

# Visalia Police Department Annual Report 2003



Jerry Barker  
Chief of Police



## A Word from the Chief



**Chief Jerry Barker**

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The year 2003 was a trying year financially and we anticipate 2004 to follow suit. We saw local budget cuts evolve because of the State budget difficulties. It seemed like on a weekly basis budget cuts were announced concerning local schools, county government, or city government.

The Visalia Police Department has implemented budget reductions in training, supplies, capital improvement purchases, and travel expenses. The year 2004 may see the necessity for additional cuts in these and other areas.

As a result of reductions in State funding, the Visalia Unified School District (VUSD) was forced to cut its portion of the funding of our D.A.R.E. Program. This has eliminated one of the D.A.R.E. positions and mandates that the second D.A.R.E. position end in June 2004. While this officially ends the D.A.R.E. Program in Visalia, the VUSD will, at that time, implement a new comprehensive drug education program which provides a role for each school's Youth Service Officer to teach a segment of the new drug prevention program.

In conclusion, I must say a few words about the passage of Measure T in the March 2, 2004 election. Amid all of the Sacramento budget cut news, Measure T's passing provided both a ray of hope and voiced a strong statement of home rule on how this new tax should be spent. The voters of Visalia passed a ¼-cent sales tax initiative, thus creating a new and secure revenue stream for public safety's growth. Visalia was the first city in California to take this bold step. While the rest of the City's budget remains austere, this Measure guarantees the hiring of 28 additional police officers over the next few years.

Pictures on the front cover of this report represent various vehicles of the Visalia Police Department. (Top left) The D.A.R.E. vehicle, donated by the Visalians for D.A.R.E. and Groppetti Auto Group of Visalia. (Top right) The Peacekeeper, donated by the U.S. Air Force. (Middle) A Chevrolet Caprice patrol car operated by Sgt. Ernie Villa. (Main photo) Current and past traffic officers worked together enforcing traffic laws for one day utilizing both the new Harley Davidson motorcycles and the retired Kawasaki motorcycles. After the saturation detail, they gathered at Mooney's Grove Park for this photograph. There are currently nine traffic officers.

# Hometown heroes honored for their dedication to the community and their profession.

## Police Officer of the Year Agent Brian Winter

“Brian has demonstrated a degree of loyalty and professionalism that serves as a model to others.”

Lt. Rick Haskill



## Communications Operator of the Year - Katie Hamlin

“Katie demonstrates dedication to her job and provides quality service to the community and her co-workers.”

Stacy Handley, Dispatch Supervisor

## Reserve Officer of the Year – Chris Wilson

“Chris has been a Reserve Officer for over 10 years and has always been actively involved in all aspects of the Reserve Program.”

Sgt. Ernie Villa



## V.I.P.S. Member of the Year – Ruben Sanchez

“Ruben oversees the training schedules and content for all candidates who qualify for the Citizens on Patrol Program. He donated more than 400 hours in 2003.”

Sgt. Bill Blankenship

**Command College Graduate  
Lt. Dennis Swiney**

Command College is a two-year training program concentrating on forecasting police trends. Its purposes are to integrate a police agency with the community it serves and to resolve crime related problems revolving around today's and tomorrow's crime issues. "Graduating from Command College is quite an achievement. Lt. Dennis Swiney's professionalism is evident in his 'command' performance."

Chief Jerry Barker



**Visalia's Breakfast Rotary Club, Paul Harris Fellowship Award – Joan Grant**

Joan Grant serves the Visalia Police Department in the Court and Staff Services Unit. She has worked for the Department for 13 years. "This was a well deserved honor."

Asst. Chief Bob Williams

**California Police Olympics – Medal Winners  
Officer Duke Hettick - 16-yard individual trap shooting event  
Officer Connors – individual trap shooting doubles event**

"Officers Hettick and Connors are commended for their skill and for the great job in representing the Visalia Police Department in this event."

Asst. Chief Jim Nelson

**Sierra K-9 Trial Winners – Officers J. Andrews and R. Johnson**

Officer J. Andrews, K-117, placed 1<sup>st</sup> in the dog competition, and Officer R. Johnson, K-79, placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in agility, 5<sup>th</sup> in protection, 6<sup>th</sup> in search, and 4<sup>th</sup> overall.

# Lt. Dave Wheeler retires after more than 31 years of dedicated law enforcement service.



## Lt. Wheeler's famous quotes:

"...our citizens were passive participants in crime prevention, problem-solving and criminal apprehension. We can no longer report that our citizens are passive by the sheer volume of citizen requests for support. Their willingness to work with officers on neighborhood issues goes a long way toward meeting our objectives of increased accessibility."

"In an era of shrinking revenues and increased demands for service, we must streamline our operation and make it more efficient. We must maximize our existing resources and, in fact, identify those that we have yet to consider."



