

*The book is a recounting of the author's varied experiences occurring during the early 1980s when he served as a police patrol officer, hostage negotiator, and crime scene investigator in one of the most violent cities in California.*

**Beach Blanket Bedlam:  
Volume Two in the Service with a Sneer Chronicles**  
By John J. Lamb

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Volume Two in the  
*Service With a Sneer*  
Chronicles

# BEACH BLANKET BEDLAM

JOHN J. LAMB

## **Books by John J. Lamb:**

San Diego Specters

Echoes of the Lost Order

The Mournful Teddy

The False-Hearted Teddy

The Crafty Teddy

The Clockwork Teddy

The Treacherous Teddy

Service With a Sneer

Beach Blanket Bedlam

Coming in 2026:

Bring Out Your Dead

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**WARNING: KEEP OUT OF THE REACH OF  
MARSHMALLOW PEOPLE AND SNOWFLAKES.  
IF INGESTED, DO NOT INDUCE VOMITING.**

Welcome to the second installment of my mordant memoirs. Volume One ended with my departure from the Riverside County Sheriff's Department in Southern California. The story resumes with my transfer to the Oceanside Police Department in San Diego County and covers the period from January 1982 until the late spring of 1984. The stories and incidents are from my days working as a patrol officer, hostage negotiator and, later, Crime Scene Investigator (CSI).

Back in the early 1980s, downtown Oceanside was a violent and anarchic blend of gun-slinging, saloon-brawling Dodge City and *The Walking Dead*, with assorted drug addicts and homeless lunatics chewing up the scenery in the roles of zombies. The undermanned police department was given a mission by the city council to reclaim the streets from the criminal element by pretty much any means necessary. This was in an era before body cameras existed. You cannot imagine the fun I had night after night!

It's probably wise to begin again with a brief, cautionary reminder. If you're a SNAG (Sensitive New Age Guy or Gal), and prone to becoming upset and offended by descriptions of bloody murder scenes, brutal hand-to-hand street combat, the casual infliction of corporal punishment on resisting offenders, aberrant sexual behavior held up for ruthless mockery, ridicule of the mentally ill, corpses employed as props in comedy routines, and a pervasive theme of jolly disdain for humanity, don't read any further.

Just don't.

And, no, this isn't a bit of clumsy reverse psychology intended to goad you into reading this stroll down memory alley. *Service With a Sneer* contained some horrible events and imagery. Yet, that first

volume is like *Anne of Green Gables* in comparison to some of the cruel and appalling things you'll find in the pages ahead.

It's also important to warn of the verbal microaggressions that are an intrinsic part of the narrative. When people disobeyed our instructions, we often called them insulting, obscene, and hurtful names. We also threatened folks with physical violence in the secret hope that this would make the actual lumping of their melons unnecessary. In addition, we mercilessly mocked those who demonstrated a fundamental lack of common sense, or basic awareness of the laws of natural selection.

Also, remember that these are true stories. If I had tried to submit these tales as fiction, they'd have been instantly rejected as contrived and unbelievable. Furthermore, as in the first book, I've used people's real names whenever possible. Sometimes, full disclosure of a name isn't doable. In those cases, the names are marked with an asterisk.

There are three reasons for this. Often, my old friends requested that I employ a pseudonym to conceal their identity. This wasn't because the event demonstrated wrongdoing on their part. It's just that they value their hard-won anonymity and have no wish to return to any level of public attention.

The second reason that subterfuge is necessary is that I worked for and with some real gutter trash – people who had no business being in possession of a police badge. I don't believe humans can change so the odds are almost a hundred-to-one that they are still scumbags. I've disguised their identities to avoid the potential of a nuisance lawsuit...not that the accounts aren't true.

My third motivation for disguising true names is that I'm becoming a softie in my old age, and don't want to hurt people who've never done me any harm. Some of the characters who are featured in unflattering situations are dead. They can't complain about how they've been portrayed yet they have surviving family members,

descendants, and friends who would be unnecessarily hurt by the tales. *They* weren't cowards, stooges, or pinheads so why should they bear the onus of that behavior?

Finally, I ask the reader to reflect on one thing. These episodes occurred over forty years ago. You might become indignant by how cops sometimes resolved problems back then but I ask a question.

Answer truthfully.

Do you think 376 peace officers from that era would have stood by, clueless, cowardly, and incapable of action, while some evil motherfucker armed with a rifle took his sweet time murdering a bunch of young children in a Texas elementary school?

You and I both know the answer. There'd have been a stampede to get into that school to send that bastard to hell. We'd have pumped so much lead into that malignant son-of-a-bitch that the Environmental Protection Agency would have designated his body a Superfund Site.

Maybe that explains why I offer no apologies for this politically incorrect history. We might have been quick to resort to violence but we weren't errant cowards and we took care of business. As far as I'm concerned, you can't ask much more out of a cop.

## GLOSSARY

As with many professions, cop work has its own argot. We often employed colorful language that was a mishmash of penal and vehicle code sections, Vietnam War lingo, police radio terminology, and macabre humor. Many of these expressions were common throughout Southern California while others were specific to Oceanside. Rather than repeatedly interrupt the flow of the narratives with explanations, a glossary seemed like a good idea. Some of the terms appeared in *Service with a Sneer* but I thought it couldn't hurt to include them as a sort of refresher.

**Adam Henry:** A sanitized version of “asshole.” It is derived from the California police phonetic alphabet. A = Adam = Ass. H = Henry = Hole.

**A.D.W.:** Assault with a Deadly Weapon. Also known as “Two-Forty-Five” from the California Penal Code Section 245(a).

**A.G.M.I.:** Ain't Gonna Make It. Used to describe the status of a person who has sustained grievous injuries and is almost certainly going to die.

