

Police Reserves Fill Big Need

by Marcia Bradford

To many people, the job of a police officer is not an enviable one. The work can mean long and unusual hours and is sometimes dangerous.

That's why it may come as a surprise to some that a large part of the police force in Scotts Valley is made up of volunteers.

The city currently has 10 reserve officers who can be called in to help with emergencies in addition to performing routine tasks with the department.

Reserves have been a part of Scotts Valley's police department since the city was incorporated 16 years ago, according to Sgt. Tom Bush, the reserve coordinator.

"We depend upon them quite a bit. They are well trained and most have been with the department for some time," he said. "They know what they are doing and are real good at it."

All reserves start out as Class 3 officers and must put in a minimum of 24 hours a month with the department. In addition, they all attend a four hour monthly training. After this is completed the requirement drops to eight hours a month.

"Most do more than that, of course," said Bush. "They are taking part in the program because they are interested in law enforcement."

The first 16 hours of a reserve's training are spent at the front desk, to familiarize them with what's involved in police work.

"A lot of times, new officers make unreal requests of people up front and don't realize what they're asking," Bush commented. "This gives them a chance to see what a dispatcher does."

Reserves are then assigned to patrol duty with other officers and introduced to the courts, the district attorney's office and various county agencies.

Additional training in emergency first-aid, cardiopulmonary-resuscitation, and the use of firearms must also be completed by each reserve.

As a Class 3, a reserve is limited to select details, including traffic control and dispatching. Occasionally, they are allowed to ride on calls with other officers.

"We don't encourage people to stay Class 3s because, in general, they aren't needed," Bush said. "We have an adequate desk staff and can better use reserves in other areas."

The exception to this rule is Teresa Rutledge. A trained pilot with her own plane, she has been helpful to the department in flying drug samples to Sacramento for analysis.

"It's worked out real well," said Rutledge. "It only takes me 50 minutes to get there, so they get things analyzed in a hurry, if necessary."

Rutledge is also helpful to the department because she speaks Spanish.

"We come across a need for this more than you might expect, especially in the summer

months," she said.

"For me, being a Class 3 works out good, really makes a lot of sense," Rutledge stated. "It I was a Class 2 and they needed me to assist with a woman in custody or with interpreting, they would have to call me in from patrol somewhere. This way I'm there and can be of immediate assistance."

She added that dispatchers are not given enough credit for the work they are expected to perform in a short amount of time.

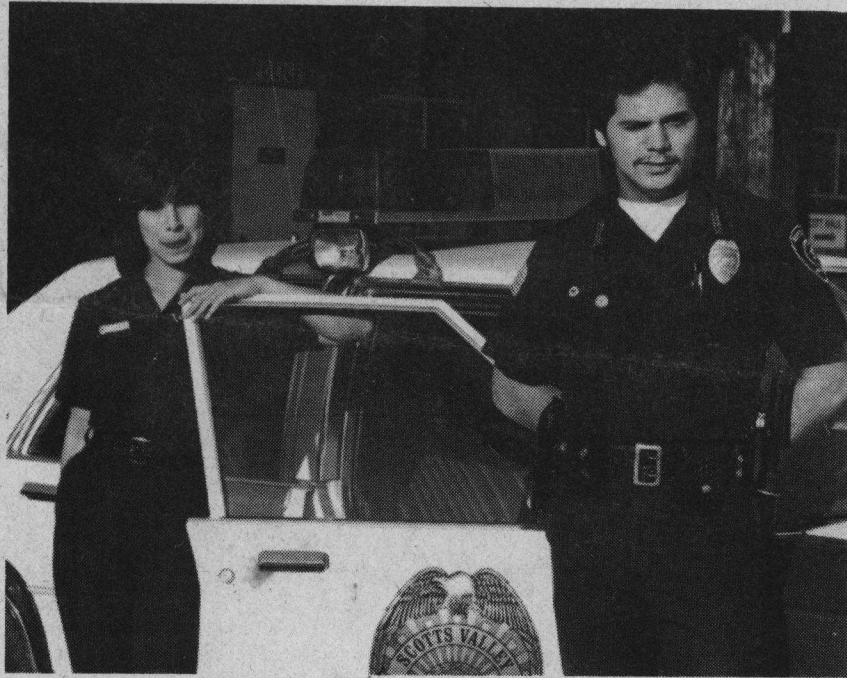


Photo by Marcia Bradford

Teresa Rutledge and Calvin Horton assist the Scotts Valley Police Department as volunteer reserve officers.