Lt. Wheeler celebrates with graduates of the Volunteers in Policing Academy.  
"Let's do the chicken dance!"



Patrol Officer  
6/75

Motor-cycle Officer  
4/80

Agt. Motors Unit  
5/84

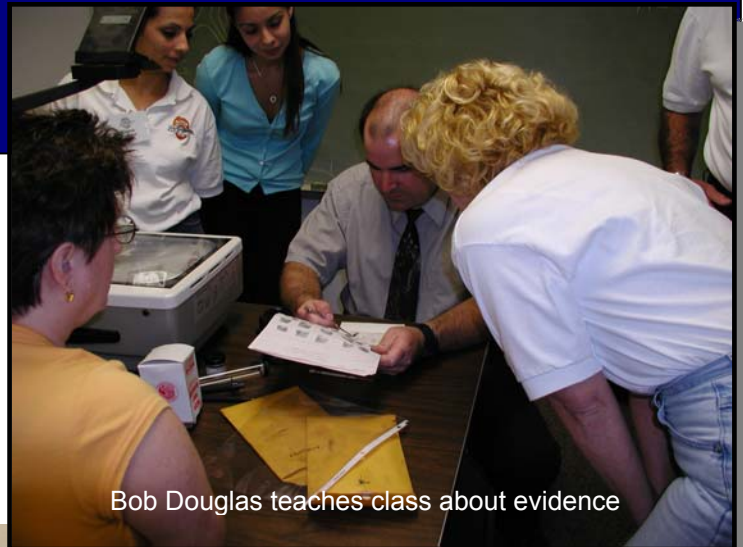
Sgt. Patrol  
7/85

Lt.  
3/95

Retired  
12/03

# Citizens Police Academy provides volunteers with opportunities to assist the police.

Citizens Academy 2003 – Class 19



Bob Douglas teaches class about evidence



Classmates share meals and camaraderie



Class exercises teach a variety of skills



“Volunteers for the Visalia Police Department are a valuable resource.”

Lt. Rick Haskill

“Graduates look forward to assisting the Police Department in serving our community.”

Angie DeAlba, Crime Prevention Coordinator

# Community Oriented Police and Problem-Solving Philosophy

“Working with the community to solve problems.”

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During 2003, officers of District 1 made graffiti prevention and abatement a high priority. Officers worked to rid the area of this blight through proactive programs.

We continue to establish partnerships and collaborations with the community in an effort to make the quality of life for citizens of Visalia the best it can be. This effort falls in line with the Visalia Police Department's C.O.P.P.S. philosophy.



**District 1 Commander – Lt. Mike McGee** (right)  
COPPS – Sr. Sgt. Rory Vadnais, Officer Jim Stamper  
Crime Prevention Coordinator – Angie De Alba  
Office Assistant – Rosemary Escamilla



Dia Del Nino at the Manuel Hernandez Center  
Sgt. Gary Williams, Officer Chris McLain,  
Officer James Andrews



Demolition of abandoned house on NW 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Street. “It was being used as a drug den.”  
Officer Brumley

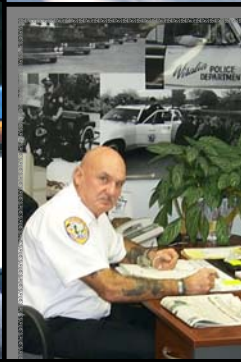


Trash-a-thon volunteers





Lt. Dennis Swiney,  
District 2 Commander



In 2003, Visalia experienced its largest commercial retail growth in its history. With the addition of many new stores with a regional draw, the officers of District 2 have worked hard to provide a safe shopping environment for our city's citizens and guests.

The officers of District 2 have focused on crimes such as vehicle burglary and thefts, purse snatching, and graffiti in our retail areas.

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Volunteers on patrol



Traffic collision investigation





# Collaborative efforts with the community and other agencies produce results.



The Police / Probation partnership began in May 2000. The purpose is to hold juvenile offenders responsible for their actions. "By having a partnership we are able to deal with juveniles more quickly and easily due to the presence of a probation officer. The partnership has been very successful."

Agent Brent Abbott

"After an MOU was signed with the California Highway Patrol, the Police Department now responds to calls for service on state property."

Sgt. Gary Williams

Police Activities League and the Visalia Recreation Department joined forces to provide a mobile recreation program. "We take recreation to children throughout Visalia with great response from the kids and the community."

Officer Jon Pree, PAL



There were 245 sex registrants\* in Visalia's jurisdiction when the Visalia Police Department began an aggressive campaign to locate and monitor sex offenders. "We are holding sex registrants accountable. They must comply with state mandates of registering annually with their local law enforcement agencies."

Russ Gauger, Sexual Crimes Detective

\*A registrant is a person who was convicted of a sex crime.

