

Names and Places

The law enforcement career of Clyde Cronkhite

By Tom Radz

- Assistant News Editor

Clyde Cronkhite jokingly blames his mother for a career path that has always, in one facet or another, revolved around law enforcement.

"She named me Clyde. As I grew up I wanted to be an entertainer, but when I got in my teens more people began making fun of my name," said Cronkhite, who did enjoy a short stint in the entertainment industry as one of the original Mouseketeers.

Years later, in the late 1950's, after putting an end to his professional career in entertainment, Cronkhite reidentified himself when he answered an ad placed by the Los Angeles Police Department. Not only did the police department provide him with a new career in which to channel his passion, it also gave him a new name.

"I thought, 'Hey, they're not going to call me Clyde anymore, they'll call me Officer,'" said Cronkhite, who eventually found that title continually changing from Sergeant, to Lieutenant, to Captain, to Commander and eventually to Deputy Chief of Police for the LAPD.

However, knowing that chief of police Darrell Gates was nowhere near his retirement at that time, Cronkhite made a career move into the private sector, after nearly 30 years of public service. He took a position as a vice president for a \$12 billion financial firm in Beverly Hills, a move that provided Cronkhite with a significant increase in salary for performing various duties that centered around overseeing the financial security of the company.

"But they started calling me Clyde again and eventually I began to miss the public sector. I missed going to work everyday and think I was doing something important," said Cronkhite, who, in 1987, was finally given the name Chief, only this time it was for the Santa Ana Police Department in California.

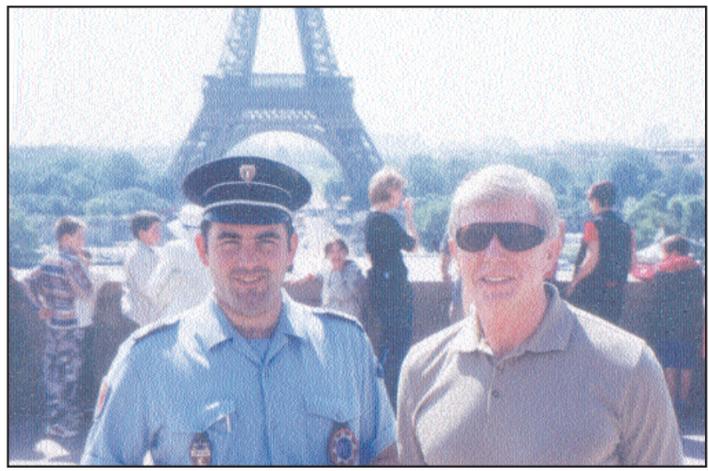
Throughout his entire career as a police officer, Cronkhite constantly thrived on compiling strategies for being an effective chief of police, and was finally able to implement his policies at the SAPD. His learning, however, was not put on hold once he attained his long-time career goal. Soon he was enrolled at the University of Southern California studying law enforcement in the classroom so that he could change his name again - this time to Doctor. While at USC, Cronkhite was named the director of the Criminal Justice Center.

His research continued when he was offered a chairmanship of the Western Illinois University Law Enforcement and Justice Administration Department in 1993. He accepted the position under one condition - he be allowed to teach classes. While at WIU Cronkhite made the jump from associate professor to full professor, and although he continues to teach classes, he resigned as chair of the department.

Focusing his attention strictly on teaching allowed Cronkhite to implement a unique approach that combined his curriculum and his research. Through a program that he entitled, "Professor Travels World In Search of Answers for WIU Students," Cronkhite illustrates the differences between law enforcement in the United States with departments that he visits in foreign countries.

"I've actually built some classes almost completely on things that I've gained from other agencies - my ethics class, culture diversity class, criminal justice administration, those kind of classes," said Cronkhite, whose most recent trip was to Taxco, Mexico last May.

His findings in Mexico related directly to his experiences with the SAPD, considering a large percentage of the area's res-



Left: France is just one of the many countries Clyde Cronkhite has visited. Below: Cronkhite with his wife Patricia at a speaking engagement, while serving as Chief of the Santa Ana Police Department. Courtesy Photos

idents were Hispanic. Cronkhite mentioned the effects the often corrupt Mexican departments have on Hispanic immigrants in the U.S. often leads to conflict during enforcement situations.

"They dress in military outfits, with rifles and carry no handcuffs. And when the police arrest you down there, you don't get handcuffed, because if you run, they'll shoot you. When I was chief of police in Santa Ana I remember that if we hit a crack house and there was ten people working in them and we pruned them and handcuffed them, they would fight us - I mean really fight us. That's because where they came from they don't get pruned or get your hands bound behind you unless they are going to kill you, so they thought that is what we were doing," Cronkhite said.

Establishing trust within a Hispanic community can be a difficult challenge, according to Cronkhite.

