



Acting Chief Dick Foerster (center) introduces Jack Bassett to his new secretary, Evelyn Finch.

# Santa Cruz police chief knows he has made the right decision

By JAMIE MARKS  
Sentinel Staff Writer

Saying he believes police departments should reflect the spirit of the community and be service-oriented, John "Jack" Bassett greeted the public this morning for the first time as Santa Cruz' newly-named police chief.

The 40-year-old Santa Ana Police lieutenant take the reins as chief Nov. 8.

Bassett said he wanted to come to Santa Cruz because of its beauty. Early this morning, he said he walked on the beach at Seacliff State Park and realized he'd made the right decision. "All I had to do was look out and I knew I'd done the right thing."

City Manager Richard Wilson formally introduced Bassett this morning at a press conference at City Hall, ending a two-month search for a replacement for Geno Pini. Pini had been Santa Cruz police chief for 25 years before retiring last April.

Since Pini's departure, Deputy Chief Dick Foerster had been in charge of the department.

Today, Bassett and Wilson credited Foerster with doing an "excellent job" of holding together the department in light of pending criminal charges against six former and current officers.

As for the investigation into alleged police brutality, Bassett said the recent events could be viewed as a "maturing process" for the department. He said he's met with management and believes that any changes that will come will come easily.

At the onset, Bassett said he will try to assess the various strengths and weaknesses within the department and will conduct a management audit.

He said the public's support for the police will come from how the front-line officers act, and that he will stress a community-oriented department.

Bassett hopes that any changes he may make will not be disruptive, but will come with time as he evaluates the situation.

Wilson said one of the first things Bassett will have to do is "relieve the burden" on current officers who've been working overtime and extra duty as a result of absences within the 61-person department.

Some 10 officers are out of service for varying reasons, and Wilson said this situation will have to be addressed soon. He added the officers currently working have done a tremendous job in providing patrols and services.

Bassett's wife and daughter will be staying in Santa Ana through the school year while he begins his work in Santa Cruz. He said this will give him a chance to throw his full support into the task ahead of him.

Bassett was with the Santa Ana Police Department since 1965. He was promoted to sergeant in 1973 and became a lieutenant in 1975.

As lieutenant, Bassett served as an area commander for one of the city's quadrants. He had 50 officers under his command and served a population of 63,000. Wilson said Bassett was active in developing the city's community-oriented police program.

Since June 1981, Bassett has been in charge of investigations into robbery, homicide and other crimes against people.

Wilson picked Bassett out of 115 applicants in what he called an "exhaustive" search for the new chief.

Foerster, who was unanimously supported by the Police Officers' Association for the job, said he will throw his full support behind Bassett.

Foerster said he wanted to thank the department and community for standing behind him in the recent months. His only complaint about the selection process was that the name of the new chief was made public in a non-local news medium, the San Jose Mercury News, before he had officially announced it to the department's officers and to the local press.

He added, "I hope the community will let us do what we have to do to get the department going again."