**A.L.F.D.:** Asshole Looking for Drugs. A prescription pain medication addict who visits a hospital emergency room claiming bogus injuries or illness in the hopes of scoring some opiates. When the Vicodin or Percocet wasn't forthcoming, the ALFD would often cause a disturbance, which led to the police being called. Usually, by the time the cops were finished dealing with the ALFD, he genuinely did need pain medication.

**Angel Dust:** Phencyclidine (PCP). A powerful hallucinogen that reduced the user's capacity to feel pain, while increasing his strength. Modern day young cops gruffly assert that the effects of K2 and bath salts are exactly like PCP. They couldn't be more wrong. Comparing the effects of those lightweight drugs with PCP is the difference

between a brisk breeze, ideal for kite-flying, and a Category 4 hurricane.

**ARJIS:** Automated Regional Justice Information System. A databank operated by the San Diego Sheriff's Department containing crime report and arrest information submitted by all county law enforcement agencies. Even though the computers were primitive, (CRT monitors with black screens and day-glow green, dot-matrix style text) ARJIS was a cutting-edge (for the time) technology. (Pronounced: AR-jiss)

**Attaboy:** A written commendation for superior performance. Since an attaboy requires a police supervisor to a) possess the ability to recognize quality cop work and b) be willing to invest a couple of minutes of effort to produce the narrative, these documents are as rare as lawyers in heaven. An attaboy had absolutely no mitigation value in the event of receiving an aw shit. (See: Aw Shit)

**Attitude Adjustment:** The brief infliction of low-grade corporal punishment for the purpose of improving the behavior of an offender who refuses to obey instructions.

**Aw Shit:** A written reprimand for deficient performance, disobedience of rules, misconduct, or simply because a supervisor had a hard-on for an employee. Aw shits were like tattoos. You were usually stuck with them forever.

**B:** A street walking prostitute. Plural: Bs. It derives from Section 647(b) of the California Penal Code, the law prohibiting prostitution. (See: On the Stroll)

**Bad Attitude:** A generic expression employed by police management to describe an employee who possesses an accurate view of the moronic and often self-aggrandizing reasons underpinning bad decisions made by the big bosses. People with Bad Attitudes seldom, if ever, see the "Big Picture."

**Badge Heavy:** An affliction that ordinarily affects younger cops, which is primarily manifested in the belief that the presence of a police badge imparts superpowers to the wearer. Symptoms include arrogance, the absolute conviction that they can win any physical fight, a complete inability to laugh at oneself, and the irrational belief that he/she should receive deferential treatment from the citizenry. Most cops begin to recover after a few years on the job but some will struggle with the disease for their entire careers.

**Beat Feet:** To physically run. The image is of shoe soles beating against the pavement.

**Bernie:** The name given to a burned corpse whose identity hasn't yet been determined. (See: Crispy Critter)

**Big Picture:** Whenever a street cop pointed out that a police manager had embarked on some unnecessary or ill-conceived project, the standard response from the administrator was to dismissively declare that the officer didn't see the "big picture." The inference was that the cop lacked perspective or simply wasn't bright enough to recognize the innate wisdom and benefits of the endeavor. The big bosses never seemed to understand that cops *did* see the big picture and recognized it for what it was: a police iteration of *Santa Claus Conquers the Martians*.

**Black and White Fever:** A mental dysfunction that causes drivers to slow down to 22 mph in a 35-mph zone when they see a police car. It refers to the black and white color scheme of many police vehicles.

**Bob:** A deceased drowning victim still bobbing in the water.

**B.O.L.:** Be On Lookout. Pronounced B-O-L. No one at OPD ever used "Bolo."

**Bus Therapy:** Many vagrants are borderline crazy, (See: Fifty-One-Fifty) yet aren't sufficiently deranged to be committed to the county bughouse. When officers grew weary of dealing with such a nuisance, they would sometimes pool their money to buy the

troublemaker a bus ticket. Whether the screwball wanted to be relocated was academic. He was placed on the bus and warned never to return. Los Angeles, Fresno, and Yuma, Arizona were popular destinations.

**Butt Boy:** An ambitious and amoral officer who'd strip the skin from his mother's back to make a drum with which to beat the praises of his current police management sponsor. Invariably useless when called upon to perform actual police work. (See: Remora)

**Canary:** An abbreviated iteration of "mine canary." A term used by firefighters to describe police officers who rush pell-mell into possible hazmat situations without proper equipment or training. While potentially lethal to the cop, this is beneficial for the firefighters since it provides them with a safe method of assessing the hazards of a disaster scene.

**Can of Worms:** An archaic expression to describe a confusing and time-wasting situation that cannot be resolved by uttering the magical incantation: It's a civil problem. (See: Civil)

**Car Clout:** Back in antediluvian times, people installed up-market sound systems and pricey cassette players in their motor vehicles. When a burglar broke into the car to steal the equipment it was known as a "car clout."

**Check The Welfare:** When people are too lazy to personally check on a family member who has ceased communication, they call the police. The best outcome is that your time is wasted when the person who is being sought informs you that the reason there has been no contact is because he/she told his/her family to go piss up a rope. The worst-case scenario is that nobody answers the door, you see dozens of flies on the inside of the window, and you catch a whiff of the unmistakable stink of decomposing human flesh.

**Choir Practice:** An after-hours gathering of cops for the purpose of drinking alcoholic beverages, venting about exasperating

experiences, and telling war stories. Derives from former Los Angeles PD officer Joseph Wambaugh's 1975 sad and hilarious novel, *The Choirboys*. Modern day cops are mostly cyber anchorites so the term is now obsolete and forgotten. That's a shame because, while there certainly was the chance the drinking could become problematic, I also believe the opportunity to safely express anger, fear, and frustration was of genuine therapeutic benefit.