The Visalia Rotary Club donated Officer Mark Lyon's K-9 police dog, Alex.



"Our Department employs nine Youth Service Officers to work in Visalia schools to keep our students safe and enhance their learning environment."

Sgt. Jim German

Nearly 1,500 students in 13 Visalia schools graduated from the 2003 D.A.R.E. program.



The College of Sequoias, in conjunction with the Tulare/Kings County Police Academy, received \$625,000 from the State to set up a training facility to instruct the required disciplines in perishable skills. POST mandated each sworn officer receive extra training in driver's training, firearms, weaponless defense, and communication techniques. Officers were required to attend training, receiving instruction utilizing a force option simulator, driving simulator, precision driving, arrest and control techniques, and tactical communication techniques."

Sgt. Michele Figueroa, Training & PIO

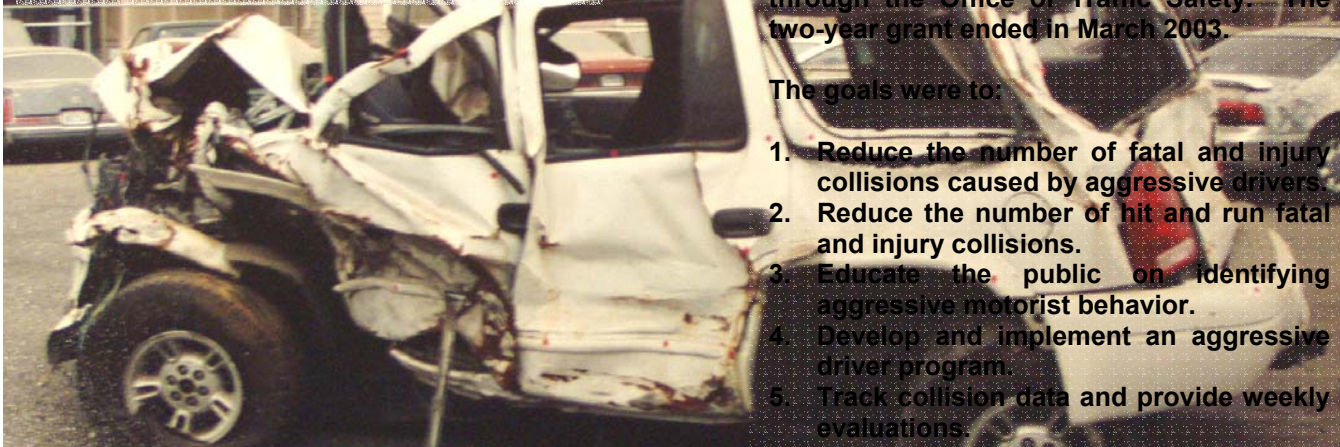


El Diamante Youth Services  
Officer Jason McWilliams

Officers Against Aggressive Motorists Program was funded by the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency through the Office of Traffic Safety. The two-year grant ended in March 2003.

The goals were to:

1. Reduce the number of fatal and injury collisions caused by aggressive drivers.
2. Reduce the number of hit and run fatal and injury collisions.
3. Educate the public on identifying aggressive motorist behavior.
4. Develop and implement an aggressive driver program.
5. Track collision data and provide weekly evaluations.



"My family is recovering from a collision caused by a speeding aggressive driver."  
Officer Brent Miller

# Workplace Murder / Suicide Shocks the City

John Gardner, an ex-employee of PrintXcell, walked into the building and shot Jose Manriquez. When Gardner observed police officers, he decided to set fire to the building and to take his own life. It was later established that he died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.

Police and fire personnel, emergency vehicles, and equipment were on the scene in minutes. They took control of the situation, eliminating the threat of further destruction.

There can be no dollar amount associated with the terrible loss of life. However, there is a cost to the community: an emotional cost, the company's loss of productivity, and the cost of emergency personnel doing their job.

Jose Manriquez was a 31-year-old press operator. He was a father and head of his household. This terrible tragedy ended with two lives being lost. There are no words that can express our overwhelming feelings of sadness for the families and workers.

## Equipment used:

- Peacekeeper
- AR-15 rifles, MP5 & HK53 sub-machine guns
- Ballistic shields
- Thermal imager
- SCBA masks & air tanks
- Two light / sound distraction devices
- Ballistic vests
- Ballistic helmets
- Bolt cutters
- Sig Sauer .357 cal. handguns
- Motorola radio systems
- Nextel cellular phones
- Fire engines / trucks
- Police cars (marked, unmarked, motorcycles)
- Bomb squad truck
- Bomb squad suit
- Mobile crime lab vehicle
- Mobile command center (EOC)

## Preventative measures against workplace violence

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration offers protection tips for workers and employers:

- Immediately report safety or security concerns to your supervisor.
- Install video surveillance, lighting, and alarm systems to secure the workplace.
- Educate your employees on what to do if they are involved in a violent incident.
- Teach employees how to protect themselves.

