

The Novato Historian

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Preserving Novato's History

Feature Section

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The Novato Historian

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The Rest of the Story Novato Police Department

By Michael Read

The Original Six Officers

Roy C McLaren — *October 22, 1960 to October 31, 1963*

McLaren would announce his resignation and accept a post with the International Association of Police in Washington D.C. on August 27, 1963. His salary as chief was \$9,372; he would receive \$11,000 a year in his new position. After six months he would receive \$12,000. His resignation was effective November 1, 1963.

In October 1963, there was a gathering of the five original Novato policemen and Chief McLaren at a Tomahawk Lodge dinner. Present were Chief Wayne Knuttila of Gridley and Chief Floyd Hollowell of Newport, Oregon, as well as McLaren and sergeants diGrazia, Mike Lafferty, and Glenn Wright.

Also that month there was a Halloween costume party at diGrazia's home in honor of Chief McLaren and his wife, Jane. Wives of Novato police gave Mrs. McLaren a portable mixer, and McLaren received a plaque bearing his badge and the names of members of the department. The original five officers presented him with an attaché case.

Robert diGrazia — *November 1, 1963 (acting chief) January 28, 1964 to November 15, 1969 (chief)*

Sgt. Robert diGrazia was named acting chief of the Novato police department on November 1, 1963, which raised his pay to \$675 a month to

start, which was \$92 a month more than his pay as a sergeant. (He was appointed sergeant on July 1, 1961.) His salary was gradually raised, with the last increase to \$1,325 per month.

Chief diGrazia, 41, would report to work November 24, 1969, at his new job as superintendent of police of St. Louis County, which had a population of one million — twice the number of people in Marin County and about 971,000 more than Novato. As police superintendent, he would administer a force of 500 men at a salary of \$2,083 a month. He headed a department with 26 sworn personnel, 6 clerk-dispatchers and 3 part-time police cadets. After St. Louis County, he would become Boston's chief of police in November 1972.

H. Floyd Hollowell — Hollowell was raised to sergeant's rank on November 1, 1962. He received \$529 monthly. He turned in his resignation to the city council, effective October 25, 1963. He would become the police chief of Newport, Oregon, on November 1, 1963. At the city council meeting, Mayor Babe Silva put up a fight about approving Hollowell's resignation as of October 25. "We ought to pay him off right now," he said angrily.

Wayne Knuttila — Resigned from the Novato department on August 14, 1962, to become the Chief of Police of Gridley. He would begin work in the Butte County community of 3,500 people on September 1, 1962. As head of a six-

man force he earned \$7,500 annually. In the two years that he was in Novato, he was active in the Peace Officers Research Association of California, the Lamba Delta Epsilon fraternity, the Marin County Peace Officers Association, the Catholic Men's Society of Our Lady of Loretto Church, the Boy Scouts of America, and the Air Force Association.

Asked after his reactions to his new job, Knutla said, "My feelings are mixed. On one hand, I'm going to hate to leave Novato. But on the other hand, the job of chief of police is the ultimate goal for any law enforcement officer." He had just finished building his new home at 1201 Simmons Lane.

Maurice Lafferty – Sergeant Lafferty would become a lieutenant on November 7, 1969, which meant a raise in pay to \$988. He was named acting chief on November 15, 1969, with a raise in pay to \$1,038. He did not qualify for Novato police chief because he had not held the rank of lieutenant or higher for two or more years. He was still a lieutenant by the time he left the force in the summer of 1972 to become Police Chief of Tiburon. (He helped found the city of Tiburon police department.) In 1975 he would quit his \$22,000 a year job to become coordinator of the Police Science Department for the College of Marin, receiving \$15,226 a year in his new post. He took the lower-paying job because he felt he would have more independence than he had as a police chief.

Glenn Wright – Wright was appointed lieutenant in October 1966 and was acting police chief in diGrazia's absence, and was the man in charge during the night hours. He would leave the force on December 29, 1969, after being arrested for drunk driving after a high-speed chase by Novato police and California Highway Patrol units. In the front seat alongside him was a female Novato police dispatcher. Wright was the father of 11 children at this time. The matter was hushed up and kept from the press. He would immediately resign.

History of the Department

July 1961 – Robert diGrazia would become Novato's first police sergeant, trained by Chief McLaren for a few weeks to take over the night shift. A new police officer, Donald Merkley, 26, would join the force at the same time, raising the number to six officers and Chief Roy

McLaren. By the end of the year, officers James Grassley and Walter Weidauer would join the department.