"It gets pretty tense in the office sometimes," she said.

The majority of the reserves working with the police in Scotts Valley are Class 2 officers. They work at least eight hours a month and ride with full time officers, assisting wherever needed.

They continue to attend the monthly training meetings, where they are kept up to date on law enforcement policies and are drilled in building searches, first aid, and domestic disturbance calls.

State requirements do not allow a Class 2 officer to ride on patrol by themselves, but they do work security for school dances and special events.

Reserves who strive for the Class 1 certification must go through very extensive training, similar to that of a regular police officer. They are required to attend a 12 week officer training program and must work a minimum of 400 hours with the department.

In addition, they must pass a series of tests. Following certification, the Class 1 officer works an average of eight hours a week and can handle calls alone.

Bush said the state requirements were made stricter several years ago. Since then, the number of Class 1 reserves has decreased significantly.

"The state found some agencies were not providing adequate training and wanted to regulate the reserves," he said. "They wanted to make sure the reserves were as able to handle calls as other

officers."

"We're almost to the point where we don't get too many Class 1s anymore," Bush added. "By the time they've gone through almost as much training as a full time officer and are doing the same type of work, they figure they might as well get paid for it."

Ron Carlton and Greg Almos are Class 2 reserves who originally intended upon becoming full time officers.

Although both switched to other professions, their interest in law enforcement

and desire to serve the community has kept them active in the reserves.

Carlton has been with the department for 10 years. He said the pressure of the job and the unusual hours were hard on his family.

In addition, he said, he had the opportunity to make more money at another job. He switched from a Class 1 reserve to a Class 2 when his job became more demanding.

Almos had similar reasons for changing careers.

"When I got out of high school, I majored in law enforcement at Cabrillo and being a police officer was my goal," he said.

"Then I went in the service for three years, which really set me back. I got married and got a good job where I could make more money so I decided to keep it."

As a carpenter, Almos is also able to provide special skills to the department.

He is also the reserve sergeant, a position which he referred to as a "glorified secretary", because he maintains the reserve records.

Carlton referred to the reserves as part of an old tradition in this county, dating back to sheriff's posses.

"With a posse a lot of people who had to work at other jobs could get involved when they were needed," he said. "The alternative is to maintain a larger department and this would be a burden on the community."

He agreed with Bush that the reserves are a very necessary part of the police force in Scotts Valley.

"The reserves are part of the team," Carlton said. "You

time officers and add vacation and sick time, that's not many people."

Bush said the reserves are especially important to the community during major incidents. They are utilized for stake-outs and undercover work, and are especially needed for emergencies.

"We make the requirement that they let their employers know about their responsibilities to the department and the employers have been very good about this," Bush said.

"When we call them, they usually come right in and are ready to go in about 15 minutes."

Although the reserves are rarely involved in dangerous situations, they are occasionally used for back-up.

"In a hostage situation, for example, we block roadways or evacuate houses if people are in immediate danger," said Almos. "Scotts Valley is very safety minded," he added. "We are taught how to approach buildings and cars, how to protect our guns from being taken from us."

The reserves were called upon for a great deal of help during the January storm last winter and are also active during Scotts Valley Days each summer.

"We really came through during the storm and the department did an excellent job of handling the situation," Rutledge said. There were people missing at first, roads that had to be closed to traffic and areas where people were in a lot of danger.

Aside from the storm she said that nothing "terribly shattering" had happened to her while working for the department. She said this is a compliment to the city itself and to the quality of the police department.

"I don't think people realize what an effective and efficient force we have," she remarked. "The coverage they give the area is great. I like to help, like being involved."

Rutledge said that friends who know of her involvement with the department are very supportive. The reactions to her volunteer work are all positive, she stated.

Because he rides on patrol and is more visible, Carlton said he experiences a variety of reactions.

"People are intrigued by policemen," he said. "I have friends who know I work at another job, but they think of me as a policeman. It's an image everyone recognizes."

"I have a lot of fun, especially during Scotts Valley Days," Almos said. "I like being out in public, and talking to people. People are very friendly to me."

When on duty, the reserves essentially act as regular fulltime officers. They wear uniforms and carry firearms.

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"The reserves are part of the team," Carleton noted. "You cannot separate them from the rest of the force."

"Most people don't recognize the fact that the police department functions seven days a week, with three shifts a day," he continued. "When you divide this up among 12 full

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Reserve police officers in Scotts Valley range in age from 21 to 40 years. Bush said the younger volunteers are usually interested in a career in law enforcement, while older reserves are mainly interested in providing a service to the community.