Equipment costs are undetermined.

Due to heavy smoke, police had to borrow equipment and breathing tanks from the Fire Department.



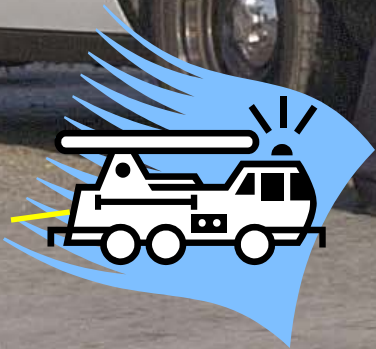
54 police personnel

44 police vehicles



16 fire personnel

7 fire vehicles



# Keeping peace in the community requires additional equipment.

“The Peacekeeper provides an increased degree of protection for both our officers and our community.”

Lt. Rick Haskill, S.W.A.T. Commander



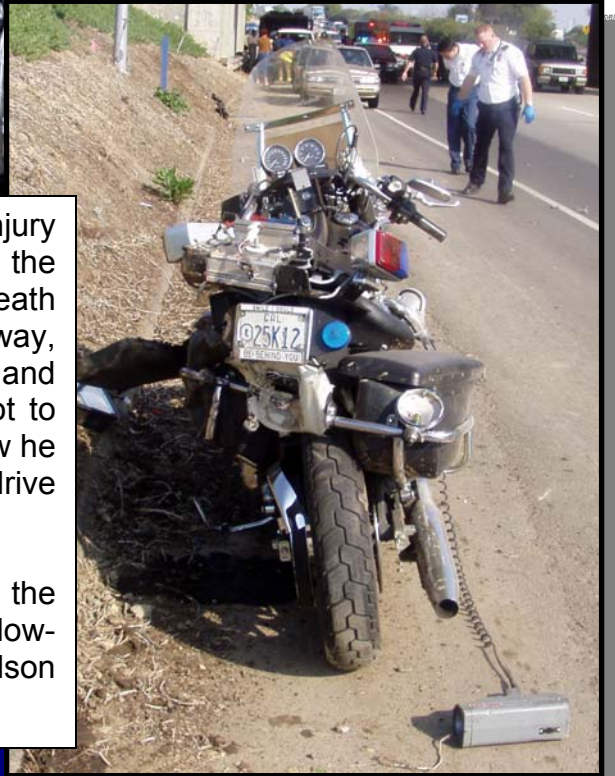
Special thanks go to Visalia businesses that donated parts and labor.  
Transmission – **Performance Transmission** and Air-conditioning – **Vogt's Automotive**

The “Peacekeeper” is an armored vehicle that the United States Air Force donated to the Visalia Police Department. The Peacekeeper was retrofitted with police equipment and is currently assigned to the S.W.A.T team. The Peacekeeper is used to make high-risk rescues of citizens or officers during tactical operations.

# New Harley Davidson motorcycles replace outdated fleet.



Motorcycle Officer  
McLain & his Harley



Motor Officer Duke Hettick sustained a left leg injury when the driver of a Chevrolet Blazer veered off the roadway and struck him. While stationed underneath an overpass on Highway 198, well off the roadway, Officer Hettick saw the vehicle approaching and jumped off his motorcycle to avoid being hit. “Not to quote a cliché,” Officer Hettick said when asked how he felt about the situation, “Just remember to drive defensively.”

Having to replace his motorcycle allowed the Department to review its current fleet and find a low-cost replacement plan. We found that Harley Davidson offered a lease program that fit our budget.

“There are risks of being a police officer. Officer Hettick’s quick reaction prevented even more serious injuries.”

Lt. Rick Haskill

# Solving cases requires superb investigative skills.

## **Visalia Homicides in 2003**

There were nine homicides in 2003, including one double homicide. All but three were gang related.

### **Five gang related shootings kill six**

1. A drive-by shooting at a residence on N.W. Second Street resulted in the death of Gary Collins, 65, and George Richardson, 38. Arrested were four Oriental Troop gang members.
2. While driving on Locust Street, passengers in two vehicles exchanged gang slurs. A suspect in a gray sedan shot Armando Gutierrez, 20. The case remains open and active.
3. Gang slurs again caused an encounter with members of opposing gangs on Strawberry Street. Arrested was Gabriel Anchondo, 20, who allegedly shot Johnny Azevedo, 34.
4. Jose Landin, 23, was in the drive-thru at Jack in the box when Isaac Meraz, 21, walked up to the passenger's side of Landin's vehicle and fired multiple shots.
5. Jorge Montes, 20, and Gerardo Cortez, 19, were shot while at a residence on N.W. Second Street. Cortez died at the scene. Refugio Ruben Cardenas, 19 and Luis Rebolledo, 19, were later arrested. See additional story details on page 16.