**Citizens:** The name used by cops to describe members of the public. It has essentially the same semantic value as "assholes," but has a more professional ring.

**Civil:** Most people are miserly bastards. Unwilling to pop for a lawyer, they call the cops for free advice on all sorts of issues that have nothing to do with violations of criminal law. My answer to all queries of this nature was, "Sorry dude/lady, this is a civil problem. You need to get a lawyer."

**Clan Lab:** Short for Clandestine (Drug) Laboratory. Forty years ago, northern San Diego County was the methamphetamine manufacturing capital of the local galactic arm. Cops didn't have access to hazmat suits, nor were there specialized response teams. When we found an abandoned or burned-out lab, we simply went inside to make sure there weren't any dead bodies and then notified the county Narcotics Task Force. Christ only knows how many carcinogens we were exposed to. Sometimes, I'm amazed I don't have tumors the size of Pomeranian puppies growing from my body.

**Clear Leather:** How a cop referred to pulling his/her gun from its holster in the line of duty. In many departments nowadays, police supervisors must complete a lengthy "Use of Force" report whenever a subordinate produces his/her firearm, regardless of whether the firearm is pointed at a suspect or discharged. How times change. We cleared leather so frequently in the 1980s that, if that reporting procedure had been in place back then, the sergeants would have had



spent the bulk of each shift producing nothing but such CYA documents. The term is now archaic due to a) many law enforcement agencies having implemented recklessly stupid use-of-force policies, b) too many modern cops blindly obeying those suicidal rules, and c) most current police holsters being composed of hard plastic. (See: CYA.)

**CLEMARS:** California Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Radio System. Pronounced CLAY-mars. An obsolete and defunct special radio frequency that allowed cops from different agencies to communicate directly.

**Code Four:** The situation is secure.

**Code Five:** Stake-out.

**Code Six:** Out of the patrol vehicle, investigating an incident or crime.

**Code Seven:** Meal Break.

**Code Eight:** Bathroom Break. In all my years as a cop, I only ever heard one officer use that code and he shouldn't have. Your coworkers *really* don't need to know that you'll be out of service because you're talking a leak.

**Code Thirty-Three:** Clear the air for emergency traffic.

**Code Thirty-Seven Frank:** A felony arrest warrant.

**Contempt of Cop:** Disrespectful or provocative behavior on the part of an offender toward a police officer that does not rise to the level of an actual violation of law, which results in an arrest for a low-grade crime that is unlikely to pass prosecutorial muster. Sometimes referred to as "Failing the Attitude Test" or P.O.P. (Pissing Off the Police).

**Crispy Critter:** A person burned to death. Adding to the gruesomeness, Crispy Critters were a children's sugary breakfast cereal produced by the Post Cereal Company back in the 1960s. Once you've smelled a crispy critter, you will forever after associate the aroma with that of burned pork ribs on the barbecue.

**C.T.D.:** Circling the Drain. Identical to A.G.M.I.

**Cup of Soup:** Unique to OPD. Used to describe a decomposing dead body that has been shut up inside a sealed motor vehicle during summertime months.

**Curb-to-Curb Carom:** A description of how a Deuce might operate a motor vehicle as it weaves back and forth across the highway. (See: Deuce)

**Cut Paper:** Write a crime report. Archaic.

**C.Y.A.:** Cover Your Ass. Usually applied to reports or documents generated upon the instructions of police management for the sole purpose of reducing the city and department's exposure to civil lawsuits. Secondary meaning of California Youth Authority, the state organization that rode herd on felons considered too young and tender to be sent to places like Folsom or Q.

**Days on the Beach:** Disciplinary days off.

**D.B.:** Dead Body.

**Deuce:** A drunk driver. It alludes to the old and obsolete Section 502 of the California Vehicle Code. The current code is 23152(a) yet cops still refer to the charge as "deuce."

**Dirtbag:** A petty criminal or troublemaker. Instead of referring to the recalcitrant character as an "asshole" or "fuck-stick," dirtbag was used as a PG-13 alternative. This was a pointless circumlocution since it was usually delivered as "fucking dirtbag."

**D.R.T.:** Dead Right There. Used to describe a person so thoroughly dead that there was no point in calling for the paramedics.

**Drag Strip:** Unique to OPD. Approximately two blocks of North Hill Street dominated by transvestite streetwalking prostitutes.

**Driving by Braille:** Being so intoxicated behind the wheel that the vehicle is driven continuously along the raised plastic dots that delineate traffic lanes so as to avoid the dreaded Curb-to-Curb Carom. (See: Deuce)

**Drop a Dime:** To report damaging information about another person. This really is an obsolete term. It alludes to the long-vanished era of the pay telephone, and an even earlier time when you could make a call for a dime.

**D.S.S.:** Didn't See Shit. Used to describe the sort of uncooperative victim/witness at a drive-by shooting or violent assault occurring in a crime-ridden neighborhood.

**Duster:** A person under the influence of angel dust.

**D.W.O.:** Driving While Old. An elderly person who is operating a motor vehicle in a hazardous fashion.

**Eat Your Gun:** To commit suicide.

**Eight-Thirty-Two:** To declare oneself "eight-thirty-two" was a verbal secret handshake among off-duty Southern California cops. It meant you were a fellow officer. It alluded to Section 832 of the California Penal Code, which provided statutory classifications for peace officers.

**Eighty-Forty-Four the Door:** Kick or smash open a door. It alludes to Section 844 of the California Penal Code, which defines how a building can be breached while in hot pursuit of a criminal.

**Eighty-Seven:** Short for 10-87, the radio code for rendezvous.

**Eleven-Five:** Under the influence of opiates, hallucinogens, or methamphetamine. It derives from Section 11550 of the California Health and Safety Code, which allows officers to arrest offenders for merely being under the influence of drugs. Actual intoxication isn't a requirement. Sometimes employed to describe the thinking processes that led a police supervisor to make a cretinous decision.

