

Guest Column: Law enforcement is under siege

May 1, 2022



Today, I'm in Southern California to pay homage to the memory of a fallen law enforcement officer murdered two decades ago.

Law enforcement is an honorable, exemplary, and potentially life-changing career to those who serve, and to those who are served. Officers who dedicate their lives in public service do so at great peril. Law enforcement is dangerous work.

My column takes a somber turn this week. Law enforcement is under siege.

Those professionals who serve the Crescent City Police, Del Norte County Sheriff, California Highway Patrol, District Attorney, National and State Parks, Fish and Wildlife, and all who take an oath and serve in federal agencies are exceptional individuals and worthy of our highest praise, appreciation, and respect. The women and men who serve and protect us are truly very special people.

The climate for all who wear the badge has turned toxic by a loud, obnoxious, aggressive and oft-times violent group of individuals who have and continue to display zero respect for law enforcement officers, and

besmirch those who swear a Constitutional Oath to protect the community.

It seems like just a few months ago but 20 years have passed since my dear friend Los Angeles County Deputy Sheriff David William March was murdered in Irwindale (End of Watch April 29, 2002).

Deputy March was on routine LASD patrol out of the San Gabriel Valley Temple Station when he pulled over a vehicle operated by the “worst of the worst” – an individual who had vowed his intent that fateful morning to “... to kill a cop.” And he did. This three-times deported and twice-convicted illegal alien drug dealer was the face and embodiment of pure evil.

Deputy March lost his life when the felon leaped from his vehicle and opened fire. A single bullet struck the deputy’s chest protector, knocking him to the pavement. With depraved indifference, the seven-year veteran deputy was coldly assassinated with multiple shots to the head.

After committing this heinous act, the killer fled to Mexico for 4-½ years, hid out in the open while the Los Angeles County District Attorney and Mexican authorities squabbled over the Death Penalty.

Decades later, this murderer languishes in a CDCR facility on a life-without-parole sentence. I vowed never to utter his name and I won’t now. May he never see, smell, taste or experience the fresh air of freedom for the rest of his natural life.

Deputy Sheriff David William March was an extraordinary young man who I met while he was in the Academy in 1995. His life was cut down at age 33, just days before he was to be transferred to Santa Clarita, his home station. Dave is survived by wife Teri and a daughter, parents John and Barbara March and sister Erin.

Good friend, retired Santa Clarita Mayor / City Councilman and retired LAPD Officer Bob Kellar helped Deputy March negotiate the screening process for LASD hire. Words fall short in describing Dave’s character: Stellar would be a modest understatement. Dave’s motto which ultimately became the LASD Creed says it all:

“I will always be painfully honest and work as hard as I can and hopefully make a difference in peoples’ lives.”

Dave March made a difference to many he came into contact with, including me. After Dave’s murder, I formed a local Minuteman chapter in Santa Clarita, not to carry a gun but to persuade the moribund Santa Clarita City Council to engage rampant illegal immigration that occurs with no benefit to the community.

Except for Kellar, the rest of the city council was useless. I remember Councilwoman Marsha McLean criss-crossing her arms telling me there was nothing the city council could do and suggested I contact U.S. Rep. Buck McKeon for assistance.

Outrageous! Elected officials like the councilwoman bring shame and disrepute to the rule of law.

Decades later, our Southern border remains pathetically porous. Homeland Security Title 42 prevents countless thousands of unvetted illegal aliens to enter the United States. Now, President Biden promises to lift Title 42. Irresponsible and shocking!

The 24-hour, two Deputy sentry begins paying homage to Deputy March at 12:01 a.m., April 29, on Live Oak Blvd, a quarter mile east of Myrtle Ave In Irwindale.

David William March EOW 4/29/2002.

Roger Gitlin is a former Juvenile Court School teacher, a former resident of the Santa Clarita area, and was twice elected to the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors in District 1.