September 1961 – Ferne Isaacson, clerk dispatcher, took a temporary part-time job with the new Novato Police Department. The mother of five and grandmother of two at the time she was hired, she would work for the department for 22 years as secretary to all of Novato's police chiefs. At her retirement, three chiefs attended the dinner: Bill Kirpatrick and John Coleman of Novato and Bob diGrazia of Maryland. Half of the original six-man force was there, too. More than once during the party, attended by more than 120 people, Ferne was given cred-



*Ferne Isaacson
Clerk/Dispatcher*

it for running the department. Over the years she had kept a scrapbook of department events. In a way, she was the police department historian. "Sometimes I wish I had kept a diary," She said. "I never did think that I'd be working this long."

December 19, 1961 – The Novato Police Department would become one-year-old, one



Happy First Birthday

year to the day that Police Chief Roy McLaren and his five-man force were sworn in as Novato police officers. The force celebrated its first anniversary by logging its 2900th case.

August 15, 1962 – The force assembled in full dress uniform for a photograph, which would be handed over to Knutla.

September 5, 1962 – Police department files and equipment were moved from the railroad

year to the day that Police Chief Roy McLaren and his five-man force were sworn in as Novato police officers. The force celebrated its first anniversary

depot to the remodeled former Presbyterian Manse on Sherman Street next to the Presbyterian Church, now owned by the city. The depot would be kept by the city for storage and police material.

January 1963 – Patrolmen replaced the cloth caps with helmets that contained a polyurethane liner to give wearers added protection. Costing approximately \$20 each, the helmets were purchased at the officer's own expense. Painted blue and grey to match the rest of the Novato department uniform, the new head pieces had a life expectancy of about ten years.

February 1963 – Novato would have a 25-man police reserve force. The supplementary policemen would serve two 4-hour shifts per month. Chief McLaren said, "It has been two years of waiting to bring the reserve force into being. People appear to be interested in the



Moving in day—1962

November 1, 1963 – Sgt. Robert diGrazia was named acting chief of the Novato Police Department. City Administrator John Baget



Robert diGrazia, right, swearing-in ceremony in St. Louis

reported that the personnel firm of Griffenhagen - Kroeger, hired for \$750 to handle the recruitment of the new chief, estimated that 70 applications would be filed. There were 87 applications for the chief of police. The top five applicants would be interviewed by the City Council. Acting chief diGrazia was not in the top five applicants recommended for the position by the firm. The City Council had not been deeply impressed by the five men suggested by the firm, and would in executive session, interview diGrazia, and then hire him.

The rest of the 1960's – William Cann of Novato would become a Novato police officer in 1964 and would leave the force in 1969 as a sergeant. He would go on to become chief of police in Union City. Cann, 32, was shot in the neck in June 1974, when unidentified snipers opened fire through a church window at a gathering of department representatives and Hispanic citizens. Cann died August 29, 1974, without regaining consciousness. William Kirkpatrick would become police chief in Union City late in 1974.

Lt. Ronald Schanaker with the Novato Police Department since 1967 would leave the force in January 1978 to become police chief of Milwaukie, Ore., a Portland suburb of 18,000.

On November 15, 1969, Robert diGrazia leaves for St Louis and within a week's time, former Sergeant/Lieutenant/Acting Police Chief Maurice Lafferty, was selected by the City Council.

Lt. Allen V. Klemme. 40, of the South San



This 1968 picture of a Novato police car, gray and white with a red light on top, was taken during a driving evaluation course for Novato police officers. The course was conducted for the first time under the supervision of Sgt. Bill Cann.

idea of such reserves primarily at budget time or at moments of international crises. It's been a struggle, believe me." The reserve officers would not work alone, except for special assignments

Francisco police department, reported to work March 1 as Novato's new police chief. Selected by City Manager Charles Brown from a field of 51 candidates, Klemme took the post vacated in November by Robert diGrazia, 41, who left his \$15,900 job to become the \$25,000 per year police superintendent of St. Louis County.

Klemme who had been earning close to \$14,000 per year as South San Francisco commander of criminal investigation, would earn the comparable starting salary of \$1,144 per month in Novato as chief. He had been with the South San Francisco police department since August 1951, except for two years from 1952 to 1954 when he served as provost marshal investigator while serving in the Army. His appointment was ratified by the council 4-1 over the objections of Councilman Babe Silva, who voted in negative because he asserted the appointment should have gone to Lt. Maurice Lafferty, acting chief since diGrazia's departure.