**Eleven-Forty-One (11-41):** Request for paramedics. San Diego County law enforcement agencies employed an Eleven code for certain calls.

**Eleven-Forty-Four (11-44):** Dead Body.

**Eleven-Forty-Five (11-45):** Suicide.

**Eleven-Eighty (11-80):** Traffic Collision involving major injury or death. Derives from the California Highway Patrol's Eleven Code.

**Eleven-Eighty-One (11-81):** Traffic collision involving minor injuries.

**Eleven-Eighty-Two (11-82):** Traffic collision with no injuries.

**Eleven-Eighty-Five (11-85):** Tow truck request.

**Eleven-Ninety-Nine (11-99):** The ultimate call for help. If an officer broadcasts an 11-99, it means that the cop believes he/she is in immediate danger of losing their life. Any peace officer in the vicinity (including those from other agencies) will respond at breakneck speed to provide backup.

**E.O.S.:** End of Shift. The conclusion of the workday.

**Excuse Me Lights:** The rear-facing, flashing yellow lamps on the police light bar. When blasting past a citizen at high speed while responding to a low-priority call, it's hoped the lights will convey this message: Sorry for blowing your doors off but I'm on my way to a very important call. Really.

**F:** Public intoxication. It derives from Section 647(f) of the California Penal Code. It is both a noun (*That F I just popped is in the holding cell.*) and an adjective (*That fuck-stick was so F he didn't know what continent he was on.*”).

**F.B.I.:** The Federal Bureau of Investigation. Most cops held that the initials actually stood for Famous But Incompetent. Other labels included the Feds, FB-One, Fee-Bees, and Junior G-Men. As patrol cops, the only time we interacted with FBI agents was when they wandered into a bank two hours after a robbery had occurred. With their pompous behavior and complete lack of street smarts, we viewed FBI agents with amused contempt.

**Felony Flyers:** Athletic shoes worn by criminal offenders. Incredibly, some crooks used to degrade the escape capabilities of their

footwear by wearing tennis shoes that had tiny flashing lights inset on the sides of the soles. (See: Felony Stupid)

**Felony Hot Stop:** The method used to remove potentially armed felons from a stopped motor vehicle. This involved pointing every police firearm at the suspect vehicle and loudly promising a re-creation of the Battle of Okinawa if any of the crooks did anything stupid. Marshmallow Person/Snowflake Alert: Forty years ago, we made certain the car was indeed empty by using the driver/suspect as a human shield when we approached the vehicle. This technique was taught at police academies and was OPD policy.

**Felony Stupid:** Very stupid indeed. It was universally applied to citizens, victims, witnesses, crooks, other cops, lawyers, judges, and police administrators.

**F.I.:** Field Interview. A form filled out by a cop to document an encounter with a suspicious character. The information was subsequently entered into the ARJIS system.

**Fifty-One-Fifty:** A lunatic. Alludes to Section 5150 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code which authorizes the involuntary commitment of maniacs. Sometimes pronounced “Five-One-Five-Oh.”

**Five From the Sky:** A tongue-in-cheek riff on “Three from the Ring” (see below) to describe striking a violent and resisting offender with multiple overhand blows from a nightstick.

**Fix-It Ticket:** A traffic citation that is usually issued for a minor vehicle equipment offense, such as an inoperable headlight or a cracked windshield. The citation will not result in a court appearance or a momentary fine if the driver makes the required fix and then gets an officer to sign the back of the ticket attesting to the repair. I’ve long suspected that the paper upon which the fix-it ticket is printed contains chemicals that dramatically lower human IQ. This is the only explanation for why people who wanted their ticket signed off engaged

in idiotic behavior, such as slamming on the brakes of their car, and jumping from the vehicle, while waving their arms frantically at me to stop. My first reaction was that some violent crime had just been committed or perhaps there was someone dying in the car's backseat. Imagine my joy when the pinhead presented the fix-it ticket. Topping that was the time a guy followed me into a public restroom and asked me to sign-off on the ticket while I stood at the urinal.

**Four-Fifteen:** A disturbance of the peace. Derives from Section 415 of the California Penal Code.

**Four-Five-Nine:** Burglary. Derived from Section 459 of the California Penal Code. Primarily a noun but sometimes employed as a verb (i.e., *The dude four-five-nined a couple of houses*).

**Fourth Waiver:** An adjective used to describe a parolee or probationer who had waived his Fourth Amendment rights as a term of his release. This meant the person and his premises could be searched anytime, anywhere. A useful legal harassment tool employed to obtain information about other wanted felons.

**FUBAR:** Fucked Up Beyond All Recognition. Originated during the Second World War. Most often used as an adjective but sometimes employed as a verb.

**Fuck-Stick:** An artificial penis or dildo. By the early 1980s, fuck-stick had largely replaced asshole as the favorite term of contempt to describe a troublemaker or police administrator.

**G.O.A.:** Gone On Arrival. The person, animal, or object sought was not there when the cop arrived. Usually accompanied by U.T.L.

**Green Greyhound:** A large passenger bus operated by the U.S. Border Patrol that was periodically stationed in Oceanside to collect illegal aliens detained by the police.

**Graybar Hotel:** County Jail. (See: VDF)

**Gut Bomb:** A doughnut. Sometimes referred to as a Gut Grenade.

**Haldol Shuffle:** Most 5150s never received anything that might be considered actual mental health treatment. Instead, they were given a big-ass injection of the psychotropic drug Haldol and promptly released from the nut house. The medication didn't make the looney-tunes any less crazy but it did temporarily reduce the chances of them acting on their wacky impulses. It also caused the patient to walk with a distinctive, and immediately identifiable, shambling gait.

