

# History: CHP patrolling without radios; hanging deer in jail

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Willard Ball, Judge of the Lake Valley Judicial Court, recalled his 21 years at South Shore during the Society's April 1975 meeting. Like so many others, Bill Ball started his residence at Tahoe in the midst of a blizzard in March 1953 as a California Highway Patrolman transferring from eleven years on motorcycle patrol in Contra Costa County. The only paved road was Highway 50 and a sign on the highway in Bijou stated the population was 1800 – obviously only in summer.



Bill, who lived at Blackwood Road and Pioneer Trail, frequently found it necessary to plow out the road with his own equipment first, before he could move out with the patrol car. No radio communication was available; the telephone was the only means of getting a call and frequently there was a lapse of time before the call would reach the officer. Even though he endeavored to keep in touch, it was not unusual for Bill to come home to lunch to have his wife relay a message about a wreck occurring as much as two hours earlier. He eventually arranged with the Sheriff's office to set up a red light in front which they would turn on whenever they had a message for him, so he would see it when cruising by.

There were only two resident patrolmen at the time, covering the area from Lake Valley to Riverton until 1958 when the CHP substation was established, after which there was always a complement of six to seven patrolmen.

In 1964, Bill retired from the CHP and was elected to the judgeship, his erroneous assumption being that it would never be more than a two-day a week job. He noted in 1965 the Lake Valley Court was 29th out of 250 California judicial courts; by 1968, it was up to 5th place. He recalled Judge Lawson as being on the bench on his arrival in Tahoe, having been preceded by Judge Palmear, the first such judge in the area. When Judge Lawson died in 1954, Rudy Buchannan was appointed, and served until Judge Ball was elected. For many years this judgeship was termed "Justice of the Peace" with the incumbent also considered a peace officer. However, in 1950, all such justices in California became Judges of the Judicial Court. Presently, there is pending legislation to create a Municipal Court at South Lake Tahoe and at Placerville.

Mike Willis, former Highway Foreman, Sheriff Dick Pacileo, and Sheriff's Captain Dick Lowe were on hand at the meeting to help Bill remember such occasions as the time a deer, hit by a car, was dressed out and hung up in the drunk tank. The next drunk arrested was suddenly sober and wanted nothing so much as to plead guilty and get out of the place. The Judge recalled the days when a dozen or more deer could be seen almost anytime in the meadows and in the trees off Pioneer Trail. "Now there are dogs down in the meadow," he said. "The dogs run the deer off."

He mentioned many familiar names to old timers on the South Shore: Lew Pilot, the first resident CHP officer in 1945; Captain Brewster, the first CHP Captain at the Lake, followed by Captain Personus, and Captain Jim Brewer; CHP Lt. Ball, recently retired, who was a cadet when the Judge was learning to ride motorcycles; Bill Turman, now City Judge at Fallon; Bill Timm; Game Warden Alec Sears, headquartered in Placerville

The Judge opined that law enforcement in general has deteriorated over the years with a lack of respect developing among the people. He noted approximately 16,000 warrants

presently outstanding for those who have failed to appear in traffic court over a six year period, and detailed the administrative problems concerned with this backlog. Contrary to a popular impression, he estimated that 90% of the warrants are for local residents, not for the tourists.

The judge noted he will soon be retiring again inasmuch as California statutes have decreed that, after December 31, 1976, all judges must be attorneys with five years experience, marking the end of the lay judge in the California court system.