"They don't trust the police. But if you really develop trust with the Hispanic community, you are going to find crime goes up. It really doesn't go up, but it goes up statistically, because (the Hispanic) people aren't reporting crime. They don't report it down there," Cronkhite said. "So, in a Hispanic community there are a lot of crimes that go unreported, but as they start to trust you they start reporting it. I can remember as a captain in L.A., in a Hispanic area, the chief called me and said, 'What the hell am I doing? I'm causing a crime wave.' Well, we weren't, we were gaining their trust."

Through a trip to a virtually crimeless Japan, Cronkhite saw first-hand the effects of not having a bill of rights for prisoners. Deterrence in this Asian country can almost directly be attributed to the chance of being imprisoned for months without seeing a lawyer or a judge.

Cronkhite also found Japan differed from the U.S. in the area of education required to become a police officer.

"To be a police officer over there you have to have four years of college. Less than five percent of our departments require a college degree," Cronkhite said.

Across the Sea of Japan, Cronkhite found another country without a bill of rights for criminals when he visited China.

"In China, the police with reasonable cause, not probable cause, can sentence you to up to two years in a camp. So they have a lot of power," said Cronkhite, who went on to mention that the country declared to be more community-minded in

1995.

During his travels to France and Spain, Cronkhite found himself in the center of the largest global intelligence agency on the planet - Interpol.

"Interpol said because of terrorism, they weren't letting anyone in, but I went to a party the night before and met their equivalent of our attorney general. He made a phone call and we all got to go," Cronkhite said. On his tour, the director of Interpol informed him that the agency has an agreement with 170 countries, of which one agency is selected to work with. When someone on their tour asked the director if the American agency was the CIA, he responded by stating that Interpol does not recognize them as a law enforcement agency because they are so secretive, and they prefer to work with the FBI.

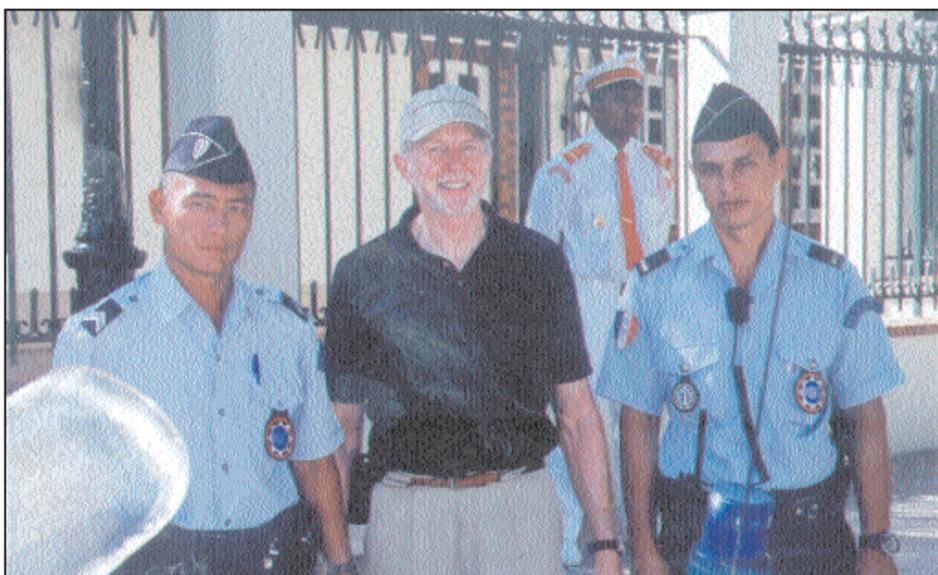
Cronkhite's trip to Prague, Vienna, Austria and Italy only provided him with one memory that stood out - the fact that you can drive across Rome without stopping, because there are no stoplights, only traffic circles. The traffic situation often causes cars to scrape each other, but the drivers only exchange verbal blows and keep driving.

On the domestic front, Cronkhite has made ride-alongs with the New York Police Department, the New Orleans Police Department, the Chicago Police Department, the FBI and his old department, the LAPD. But it's his experiences abroad that truly reveal to him why he continues to answer to "Dr. Cronkhite."

"To me, it is a reason that we have to teach all our people in criminal justice about the balance," Cronkhite said. "I marvel at our constitution and how it was put together and how it does provide for a balance, if we obey it, and how important the criminal justice system is in keeping that balance."

People came to this country, our forefathers, many years ago, to get away from oppression. They wanted a democracy, but they found out they can't have a democracy, we can have a republic as long as the majority are in charge, and no matter how big of a criminal you are, you have these rights. And that's what gives us maximum freedom to be our selves, to be individuals in this country."

This fall, Cronkhite plans to visit Russia, where crime has gone up 800 percent since the fall of the Soviet Union.



Left: Cronkhite poses for a picture with a couple of police officers in Tahiti. Right: Cronkhite's most recent law enforcement research was done on a trip to Taxco, Mexico. Courtesy Photos