**H.B.D.:** Had Been Drinking.

**Hook and Book:** To arrest someone. Hooks were handcuffs. The expression was usually employed to describe a particularly busy shift where an officer had made multiple arrests. (i.e., *Man, it's been nothing but hooking and booking since I went Ten-Eight.*)

**Hot Sheet:** Before there were such things as NCIC-connected computers in cop cars, and automated license plate readers, there was the no-tech hot sheet. It was a simple typewritten list, distributed at the patrol briefing, that contained the license plates and descriptions of recently stolen and/or wanted vehicles. Cops would fold up the sheets and attach them to the small notepad holders in their units. That way, the list could be checked immediately. Primitive? Maybe. Effective? Absolutely.

**H.U.A.:** Head Up Ass. Refers to a bad or inattentive driver of a motor vehicle.

**I.A.:** Internal Affairs. This can refer to the I.A. Unit, the I.A. investigator, or the complaint itself. (i.e., *Can you believe this shit? I got an I.A. for rudeness.*)

**Invoked:** The suspect has declared his/her intent to remain silent and answer no questions. The expression "lawyer up" was never used in Southern California during my years as a cop.

**In the Wind:** Suspect has fled. Sometimes shortened to "I.T.W."

**I.O.D.:** Injured on Duty.

**Keep The Peace:** A dispatched radio assignment most often connected with the break-up of a marriage or cohabitating relationship. He wants his property. She claims she doesn't have it. Maybe she has a new boyfriend and he threatens to kick the old beau's ass. The cops get called to stand by, and make sure that nobody starts a fight. How well does it all work? Just remember how successful UN Peacekeepers have been in places like Rwanda and Bosnia.

**Kel-Lite:** A flashlight composed of heavy-duty aluminum that also provided splendid service as a blunt force trauma weapon, and a device with which to smash open car windows.

**Kibble 'N Bits:** Possibly unique to OPD. The bone and tissue detritus from a serious gunshot wound, usually to the head. Derives from Kibble 'N Bits dog food.

**Kiss Off:** Fail to handle a call for service properly. This sometimes resulted in another cop being later sent to the scene to unravel the mess left by the "Kiss-Off Artist."

**Lance Corporal Schmuckatelli:** A Marine Corps expression used at OPD. Schmuckatelli was the invented name given to the personification of a young marine who consistently found himself in trouble due to making abysmally bad decisions. Thus, any Marine who did something brain-numbingly stupid, or recklessly dangerous, was christened Lance Corporal Schmuckatelli.

**Liar For Hire:** A defense attorney.

**LT:** Pronounced EL-tee. Veteran officers employed LT as a quasi-respectful appellation for a lieutenant.

**Mad Dog:** To glare threateningly at someone. As the years passed, and the culture grew coarser, "mad dog" passed out of fashion to be replaced by "eye fuck."

**Midnight Basketball:** A sardonic rejoinder by street cops whenever a city politician began blathering about invariably illusory methods to reduce juvenile crime. The imbecilic notion was that if the



basketball courts were lit up all night, the juveniles and young adults would stop committing crime, and devote themselves to improving their chances to play in the NBA. What actually happened was that nobody ever played B-ball and the dope dealers found the improved illumination a boon to drug sales.

**Minimum Performance Expectations:** A camouflaged label for traffic ticket quotas for patrol officers. Yes, Virginia, there were traffic ticket quotas – although you’d never get a police supervisor to admit there was such a practice. You might arrest twenty felons and thirty-five misdemeanants in a month but God forbid if you did not write enough traffic citations. Why? Revenue for city coffers. In California, cities got a cut of every fine levied for a ticket. How many tickets were enough? Supervisors never said because providing a number proved the existence of a quota, which was illegal.

**Mirandize:** To advise a suspect of her/his constitutional rights as per the *Miranda v. Arizona* ruling.

**Morning Watch Mormons:** Tweaker burglars on bicycles who cruised the city streets after midnight. (See: Tweaker)

**N.H.I. Caper:** No Human Involvement. Used to describe a murder where the victim, suspect, and witnesses all require DNA tests to prove that they qualify as actual human beings. Also known as Misdemeanor Murder.

**N.I.G.Y.S.O.B.:** Acronym for Now I’ve Gotcha You Son-of-a-Bitch. Pronounced NIGGY-sob. Unique to OPD. A term used to describe retaliatory or vengeful actions implemented by a malevolent police manager against an officer who has failed to demonstrate an appropriate level of slavish loyalty.

**Obs:** Likely archaic. It meant you had someone or something under observation. (i.e., *I’ve got obs on the suspect vehicle.*)

**Office Pogues:** A scornful term applied to alleged police officers who found the streets too frightening and subsequently secured quiet

and safe daytime employment as armed clerks and public relations flaks.

**One-Eighty-Two:** Criminal conspiracy. Deriving from California Penal Code Section 182. Often used by cops to describe police command staff meetings.

**One-Eighty-Seven:** Homicide. Derived from California Penal Code Section 187.

**On-Site Arrest:** Obsolete term to describe a crime personally witnessed by the officer that resulted in an apprehension.

**On the Stroll:** A term used by streetwalking prostitutes and cops to describe hookers being open for business as they loitered or meandered along the sidewalk.

**Open Mike:** Sometimes a police radio microphone is activated unintentionally and it can be the funniest episode of the evening. That is as long as you aren't the cop a) talking about wanting to bed the sexy new records clerk, b) how big an imbecile your sergeant is, or c) pounding a suspect like veal at the conclusion of a foot pursuit.

**PAL:** Parolee at Large. A released convict who has violated the terms of his parole, and is, therefore, wanted by law enforcement.