## **Three additional shootings bring total homicides in 2003 to nine**

Murder / suicide at PrintXcell claimed the life of Jose Manriquez. John Gardner, 45, an ex-employee, walked into the business armed with two handguns. After shooting Manriquez, he tried to set fire to the building. When Gardner attempted to leave the site, he observed several police officers and then decided to take his own life. He died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. The suspect and victim had ongoing negative co-worker issues.

While attempting to steal a truck, suspect Juan Mejia, 20, shot his accomplice, Sabas Rodriguez, 24, rather than the intended victim and owner of the vehicle.

Dina Guzman, 19, was at her ex-boyfriend's house when an argument ensued. Martin Farias, 22, produced a handgun and shot Guzman. His parents were also arrested for being accessories to the murder after providing a false alibi.

## **America's Most Wanted**

A fourteen-year-old murder case turned high profile when suspect, Elio Dominguez Benavente, was featured on America's Most Wanted and his picture was plastered on a billboard at Center and Burke Streets.

## **Gang member gets life**

In January 2002, a South Side Kings gang member walked up to a driveway on Ferguson and shot Carlos Cortez. In 2003, Richard Avenida was convicted of 1<sup>st</sup> degree murder and gang allegations. He was sentenced to life without parole.

## **Organized gang crime ring busted**

Police officers in the Special Enforcement, Violent Crimes, Property Crimes, Narcotics, SWAT, and Youth Services Units joined forces with Tulare County Probation and the Tulare Police Department to serve search warrants at seven separate addresses. Officers received information that organized gang members had been planning, documenting, and committing various crimes involving drugs, robberies, and vehicle thefts throughout the community.

After serving the warrants, property seized included 10 grams of methamphetamine, two handguns, a large amount of U.S. currency, evidence of gang membership, and a 2000 BMW x5 SUV. Seven suspects were arrested on charges of robbery, sales of narcotics, possession of narcotics, and weapons violations.



**Narcotics display**

## **Attempted bank robbery failed due to police surveillance**

Officers from the Visalia Police Department and agents from the FBI began conducting surveillance on banks in downtown Visalia after a witness reported suspicious circumstances at Valley Oak Credit Union.

Officers spotted a stolen vehicle driving by the Credit Union several times and began pursuing the vehicle. Four suspects were arrested and charged with attempted robbery, auto theft, failure to yield, possession of a concealed weapon, and gang enhancement charges.

### **Homicide Suspect Arrested**

Armed with a shotgun, Refugio Ruben Cardenas, a known northern affiliated gang member, brazenly approached five southern affiliated gang members at a residence on N.W. Second Street. Cardenas began firing several rounds and struck Gerardo Cortez and Jorge Montes. Cortez later died of a gunshot wound to the head.

Police tracked Cardenas to the Sacramento area. He eventually returned to Visalia and was found by Officer Mark Lopez. Upon contact, Cardenas attempted to flee. After a brief struggle, Cardenas was taken into custody. A loaded 12-gauge sawed-off shotgun, which is believed to be the murder weapon, was found in his possession.

