was 1979, my high top boots were brand new and nicely polished. I was diligently studying my directives and bulletins in the one hour before my shift started, when I was called into the Sergeant's office. There an FTO pointed out in no uncertain terms that there was a stitched seam across the top of my new boots. "Only SWAT and FET Officers are allowed to wear jump boots." I looked down at the offending footwear. I had thought a plain toe was a plain toe? Oops!

On another day, walking from Records to Roll Call, a SWAT Sergeant stopped me. "What kind of speed loader pouch is that?" I had purchased a double pouch with Velcro closures instead of the standard silver snaps. Anticipating a repeat of "the boot incident" I showed the Sergeant my Velcro set up and waited for the worst..."Pretty neat!" was his judgment and off he strode down the hall.

A few days later I was sent to the second floor of the Police Facility. Back then the S.P.D. had only one building. The second floor was where the Big Brass, Administrative and Investigations Divisions were located. I swiftly executed my mission upstairs and headed for the East stairwell. After passing through the lobby, I turned down the North hallway, and was almost immediately confronted by Deputy Chief Lester Novaresi. I said a silent prayer that all my buttons were properly secured and my duty belt squared away. Novaresi, gold stars shining on his collar, strode forward towards me with a confident step. As we closed in his face broke out in a friendly smile and he pleasantly said "Hello!". I smiled back in relief and continued towards the stairwell.

Over thirty years later I wish that the only encounter between myself and Chief Novaresi while in uniform had been longer. As I have since discovered, getting to know Les Novaresi is a very pleasant and informative experience.

L.J. Novaresi - Soldier and Airman



Les was appointed to the SPD in 1952. It was not his first job in uniform. Drafted out of the first class at the brand new Edison High School in 1944, Les was trained by the US Army for duty with I Company, 17th Infantry Regiment of the 7th Division, and soon found himself in the invasion of Okinawa. By the time his unit was sent to Korea, Les had earned the prestigious Combat Infantry Badge. In Seoul Les had the honor to participate in the surrender ceremony of the Imperial Japanese Army in which the "meatball" flag was hauled down and replaced by "Old Glory".

World War Two : PFC

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Back in the USA by 1946, Les finished high school. He had developed an interest in aircraft partially inspired by his brother. Sidney Novaresi began his military career as an California National Guard enlisted man and ended WW2 as a fighter pilot and ultimately retired as an Air force Major General. Les joined the Air Force Reserve - and found himself called up as a Crew Chief for the Korean conflict. Before leaving Stockton Les took and passed the test for Police Officer - but joining the SPD would have to wait until his return.

Badge Number 76

Finally the day came when Les and 15 other new officers were sworn in. Each new Officer was presented two items: a badge (for Les it was #76) and a cap piece. The rest of the uniform and equipment was up to the new officers to purchase on their own.

Les worked his way up through one and two-man beat cars, traffic, the Police Ambulance and a downtown walking beat, Les progressed as an Officer. He enjoyed working with like minded partners like Dallas Faulkner and Donald Garibaldi - developing friendships that endure to this day. Recalling those days on the street Les remembers having to deal with every type of situation, from a rampaging organ grinder's monkey to chipping in with Don Garibaldi to buy groceries for a mom and her two children after arresting the "man" of the house for wife beating.

Promotion to Sergeant



Sergeant Novaresi

Promoted to Patrol Sergeant Les supervised Officers on his shift - just as today's Sergeants do. But another Sergeant's assignment was much more challenging - Desk Sergeant. With one or two phone operators, the Desk Sergeant was located at Police Headquarters in the basement of City Hall. The model of modern multi-tasking, not only did the Sergeant dispatch the calls for service, he often answered the telephone himself. The Desk Sergeant also had to handle "walk ins" at the front counter, along with the teletype machine - all the while coordinating with the Patrol Sergeant. It made for many busy nights!

While he enjoyed working Patrol, Les was eventually transferred to Detectives. There Les enjoyed working with future Chief Jerry Cecchetti and Bill Mac Donald as the three of them performed follow-up investigations, and monitored the progress of criminal complaints through the Courts

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In 1967 Les was promoted to Lieutenant by Chief O'Keefe. Now assigned to duty as a Watch Commander, Les supervised an entire shift and had some exciting times dealing with the riotous occurrences that were the 1960's in Stockton. Promoted to Captain in 1971 Les found himself working in Administration and Patrol, especially enjoying the latter - where he was in a position to foster a diverse group of Officers and mentor those with special talent - and occasionally help others find employment elsewhere.

One of Les's proudest accomplishments was helping to establish Stockton's SWAT Team, the second one formed in California, LAPD had the first. With support from both Chiefs Delaney and Cecchetti and a lot of innovation and footwork by his old partner Dallas Faulkner - our SWAT Team was not only pioneering but became a model for other Departments.



Promoted to Captain



FBI School with Bob Ross & Dallas Faulkner



Patrol Division Captain

Les continued in that spirit when he was promoted to Deputy Chief in 1976. Les was put in charge of Field Operations, which consisted of the Patrol, Traffic, Detectives, Juvenile and Vice Sections. Three years later Les retired from the SPD in March 1979.

Post S.P.D.

Not to be idle long, Les began a second career as an investigator for the San Joaquin Sheriff's Work Furlough Program, often working with Sheriff's Lieutenant Larry Mills, whom Les found to be an outstanding Deputy and good friend. After 14 years Les retired again officially leaving Law Enforcement in 1993.

After that Les concentrated on his family and travel. He was able to visit Switzerland - the country from which both his Mother and Father immigrated. He also enjoyed the opportunity to spend quality time with his wife Pat, whom he married in 1951 and his two children, son Tony - a 31 year veteran with the Port of Stockton Police and daughter Lesta. Sadly, Pat passed away in 2006.

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In 2007 Les was invited by Dallas Faulkner to do some recreational shooting. A charter member of the SPD Pistol team in the 1950's and 60's, Les had given up shooting when promotion to higher rank began to take up more and more of his time.

Finding himself struggling a bit with his SIG .380 Assistant Rangemaster Virgil Lowe asked Les if he needed any help. A few pointers from Virgil re-ignited Les' competitive spirit. Retrieving his pistols from his son, Les returned to the range after a 28 year absence from serious marksmanship. The discipline required for bullseye shooting was aided by Les' regular regime of five mile walks and push ups.

Goal 300

These days Les can be found twice a week at the shooting range. Equipped with a new super accurate Baer .45 pistol, at age 82 Les can group his shots into the 25 yard bull's-eye with deceptive ease. His goal - a perfect score of 300 in both Match and Timed fire Courses. Even though he regularly shoots in the 290's Les has yet to shoot 300. However, shooting 300 is the equivalent of playing a perfect round of golf, it's a difficult feat to be that precise firing a heavy caliber pistol standing offhand on the 25 yard line. Even so, it's only a matter of time before Les reaches this goal.

So if you see Les coming towards you, don't feel apprehensive, as I did back in 1979. He's a fine example of S.P.D.'s best. Be watchful though, he's still a cop, sharp and inquisitive. When asked to sum up his police career Les says it all reduces down to one thing, "Was I a good Cop?" In the case of Lester J. Novaresi the answer is a resounding "YES"!



1952: On the road to Deputy Chief



2008: On the road to 300