**Payday Weekend:** The Marines received their wages on the first and fifteenth days of the month. When payday fell in conjunction with a weekend, it meant that downtown was going to resemble the Visigoth sack of Rome and that work was going to be extra fun.

**Ped Check:** To contact and detain a pedestrian engaged in suspicious activity for the purpose of conducting an investigative stop.

**Pencil Fuck:** The process by which a skilled supervisor assembles the documentary evidence necessary to encourage a lazy and recalcitrant officer to either improve his/her field performance or seek out an assignment on another shift led by a less diligent manager.

**Pillage Village:** As far as I know, unique to OPD. A residence or apartment occupied by methamphetamine addict squatters who were also thieves and burglars.

**P-One:** Like most California departments, OPD used the CHP Form 555 to report traffic collisions. The first person listed on the form is the driver deemed most responsible for the crash. Hence, P-One. If a cop crashed a police vehicle, being listed as P-One could result in disciplinary action.

**P.O.V.:** Personally Owned Vehicle, as opposed to a department car.

**P.R.:** Pound and Release. The primary method for breaking up the large fights that routinely erupted on the downtown streets of Oceanside.

**Priors:** Previous convictions for crimes

**Q:** San Quentin State Penitentiary.

**Red Liner:** Unique to OPD. The red liner was a confidential written memorandum. The name is derived from the original format of the document, which had a red line across the top of the page. It later came to describe any form of secret information.

**Remora:** A sneaky, sycophantic police officer who possesses little talent for law enforcement work but management nonetheless finds useful for service as a snitch. Not brave enough to be considered a Butt Boy. Refers to the tiny fish that clean the teeth of sharks.

**Riki-Tik:** To hurry or accomplish something quickly. A Vietnam War expression deriving from a Rudyard Kipling story about a speedy mongoose named Rikki-Tikki-Tavi. (i.e., *The LT says you better take care of your timesheet riki-tik.*)

**Righteous:** Back in the early 1980s the word was used as an amplifier, probably deriving from it being a synonym for “honest.” Righteous meant “unquestionably” or “undeniably.” Now obsolete. (i.e., *That guy is a righteous scumbag.*)

**ROAD:** Retired on Active Duty. A term used to describe a slothful officer who is employed by a police agency yet doesn't actually perform any labor.

**Rock:** Processed cocaine. For whatever reason, the expression "crack" wasn't used in Southern California. Cops and crooks alike called it "rock." (See: Slinging Rock)

**Rock-n-Roll:** To engage in physical combat with an offender. Originates from the Vietnam War.

**Rollin' Stolen:** A stolen motor vehicle being driven by a suspect.

**R.P.:** Reporting Party; the person who made the call to the police.

**Samsonite:** To bind a wildly resisting offender in such a way to prevent him from moving. This usually involved hog-tying the moron, which meant we had to carry him as if he were an item of luggage. There weren't any specialized law enforcement tools then being produced to address this need so we made do with heavy-duty dog leashes and, sometimes, duct tape.

**Screen Test:** Back in the old days, the front seat of a cop car was separated from the backseat by a simple barrier of heavy-duty metal mesh. Sometimes an unruly prisoner would lean forward, and spit at the officer through the gap. That's when an imaginary dog would suddenly appear in front of the police car. The officer would then slam on the brakes to avoid striking poor Fido. This caused the obstreperous prisoner's face to collide, at high speed, with the metal barrier. Afterwards, the officer would apologize for the incident, and suggest the prisoner might not want to be so close to the screen, because there were many stray dogs in the neighborhood and who knew when the next one would appear? This behavior modification technique was known as a Screen Test. Or at least that's what I heard...

**Sherms:** (Also known as Sherm Stick) A slang term for PCP. It derives from Sherman's Cigarettes, a now defunct tobacco product

company. A popular method of ingesting the drug was to apply the liquid PCP to the pricey cigarettes and smoke them.

**Skate:** Avoid or escape from the consequences of a bad decision or unpleasant situation. It recalls the image of an ice skater speeding across the ice.

**Slinging Rock:** Selling cocaine.

**Sneakers Up:** Dead. It describes a person lying flat on his back, footwear pointing skyward.

**Snitch Jacket:** An informer. Refers to a Butt Boy or Remora who tattles to management about cops expressing “Bad Attitudes.” Derives from prison argot. (i.e., *Hey dickhead. Come EOS, you need to get over to Men’s Wearhouse. I hear they’ve got snitch jackets on sale, two for the price of one.*)

**Social Worker:** A scornful term used by cops to describe a naïve police coworker who arrogantly imagined he/she possessed the wisdom and force of personality to change people’s hearts and minds for the better. Their unrealistic view of reality might best be described as that of imbecile Father Edward Flanagan of Boys Town, who once unctuously declared, “There are no bad boys.” That was a phrase that must be numbered among the most foolish and untrue things ever spoken in the history of humanity. Officers of this ilk weren’t merely disliked for their smug and nauseating aura of moral superiority. They were also despised because the real cops had to handle the social worker’s calls while he/she wasted time trying to unravel non-criminal problems that would confound a skilled family therapist.

**SODDI Defense:** Unique to OPD. Some Other Dude Done It. A claim made by a suspect when confronted with overwhelming evidence pointing to his culpability in a crime.

**Some Dude:** A conscienceless, criminal mastermind and man of a thousand faces. If you believed the “innocent” citizen stopped by the police, Some Dude had asked him to hold onto a bindle of white stuff,

never mentioning it was crystal meth. Similarly, Some Dude was the guy who left the loaded .25 caliber pistol hidden in the poor citizen's car.

**Speed Bumps:** Skin eruptions caused by the excessive and long-term use of methamphetamine. The jittery tweakers continuously scratched at the meth acne with unwashed hands, which caused the sores to become infected.