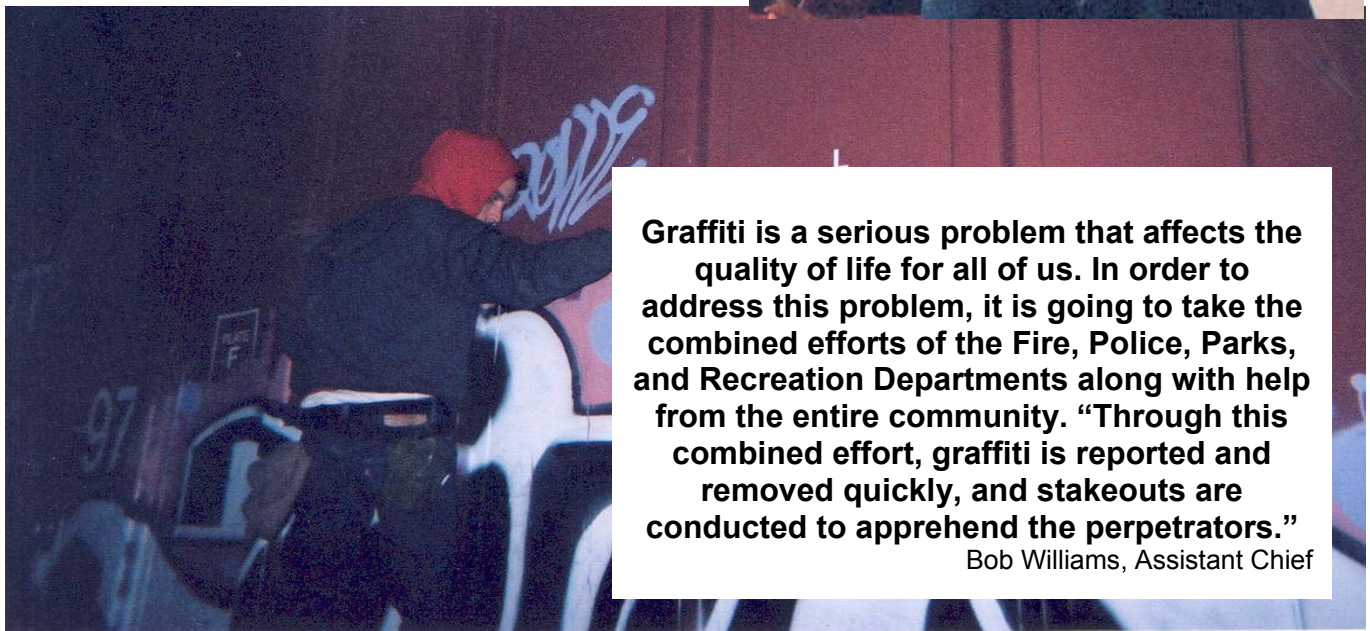
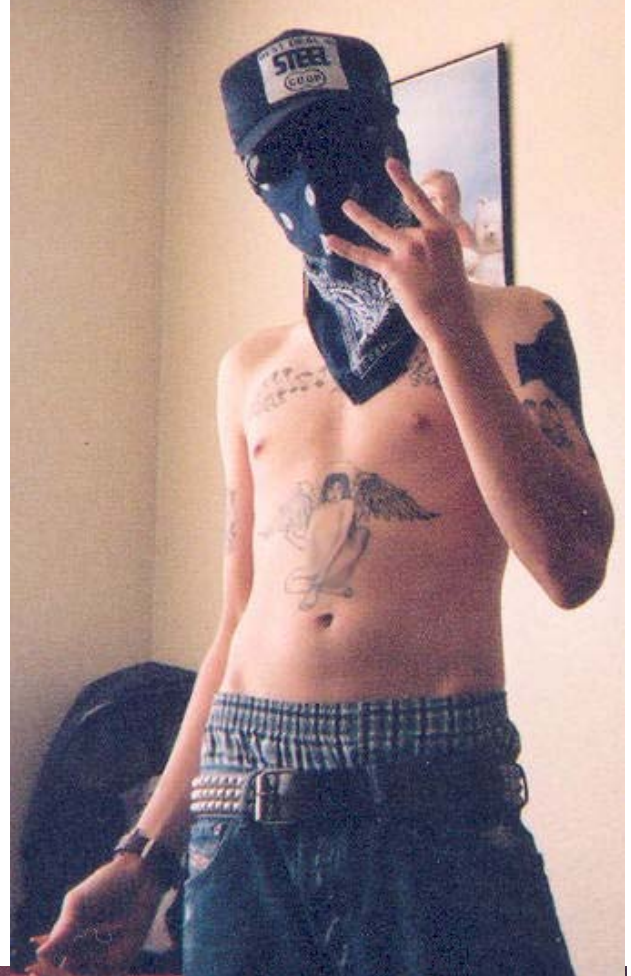
# Gang problems continue to plague Visalia and drain police resources.

## Visalia Gang Crimes Increase

- There are 950 known gang members in the Visalia area.
- There are 21 different gang families.
- Gang members released from prison return to Visalia.
- Gang identification cards generated by officers are increasing.
- Costs of dealing with gang criminal activity escalate.
- One additional officer transferred to the Gang Unit.
- Gang graffiti dramatically increased during the last few months of 2003.

**“We are reprioritizing things right now, especially to deal with gangs.”**

Jim Nelson, Assistant Chief



**Graffiti is a serious problem that affects the quality of life for all of us. In order to address this problem, it is going to take the combined efforts of the Fire, Police, Parks, and Recreation Departments along with help from the entire community. “Through this combined effort, graffiti is reported and removed quickly, and stakeouts are conducted to apprehend the perpetrators.”**

Bob Williams, Assistant Chief



## End of Year Statistics

ABOUT THE CITY	TOTAL
City limit square miles	32.26
Miles of streets	320
Population	98,875
Daytime population	130,000

ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT	TOTAL
Calls for service	97,731
Reports written	22,114
Arrests (4,438 adults / 1,361 juveniles)	5,799
Gang cards generated	1,256
Web site hits	15,239

INVESTIGATIONS	TOTAL
Cases investigated - property crimes	930
Cases investigated - violent crimes	1,281
Controlled / attempted buys - narcotics	164
Gang probation searches	332

TRAINING	HOURS
Total POST hours	5,129
Total Internal hours	2,513

PERSONNEL	TOTAL
Personnel	165
108 sworn, 6 grant, 51 civilian	
Reserve officers	10
Volunteers - VIPS	58
Chaplains	8