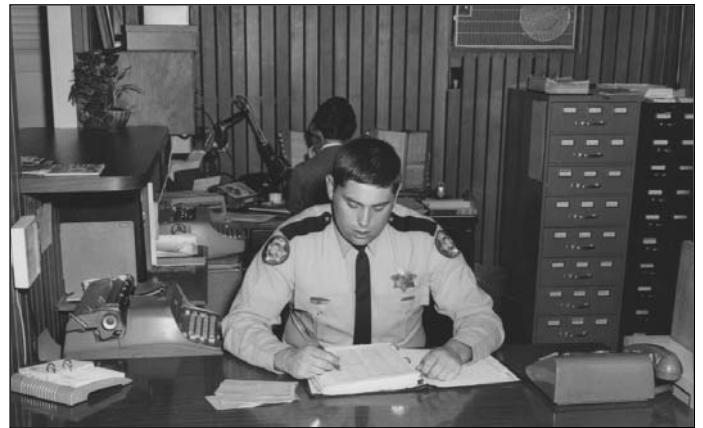


In 1969 Novato police get five new all-white patrol cars, instead of the two-tone vehicles. The patrol units also had a badge emblem on the front doors.

April 1970—A law enforcement Explorer Post was organized under sponsorship of the Novato police department. Charter members were Rod Perryman, David Higgins, Carl Wandt, Steven Stanley, William Decker, Charles Jones, Richard Soares, Mark Brown, Mike Carter, David Clucas and Rick LaSalle. Post 92 was under the direction of Sgt. Tony Stoutt and Robert Fisher, district scout executive.

July 31, 1973—Chief Klemme would leave the city. City Manager Charles Brown said that the city received 49 applications for the chief's job; he felt staff did not have the time that would be required for screening and selection of applicants. He recommended that Griffenhagen-Kroeger be retained for the job. The City Council would again hire that firm for \$2,000 to \$2,500.

August 1, 1973—John C. Coleman, 47, police chief of Brawley, California, was appointed Novato's fourth police chief at about 2:30 a.m. by City manager Charles Brown with the unanimous concurrence of the City Council. Technically, Brown did not need the concurrence of the council as he was still operating under the old Ordinance 34 which gave him sole power to hire and fire department heads.



Cadet Raymond Hill inside the small police station. with a dispatcher behind him.

Coleman came to Novato after three and one half years as police chief of Brawley, a desert city of 16,000, in Imperial county. Prior to 1970, Coleman spent 14 years with the Long Beach police department.

August 1975—The Crime Prevention and Youth Services units were added to the department. They were set up in still another former residence (Sousa / Hadden) across the street.

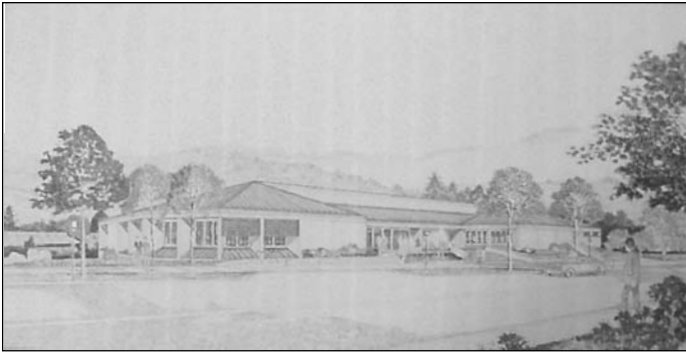
July 13, 1976—Novato City Council authorized the purchase of a one-acre downtown par-



Pictured left to right, Phillip Brown, Mayor David Milano, Harvey Yorke, Robert Stockwell, Robert Burke (obscured by dirt), Gail Wilhelm and Chief John Coleman

cel slated for a police and fire building, at a price of \$251,918. The parcel was located along Machin Avenue, between the Taco Bell and Pizza Hut restaurants, opposite the Community House.

December 4, 1977 – The city Council officially broke ground on the new \$2.1 million police station. At the ceremony, Chief Coleman said,



Novato's new \$2.7 million police facility.

referring to the present police station, "glad to get myself out of the bedroom, my secretary out of the dressing room, the detectives out of the attic and the communications equipment out of the women's restroom." Councilwoman Gail Wihelm acknowledged that the present facility "is the worst in the state ... but the department itself is the best in the state."

May 1978 – The long under-staffed Novato police department hired its first woman officer in the person of Nancy Ann Jensen, a 1972 graduate of Novato High School.

She was going to enter the Police Academy at Riverside later in the month. Jensen, a police aide in San Rafael, was the only one of five women applicants who was able to pass the agility test administered.

September 15, 1979 – Novato's new \$2.7 million police facility was dedicated in an Old Town celebration that included an arts and crafts show, hot air balloon rides, a bagpipe parade, costume contests, and a sidewalk sale. The new building has 14,980 square feet of working space. The building is meant to serve at least 25 years without any major alterations. It was built by ROMA architects of San Francisco and Novato architect Alan Dunham, at a cost of \$2,755,352. A federal public works grant paid \$901,000 of the cost.