**Station O:** The radio designator for Oceanside Police and Fire dispatchers.

**Stick Time:** Obsolete. Employed to describe the act of smacking multiple people with a nightstick in a riot or large fight setting.

**Stu:** An unidentified corpse in an advanced state of decomposition.

**T.C.:** Traffic Collision.

**Team Player:** Police manager-speak for a boot-licking toady.

**Ten-Seven (10-7):** No longer in service. Can also mean that someone or something has died. (i.e., *The guy in the TC that was all FUBAR'd just went 10-7. My portable radio battery just went 10-7.*)

**Ten-Eight (10-8):** The radio code to indicate an officer is in service and available for calls. A secondary meaning is that the cop is about to vociferously express profound dissatisfaction with another person's behavior. Sometimes the subject of the screed is another officer. (i.e., *I'm about to go Ten-eight on that useless motherfucker for kissing that call off to me.*")

**Ten-Eight-Fifty-One:** Refers to Section 10851 of the California Vehicle Code, which is the definition of auto theft. Forty years ago, Southern California cops never called it "GTA" or Grand Theft Auto.

**Ten-Sixteen (10-16):** A prisoner.

**Ten-Sixteen X-Ray:** A female prisoner. We were obligated to provide both starting and ending mileage whenever we transported a woman arrestee. This was to ensure that male officers were protected

from claims we'd stopped to have sex with a female prisoner. Talk about a throw-up-in-your-mouth notion.

**Ten-Nineteen (10-19):** The police station.

**Ten-Twenty-One (10-21):** An instruction to make a telephone call, usually to either the Watch Commander or dispatch. There were no wireless telephones back then so this required either finding a pay phone (scabies, anyone?), or stopping at the local fire station to make the call.

**Ten-Twenty-Two (10-22):** Disregard last communication.

**Ten-Thirty-Five (10-35):** The radio code to ask if anyone (particularly a crook) can overhear the officer's radio because sensitive information was about to be broadcast. Also used to describe hot police station gossip that cannot but, of course, will be disseminated.

**Ten-Ninety-Seven (10-97):** On scene at a radio call.

**Ten-Ninety-Eight (10-98):** Radio call concluded and back in service.

**Three From the Ring:** A now archaic term used to describe the first three striking moves after removing a nightstick (an obsolete weapon) from its carrier ring. (i.e., *The stupid bastard wanted to rock-n-roll so I gave him three from the ring.*)

**Troll Town:** In Oceanside, this referred to the settlement of vagrants, homeless drug addicts, and mental cases that lived in a makeshift village that lined the south bank of the San Luis Rey River beneath the Interstate 5 overpass.

**Tweaker:** A long-term methamphetamine user.

**Two-Eighty-Eight:** A child molester. Derives from Section 288 of the California Penal Code. (i.e., *We need to keep an eye on that creepy little asshole who's been hanging around Tyson Street Park. He's a righteous two-eighty-eight.*)

**Two-Eleven:** Robbery. Derives from Section 211 of the California Penal Code.

**Two-Fer:** A homicide where the “victim” is a scumbag crook. Society derives a dual benefit from the criminal being converted to worm food and the killer sent off to prison.

**Two-Ninety:** A registered sex offender. Derives from Section 290 of the California Penal Code.

**Unit:** The police vehicle. Southern California cops never used the terms cruiser or squad car.

**U.T.L.:** Unable To Locate.

**Vandalism of Occupied Clothing:** Murder. Likely unique to OPD. The inference is that the damage to the apparel is a more significant criminal offense than the lethal injuries sustained by the NHI victim wearing the clothes. (See: N.H.I.)

**VDF:** Vista Detention Facility. The San Diego County Sheriff’s Department jail that housed prisoners from the northern portion of the county.

**War Story:** What is the difference between a war story and a fairy tale? The fairy tale begins with “Once upon a time” and the war story opens with “This is no bullshit.” A war story is the verbal recounting of an incident that might reflect a violent or dangerous arrest, a humorous, duty-related episode, or an ironic outcome to an event. The police service is one of the few places that retains an oral tradition so, if the stories are compelling enough, they become part of an organizational mythos and are told long after the involved officer has left the department. In essence, my memoirs are merely a collection of war stories.

**Wienie Wagger:** A male indecent exposure suspect. The term incorrectly paints the offender as a pathetic character. Smart cops know that a wienie wagger is a novice sexual predator working up the nerve to commit a rape.



## WHERE THE DEBRIS MEETS THE SEA

The City of Oceanside is in northern San Diego County, about 35 miles north of downtown San Diego, and about 80 miles south of Los Angeles. As the name implies, the city is bordered on the west by the Pacific Ocean. The town was an outgrowth of a village that adjoined the Franciscan Mission San Luis Rey de Francia, which was built in 1798.

As an aside, I find it puzzling that the California missions still retain an aura of bygone romance. The Mission San Luis Rey was one of a string of vast agricultural estates worked by thousands of Native American slaves. The only difference between the mission and a Mississippi cotton plantation was that Franciscan fathers didn't import their chattel laborers from Africa. Instead, a beneficent God was kind enough to have the Kumeyaay Indians patiently awaiting the arrival of the missionaries-cum-slave masters. Try as I might, I can't find anything nostalgic about that. But I digress...

With an area of almost 43 square miles, Oceanside is a good-sized town. It is bordered on the east by the City of Vista (1982 population 35,000), and on the south by Carlsbad (1982 population 40,000), the latter municipality largely composed of smug NIMBYs and Yuppies. Oceanside's population was right around 85,000 when I arrived but that figure had grown to about 150,000 by the time I retired.

