

Biographies of SCPD's Fallen Officers for Presentation to the Historical and Landmarks Commission

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SERGEANT BEN MENDIS

After being discharged from the U.S. Army in 1956, Bernard L. Mendis Jr. became a Santa Clara Police Officer. Ben, as he was known, lived in Sunnyvale with his wife Norma Jean, and five children Pam, Brian, Tammy, Kevin and Dwayne. Ben was promoted to the rank of Sergeant, and went on to be assigned to the Detective Bureau. On October 20th, 1971, Ben collapsed while seated at his desk. He was believed to have suffered a fatal heart attack. Sergeant Mendis served the City of Santa Clara for 15 years. He is buried at the Mission City Memorial Park Cemetery in Santa Clara.

OFFICER WILLIAM "BILL" RICKABAUGH

Officer William "Bill" Rickabaugh grew up in Nebraska and went on to serve in the US Navy from 1957 to 1960. He then became an officer with the Santa Clara Police Department. Officer Rickabaugh and his wife Joan had two small children named Bill Jr. and Sherri.

In January 1962, Officer Rickabaugh was instrumental in the capture of an assailant who killed Sunnyvale Officer Gary Larson. Officer Rickabaugh came close to being shot that night. He was recognized for showing extreme bravery in capturing the assailant's accomplice. Officer Rickabaugh was given a commendation by the Sunnyvale Department of Public Safety for bravery and decisive action in the line of duty.

Officer Rickabaugh went on to become a Santa Clara Police motorcycle officer. On January 11th, 1966, at approximately 1630 hours, Ofc. Rickabaugh spotted two boys trespassing in a construction zone. The boys were riding motorcycles on top of a dirt ramp on what is now San Tomas Expressway (near Monroe St. and Los Padres Blvd). Ofc. Rickabaugh rode his motorcycle up a dirt ramp and inadvertently collided with a metal cable that had been stretched across two posts. The cable impacted his chest throwing him off his motorcycle. A resident from Monroe St. rushed to the officer's aid and provided mouth to mouth resuscitation. Ofc. Rickabaugh was transported to the hospital where he was pronounced dead. He was 28 years old and served the department for five years.

Ofc. Rickabaugh is buried in the Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Bruno, CA. He was survived by his wife and two children.

NIGHT WATCHMAN GEORGE WHYBARK

Before the advent of police officers, the City of Santa Clara was protected by guardians who were called Night Watchmen. One such Night Watchman was named George Whybark. Night Watchman Whybark had been employed as such for two years. On March 14th, 1910, sometime after 4:00 a.m., a citizen saw a man burglarizing a jewelry store on Franklin Street. The citizen ran and summoned Night Watchman Whybark who promptly located the suspect hiding in the backyard of Liebes' Saloon at the corner of Franklin St. and Alviso St. Night Watchman Whybark challenged the suspect who then emerged from the darkness and shot him four times. Night Watchman Whybark was killed but not before returning fire at the suspect.

The suspect fled but was captured on March 24th, 1910. The ensuing investigation determined the suspect had committed several crimes all over the Bay Area before killing Night Watchmen Whybark. Those crimes including murdering two men in San Francisco and killing Alameda County Deputy Sheriff Andrew Lindquist during a robbery of a saloon. The 22-year-old suspect was convicted of Night Watchman Whybark's murder and sentenced to life in San Quentin prison.

Night Watchman Whybark was 55 years old when he was killed. He was a long time resident of Santa Clara. He was not married and was survived by his brother F.W. Whybark and sister M. L. Simpson. Night Watchman Whybark was laid to rest in the San Lorenzo Pioneer Memorial Park.