

Wider Police Scandal Hinted

BILL FARR

Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File); Jun 14, 1982;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1986)

pg. 1

Wider Police Scandal Hinted

Court Papers Suggest 'Worse' Corruption

By BILL FARR, Times Staff Writer

Corruption "a hundred times worse" than publicly revealed has plagued the Los Angeles Police Department's Hollywood Division for the last few years, according to a "sordid picture" painted in court documents filed last week.

Those documents were submitted in connection with the criminal case filed against suspended Sgt. Joseph D. Balleweg, who is scheduled to surrender today for booking on burglary charges.

"When you read those reports, you get a sordid picture of what was going on among some of the policemen out in Hollywood," Deputy Dist. Atty. Jay Lipman said after filing multiple felony counts against Balleweg and resigned officer Bradford Fisher, who was arrested Thursday.

Examples of Misconduct

Those reports indicate that policemen took part in possibly hundreds of burglaries, and while on duty, engaged in sex with prostitutes, drank and gambled.

The burglary operation became so sophisticated that officers were taking orders for merchandise and Balleweg allegedly assumed the duty of finding stores that carried the items.

The reports filed in court were compiled by investigators in LAPD's Internal Affairs Division in their efforts to clean up the beleaguered Hollywood Division.

Police Chief Daryl F. Carter has said the goal of the investigation is "to weed out every last policeman who has engaged in these corrupt activities."

The "hundred times worse" appraisal was made by the now deceased Jack Myers, one of the first officers to be arrested in a scandal that began last December.

Myers and his patrol partner, Ronald L. Venegas, were arrested by internal affairs investigators who caught them leaving a Hollywood

video equipment store with stolen merchandise.

Both men resigned shortly after their arrests and subsequently agreed to assist police and district attorney's investigators.

A source close to the investigation said Myers told investigators he could not remember how many burglaries he committed.

Pressed to estimate the number, he reportedly said it was "more than 150" during the two years he and Venegas were assigned as partners in a special burglary response unit.

Died in Auto Accident

Myers was killed in an auto accident May 12—but not before he had given detectives the names of 10 other Hollywood policemen involved in illegal activities.

The voluminous reports filed in court last week in the Balleweg case repeatedly refer to a conversation retired police officer William Harper reported having with Myers the day after Myers was arrested.

Please see POLICE, Page 18

POLICE: Papers Suggest Wider Scandal

Continued from First Page

Prosecutor Lipman said most of the statements Harper attributed to Myers were subsequently repeated by Myers to internal affairs investigators.

In the conversation with Harper, Myers said the scandal was "a hundred times worse than anyone thought."

According to the court documents, Myers also told Harper that the stealing started out "by policemen taking parking meters and coin boxes as souvenirs."

Myers then went on to say the illegal activities "also involved policemen picking up prostitutes on the boulevard and taking them up to the 'tree' (in Griffith Park)" for sexual activity that he said involved "half of the division."

In return for sexual favors, the police would not hassle the women during their solicitations, Myers said.

He reportedly told Harper that "the primary person who was involved in all of this was a sergeant" whom he referred to as the "main man" but did not identify.

Harper said Myers told him this sergeant gave him a set of burglary alarm keys to turn the alarms off. While he never mentioned the sergeant's name to Harper, Myers later told investigators he received the keys from Sgt. Bob Gibson, a court document states.

Gibson is under investigation by the district attorney's office for his alleged role in illegal activities but no criminal charges have been filed against him.

In other references to the so-called "main man," Myers reportedly told Harper:

"Once this unnamed sergeant had the policemen involved with the prostitutes, gambling and drinking, he had them in a position where they could not divulge other improprieties."

Description of procedure

According to a summary in one of the reports, the burglary activity worked this way:

"The unnamed sergeant would receive lists of desired merchandise from five or six other officers who were taking orders. He would then give the list to Balleweg who would go out and see which stores were carrying those items. Balleweg then would tell Myers, Venegas and Fisher which store to hit."

There were several ways the burglaries were committed, according to Myers and Venegas, who is continuing to assist authorities and will be the key witness now that Myers is dead.

One method was to answer burglar alarms that went off as the result of a real burglary or a mistake tripping of the alarm. They would take merchandise and report it stolen by burglars.

But their main method for burglarizing a location for desired merchandise was to themselves trigger the alarm by using a slingshot and a marble to bust a window.

The officers would then load their contraband into the police car and one would drive it to a personal car to transfer the loot. When the officer returned, he would bring coffee and donuts to account for his absence in case the store manager showed up.

On one occasion, the police-turned-burglars were almost tripped up when a patrol car driven by Venegas was involved in an auto accident.

The patrol car's trunk flew open, revealing stolen video equipment and numerous cassettes. Venegas said he quickly thought up the story that he was taking the items to the police station to check for fingerprints.

But the burglary capers came to an end last December, shortly after internal affairs investigators were tipped off by a former LAPD officer turned FBI informant.

In addition to the burglary ring and sex with minors, the cops in Hollywood (CA) were also extorting prostitutes for sexual favors. Jack Myers, who was killed in a very suspicious auto accident after he named at least 10 other officers who were involved in the criminal activity and for which none of them were convicted or served any time-told investigators about the routine for the cops who worked nights- "Policemen picked up prostitutes on the boulevard (Sunset) and took them up to the 'tree' in Griffith Park, where they had sex in exchange for not hassling the women during their 'solicitations.'" "

This sexual activity involved "half of the department" which means the other half knew about it and did nothing.

The sergeant mastermind of this criminal enterprise made certain that the cops whom he was recruiting into the ranks of crooked cops, got involved with the prostitutes, drinking on duty and gambling so that he had the 'goods' on them so he could trust them 'so they would not divulge other improprieties.'

Click on article to view the jpg image from the LA Times Archives June 14, 1982

COPS RAPE / EXTORT PROSTITUTES