Interstate 5 cuts an eight-lane asphalt and cement path through the city, bringing in riffraff from both the north and south – not that the city ever experienced a need to import miscreants. As a rule, OPD cops just used I-5 for rapid transportation to calls. The California Highway Patrol had primary jurisdiction over the freeway and the Chippies were touchy about what they considered poaching on their turf. There was a CHP regional station on Oceanside Boulevard near the interstate that

I think I visited once between 1982 and 1998. That should provide some insight into relations between OPD and the para-police.

Back in 1982, the city suffered from a bad case of Dissociative Personality Disorder. Longtime residents considered downtown, and the neighborhoods within three miles of the beach, as the “real” Oceanside. Meanwhile, the city was undergoing explosive growth in its eastern environs. As evidenced by letters to the editor in the local newspaper, and comments at city council meetings, the established western inhabitants were of the firm opinion that the folks living east of I-5 were obnoxious newcomers who needed to pay their taxes, and keep their mouths shut.

Up until about the late 1990s, downtown Oceanside presented an enigma. Located along a stretch of a picture postcard-quality, gorgeous Southern California beach, and blessed with some of the most clement weather on the planet, the district should have been clean, trendy, affluent, and packed with upscale businesses.

Instead, it was a grimy demilitarized zone full of dingy bars, porn bookstores, massage parlors, convenience stores, pawn shops, an abandoned miniature golf course, fast food joints, liquor stores, an X-rated movie theater, and a couple of sleazy clubs that featured topless and fully nude female dancers. It was also home to the then modest city hall, a half-dozen scuzzy hotels and motels, and a ramshackle, storm-damaged municipal fishing pier that extended out into the Pacific Ocean.

After dark, the streets were full of aggressive panhandlers, sassy prostitutes on the stroll, transvestite hookers, Johns on the lookout for discount blowjobs, crystal whores, dope dealers, rich folks trying to score rock cocaine, sloppy drunks, outlaw bikers, vagrants, tweakers, street gangsters, cruiser gays looking for love in all the wrong places, violently crazy loons who belonged in a nuthouse, and Marines. Lots and lots of Marines.

The U.S. Marine Corps base of Camp Pendleton was just north of Oceanside. Home to the First Marine Division, there were some 40,000 or so of the Few and the Proud on the huge installation. In fairness, most of them didn't come downtown very often. Even those who did usually weren't bad guys. Their only fault was that, like most young men, all they wanted was booze and some no-strings-attached sex.

Unfortunately, many of the jarheads couldn't hold their liquor and, to make matters worse, were often naïve to the point of imbecility. Most came from small towns and other civilized locales where you could carry a wad of currency in your pocket with no risk of being beaten up and robbed. This made the Marines first-class crime victims. Consequently, downtown was full of predators...some of them fellow Marines.

It wasn't just the nightly savagery in the downtown district that made Oceanside one of the most violent municipalities in California back then. There was bloodshed aplenty throughout the rest of the city. There were two barrios in the western portion of town and each had their own Hispanic street gang. The East Side "Posole" gang and the Center Street "Locos" were in a perpetual war with each other that often resulted in drive-by shootings and murder.

The combatant factions in the central part of the city were the Samoan Brotherhood and the African American Insane Crip Gang, which everyone, including gang members, shortened to "ICG." Street cops made a point of telling the ICG bangers that the initials stood for Ice Cream Girls. Nowadays, we'd be disciplined for rudeness, and engaging in cultural insensitivity.

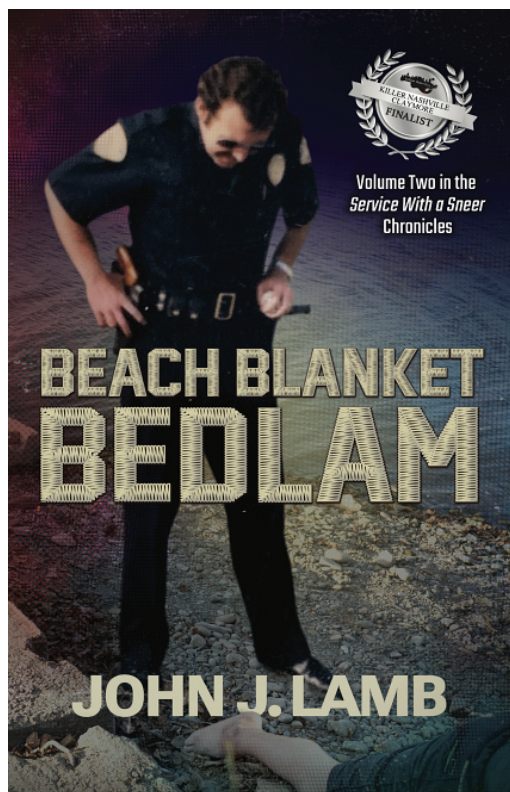
Out in the northeastern part of the city, we had three more street gangs in constant conflict with each other. The African American Deep Valley Crips liked to shoot at the Valley Bloods, who were mostly of Samoan descent and, for reasons that mystified us, seldom

availed themselves to firearms. This tended to make the battles with the other gangs distinctly one-sided.

There was also a Hispanic gang in that neighborhood. The Mesa Locos were primarily at war with the Vista Homeboys, a Hispanic gang from the neighboring city. However, to break up the monotony, the Locos occasionally went to war with both the Crips and Bloods.

Yet, the street gangs and warring dope-dealers didn't account for all the brutality—not by a long shot. The regular citizens often pitched in to add to the savagery. Domestic violence and child abuse were commonplace throughout the city and the episodes sometimes led to murder. There was also a surprising amount of gay-on-gay carnage. Finally, out in the illegal alien farmworker villages, disputes were sometimes settled with knives and machetes.

Other than that, Oceanside was a regular Garden of Eden.



*The book is a recounting of the author's varied experiences occurring during the early 1980s when he served as a police patrol officer, hostage negotiator, and crime scene investigator in one of the most violent cities in California.*

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