COMMUNITY PROJECTS	TOTAL
D.A.R.E. student graduates	1,493
Graffiti abatements	463
COPPS problem-solving plans	54
COPPS community contacts	10,635

TRAFFIC CONTROL	TOTAL
Collisions - fatal & injury	783
Collisions - non-injury	1,916
Traffic citations	11,101
Parking citations	15,583

SEX REGISTRANT TRANSACTIONS	TOTAL
Actual registrants in Visalia	228
Registrant transactions	309
Megans Law database inquiries	54

CRIMES AGAINST THE ELDERLY	TOTAL
Cases of elder abuse reported	26
Aggravated assaults, victims >60	45

## 2003 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REPORTS

	TOTAL REPORTS	VER-BAL	HANDS/ FEET	KNIFE	GUN	OTHER
2003	904	581	243	13	1	66
2002	981	298	542	30	8	103
% IN/DE	-8%	95%	-55%	-57%	-88%	-36%



NOTE: The Department of Justice required the VPD to change the way we reported domestic violence assaults in 2003. Therefore, the use of weapons significantly decreased while verbal assaults increased.

## 2003 REPORTED PART 1 CRIMES

	HOMICIDE	RAPE	ROBBERY	AGGRAV ASSAULT	PERSON CRIMES	BURG	GRAND THEFT	VEH THEFT	PROP CRIMES	TOTAL CRIMES
2003	9	47	144	589	789	1081	777	806	2664	3453
2002	13	46	130	654	843	1096	812	832	2740	3583
% IN/DE	-31%	0%	11%	-10%	-6%	-1%	-4%	-3%	-3%	-4%

# Community involvement comes in many forms.

What we value as an organization is reflected through our commitment to serving our community. Police officers make themselves available to our citizens in a variety of ways.



Traffic Enforcement Officer Gwen Jenkins talks with citizens downtown



Lao New Year Celebration



K-9 demonstration, Officer Andrews & Zeke, Officer Lyon & Alex



PAL - Basketball Coach Lt. Mike McGee



Youth Service Officer Somavia at Divisadero School



Visalia Police Explorers



Merchant training on fraud and stolen checks



D.A.R.E. Officer Dyar



Commercial Policing Officer Mike Stow talks with the Loss Prevention Officer at Target-Greatland

## Mapping our Future

The community and the Visalia Police Department collectively examined the factors that may affect our future. The following goals were developed so we may attain the desired outcome.

### Strategic Planning is...

“...a group dynamic process which enables a group or organization to address issues, examine trends, assess organizational capabilities, re-examine its purpose and define a new sense of direction.”

Gary Brown & George Caravallo

**STRATEGIC GOAL #1** – Foster community support and build healthy relationships within the organization, with other City departments, other law enforcement entities and government agencies.

**STRATEGIC GOAL #2** - Modify the organizational structure of the Department and establish optimum and minimum levels of staffing in all areas based on the City's growth. Increase sworn and civilian staff to more effective levels. Reevaluate caseloads and apply resources to units based on community needs. Evaluate special programs and staffing needs, specifically the Traffic and Gang Units.

**STRATEGIC GOAL #3** – Recruit, hire, and retain employees that exemplify the high standards and philosophy of the Department. Ethnic diversification of the Department should be a reflection of the community. Encourage and support a well-trained workforce. Continue to review and modify the benefit package to encourage retention of existing highly qualified personnel.

**STRATEGIC GOAL #4** – That the Visalia Police Department and its employees interface better with

and be accessible to the public which can be achieved by continued support of the Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving philosophy.

**STRATEGIC GOAL #5** - Identify and utilize the most effective technology in the delivery of police services. Project future equipment needs utilizing long term planning. Evaluate and replace outdated equipment, i.e., radios, repeaters, dispatch communications, voice recognition equipment, etc. Evaluate personnel needs related to computer and software applications.