June 1980 - Chief John Coleman would try

to reorganize the Novato Police Department. His reorganization would create another level of administration to facilitate operations within the department. The chief's rank would be followed by two new positions of captain (a new rank) and two lieutenants, instead of the then three. Under these positions there would be six instead of five sergeants. Coleman would draw disagreement from people for the loss of one line position for a bureaucratic (captain's) position. His plan would wait until 1982 under a new police chief.

July 1, 1980 – Chief Coleman announced his retirement from the position he has held for six years effective July 1, 1981. Coleman said that the early announcement would help effect an orderly transition of administration duties. "I have always planned to retire at age 55," Coleman said during the press conference.

William Kirkpatrick, 48, police chief at Union City, succeeded John Coleman as Chief of Police in Novato. He joined the Novato department on January 5, 1981 as assistant chief, a six-month position during the transition period. He would be promoted to chief on July 1, 1981, Chief Coleman's official retirement date. As head of the Union City Police Department, he earned about \$3,000 a month;



Novato Police Department, 1981

as Novato Chief he would earn \$2,850. He took the salary reduction for several reasons, among them the attractive rural surroundings in Novato, he said.

January 15, 1983 – Novato sculptor Ralph O'Neill would dedicate his marble sculpture

"The New Family" which would be placed in front of the Police Department. Funding for the \$11,040 sculpture was by the Buck Fund and private donations. The dedication was held in conjunction with the city's annual birthday celebration.

August 22, 1983 – A group photo was taken



Novato Police Department, 2005

of the police department in full uniform. All 62 officers, dispatchers, clerks, and administrative employees were at the station for the photo, that included 42 sworn officers.

March 14, 1985 – Chief Kirkpatrick, citing job stress, went on sick leave. During a telephone interview, he said his high blood pressure, insomnia, tenseness and stomach problems were caused by "an accumulation of things based on a differing management style and opinion from City Hall." After being the city's top law officer for the past 3½ years, he would file for disability retirement and would remain on leave until a ruling was made on his claim. Capt. Jerry Bennett would oversee the day-to-day department operations while the city sought a temporary replacement for the chief.

April 1985 – Bill Bartholomew, a former Davis police chief, was hired for a four-month interim period to work with the city on budget and contract matters. When he returned to retirement, the department's two captains, Brian Brady and Jerry Bennett, were chosen to rotate in the chief's position, serving two months at a time. Bennett came to Novato in July of 1969 and had begun his police career with the city of Pasadena in 1963. On October 24, 1985, Kirkpatrick would win disability retirement.

March 1, 1986 – Charles Brobeck, a veteran

with 24 years law enforcement experience, all in Marin County, became Novato police chief. He was a captain in charge of support services for the San Rafael Police Department. His salary would be \$4,316 a month. He began his law enforcement career as a police dispatcher in San Rafael before becoming an officer in Corte Madera. Brobeck would leave on January 10, 1992 for Irvine.

October 27, 1992 – Novato City Manager Rod Wood named Brian Brady Novato's new police chief. Since Brobeck's departure, Brady and Novato Police Capt. Jerry Bennett alternated as acting chief, with Brady serving in that capacity since April. Brady, a San Francisco native, had been in law enforcement for 23 years, beginning as a patrol officer in Berkeley. He would become a sergeant at Berkeley, a lieutenant in Baldwin Park in Los Angeles County and a captain in Farmington, N.M. He came to Novato in 1982 to become Administrative Services Commander when the department was reorganized. The new police chief was single, with two sons, Bo, 22 and Jim 19.

April 1999 – The first Novato Citizen's Police Academy was established by the Novato Police Department. It was a 10-week program where the citizens learned about police work from those who know it best – cops. The first class graduated on June 16, 1999.

March 2004 – Jennifer Tejada, a sergeant and eight-year veteran with the Novato Police Department, was promoted to lieutenant by interim Chief of Police Larry Todd. Tejada, who was born in New Ross, Ireland, phoned her mother, who still lives in the town, to tell her the news. In 2011, Tejada would become the Chief of Police for Sausalito.

December 6, 2004 – Joseph Kreins, 48, Sausalito's police chief for the past three years, would become our present chief of police. He replaces Scott Sibbald, who had been serving as acting chief for two months after interim chief Larry Todd left to resume retirement. The chief position had been open for more than a year since long-time chief Brian Brady went on medical leave, then retired. Kreins has been married to his wife, Colleen, for more than 20 years. The couple has a son, Joseph, 22, and a daughter, Emily, 20. He said, "I am really excited about coming to Novato."