

Belgard appointed police chief

By STEVE SHENDER

Ray Belgard, a longtime Watsonville resident and chief of the investigative division of the Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Office, has been appointed Watsonville police chief.

The appointment of Belgard, 51, was announced by City Manager John Radin today at a late-morning press conference.

Belgard, who will take over the \$40,000-a-year job February 1, said this morning that he sees the position as the capstone of a law enforcement career that has already spanned more than 27 years, and indicated he intends to make some changes in the way the department is being run.

Belgard said "organizing the

department into a modern, efficient, well-run organization" is the top challenge facing him as he moves into his new job. He said he hopes to "instill a higher degree of professionalism in the police department."

"The department has suffered some credibility problems (with other law enforcement agencies) in the past," said Belgard, who added that his appointment would "increase that credibility by a good percentage point."

Declining to get into specifics about his plans for the police department, Belgard told a group of newspaper, TV and radio reporters that he felt eminently qualified to run the agency.

His experience in the community

and in law enforcement, Belgard said, "gives me a little more insight into how to measure the department and measure its needs."

"I'm just completely, thoroughly familiar with all the police administrators and working-type detectives in this whole county," he said, noting, "I can't do it (reshape the department) all by myself, but I have a vast field of expertise to call from."

Belgard, who grew up in Watsonville and, with the exception of a 13-year period from 1954 to 1967, has lived here all his life, said his knowledge of the community — including familiarity with its "criminal elements" — would also prove valuable in his new job.

Belgard said he saw the police chief's post as the "top of (his) career ladder," rather than a stepping stone to another job. Accordingly, he indicated, he will be less vulnerable to political and other pressures than a younger man, especially since he is already eligible for a pension under the state employees retirement system. "I'll have an advantage," he said, noting his would be a "less compromising position all around."

"It's an opportune time for me to come into a position like this and do what I think needs to be done," he said.

In response to questions on other matters, Belgard said:

—He could not "express any opinion, pro or con" on police

officers' demands for a four-day, 10-hour-a-day workweek.

—There is "definitely" a need for more police officers of Mexican descent in Watsonville.

—The city's gang difficulties must be addressed as "a crime problem" and not an "ethnic" problem.

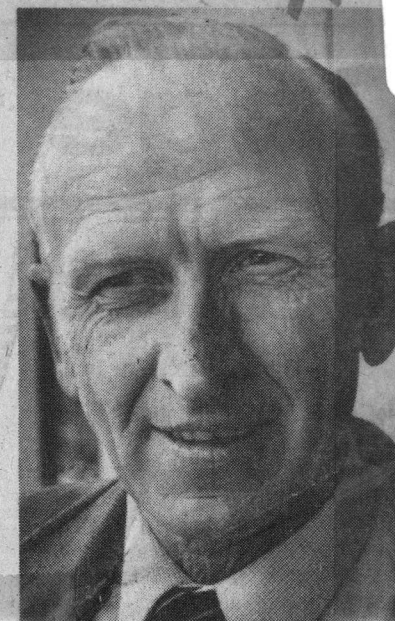
Belgard, who was chosen by Radin from among 40 applicants, began his law enforcement career as an officer with the Salinas Police Department in 1954. By the time he left the Salinas department in 1964 to take a job as an investigator with the Monterey County DA's office, he had been promoted to detective sergeant. He was later appointed acting

chief investigator for the Monterey County DA's office.

He joined the Santa Cruz County District Attorney's office in 1967, and currently serves as both the office's chief investigator and District Attorney Art Danner's top administrative assistant, overseeing the office's daily operations and its \$2 million budget.

Danner had high praise for Belgard today.

"Ray was a steady influence over the years for the DA's office," Danner said. "In large part, he contributed to what success the office has had. His credibility and respect throughout the criminal justice system has made being DA a lot easier for me."



Ray Belgard

Danner, citing the city's high crime rate and youth gang problems, said Belgard's expertise would "really make a difference" in Watsonville and called Belgard "the kind of chief Watsonville has needed for quite some time."

"We hate to see him go," Danner said, "but really, I think we're getting him back where he's needed most."

REFERENCE

WATSONVILLE
REGISTER-PAJARONIAN
December 22, 1981