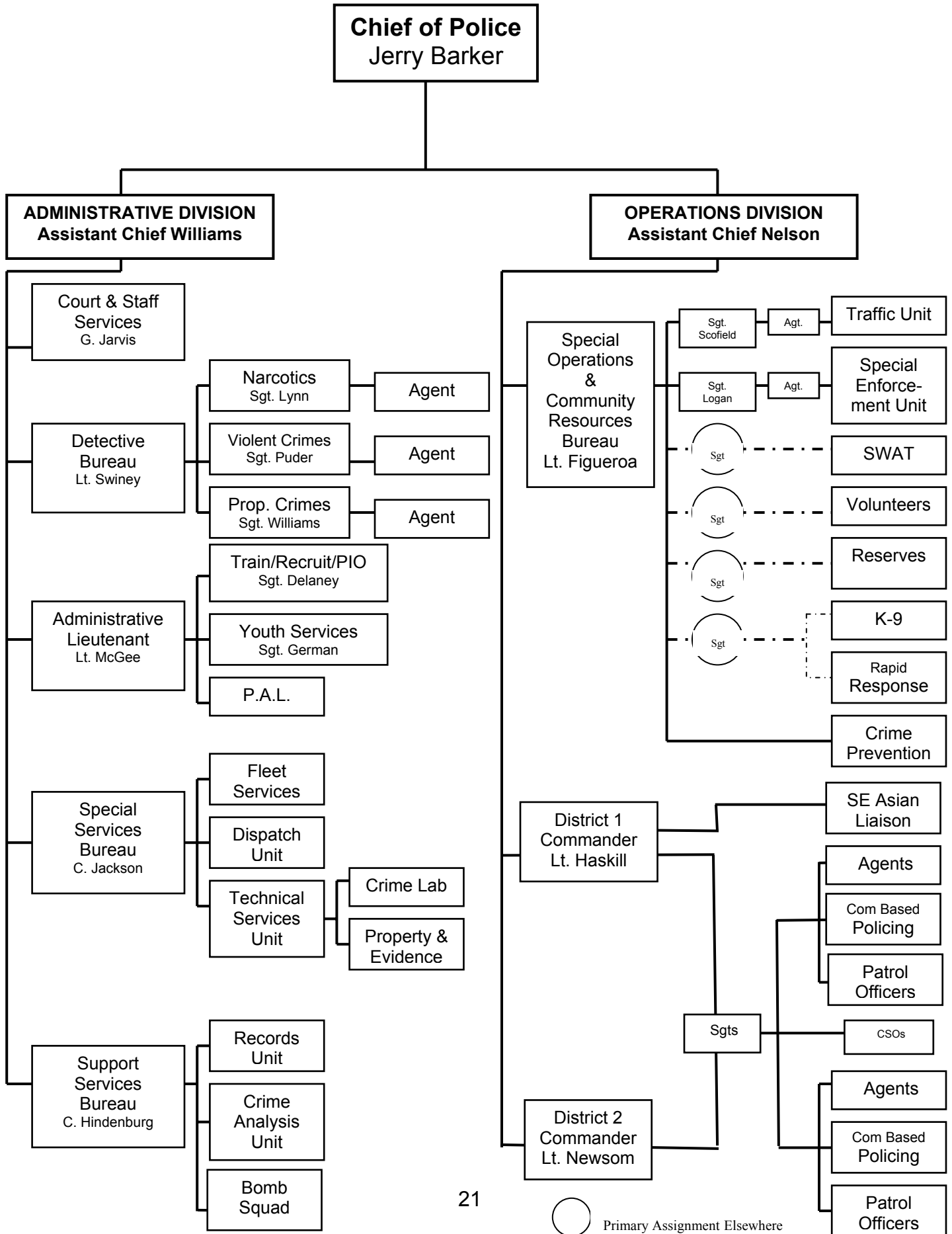
**STRATEGIC GOAL #6** - Develop fully functioning facilities to meet the needs of the department and the public. Integrate fully functioning precincts in north and south Visalia.

**STRATEGIC GOAL #7** - Target alternative sources of revenue outside of the City's General Fund. Delineate the use of such resources once obtained for facility, equipment, and staffing purposes.

**STRATEGIC GOAL #8** — Provide leadership in marshalling community efforts to eradicate crime. Take a futuristic approach to preventing potential crime problems, i.e., homeland security, computer crimes, identity theft.



# Organization Chart ..... 2004



## RECRUITMENT

The Visalia Police Department is continuously recruiting:

- Police Officer (California P.O.S.T. Academy Graduate)
- Police Officer Lateral (California Certified)
- Communications Operator (with one year experience)

Other career opportunities include CSI (Crime Scene Investigations), Community Service Officers, Records Management, and Criminal Investigations positions. Volunteer positions are also available.

Applications may be obtained at, and submitted to, the City of Visalia, Human Resources Department, 707 W. Acequia Street, Visalia, CA 93291. For application materials call (559) 713-4407.

Visit the City of Visalia's website at [www.ci.visalia.ca.us](http://www.ci.visalia.ca.us)  
and the Police Department's website at [www.vpd.ci.visalia.ca.us](http://www.vpd.ci.visalia.ca.us)

An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer  
invites applications from women,  
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VISALIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

- HOME
- Dept. Contacts
- Crime Map
- History
- Recruitment
- Report Crime
- Site Map
- Statistics
- Units/Bureaus
- What's New



## Online Crime Report Form

The Visalia Police Department accepts crime reports "on-line." If you are a victim of a crime that occurred within our city, you can submit your initial report here. This form is for "cold" crimes (non-emergency) for which there are no suspects or evidence. For emergencies, please dial **9-1-1**.



The Records Unit has staff available to answer questions from the public from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m. on weekdays and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays.