

Part 5 ~ 'To Protect and to Serve' ~ Joe Domanick

*Awarded 1995 Edgar Award for best true facts
[These are extracts from Mr. Domanick's taped interviews
on 10-30-1991 and 11-12-1991 with Detective Steve Fisk]*

Page 282: Steve Fisk had been in SIS for five years. From 1978 to 1987 the SWAT team shot 15 people; SIS shot 29. Shootings were a badge of honor.

Page 231: Steve Fisk took to stopping at various saloons with the troops – just drinking and having fun. Then he took to **drinking for hours**. Over time, he was **consuming a fifth of Jim Beam** a day.

Page 261: Steve Fisk bragged and put it, “who’d been given a **gun** and a **badge** and **all the authority** they needed ... **all the back-up** they needed to **take someone’s life** and **ruin it, kill someone, destroy their family** ...

Page 284: Steve Fisk had been **drinking** for a **long time** before that day ... **Drinking until he’d black out** and wake up in his car someplace and **not even remember where he’d been**. But that had always been because he’d **enjoyed it, enjoyed the drinking** ... after a **killing** he had called his father, Jim Fisk, he said ... “**I murdered a man**”. This time **Jim Fisk**, who was an **LAPD police Commissioner** along with **Stephen Reinhardt** (who then was made **U.S. Ninth Circuit Judge**) **arranged** for his son, **Steve**, to go see the **department psychiatrist**. **Steve Fisk showed up drunk**. In 1978 he was awarded a **stress pension**, and with his wife and family he **moved to Idaho**. Things **didn’t get any better**, and his **drinking got worse** ... In 1986 he **returned to L.A.** and the **LAPD**, becoming a **homicide detective** in **Pacoima** and **Van Nuys**, although still an alcoholic and mentally ill. But with **Steve Fisk’s father** a **LAPD Police Commissioner**, this was **deliberately ignored**.

Detective Steve Fisk, LAPD’s finest! The LAPD set-up their own system to investigate murders and corruption by cops, and made the system **full-proof** so that the cop is **always found innocent**.

Page 95: If **Bill Parker** had done nothing else in his police career, the following alone would have merited him a place in **LAPD history**. **Parker** and **Earl Cooke** and the **rest of the League activists** had **given the chief of the Los Angeles Police Department the lifetime tenure, free of accountability, of a Supreme Court justice** and **laid the cornerstone on which the department’s future autonomy and power would rest**. The League had seen its opportunity, struck and won with a timing that couldn’t have been more perfect, for the mid-thirties had been years of **tremendous tumult** and **dissatisfaction with the LAPD**. The **grand jury** was **finding corruption under every overturned stone**. **LAPD** was becoming an **increasingly intolerable joke**.

The vote on the 1937 charter amendment to **protect the chief** passed by more than 10,000 votes, dramatically **altering the history of L.A.** Now with the approval of the electorate, a weird balkanization had taken place. A **quasi-military organization** had **declared itself independent of the rest of city government** and placed itself ‘**outside**’

the control of the L.A. Police Commission, City Hall, or any other elected officials, outside of the democratic system of checks and balances. And Bill Parker, who helped write the statute, would become the first to realize it.

Page 114: Now, with this unyielding power held by the chief, he put it to work **against the public.** The Cahan decision concerning the start of the courts – both state and federal – handing down decisions restricting the rights of cops to go on fishing expeditions or to use thin, imaginative, or nonexistent reasons for stopping, searching, questioning, intimidating, and bugging citizens.

Chief **Parker railed against** the Cahan decision, calling it and similar rulings “**a death warrant for law enforcement**” and the “**prelude to a policeless state.**” The implication drawn, he declared, is that **activities of the police** are a **greater social menace** than are activities of criminals. “**This is terrifying.**”

And with that, Chief Parker allowed this ruling to go **unenforced in L.A.** So, no matter how many cases of illegal search and seizure there were, there was **never and officer disciplined** for a search-and-seizure violation. Accordingly, the police did what they felt to get the job done.

Each time a state or **federal court** expanded citizens’ **rights** and **restricted unconstitutional police practices**, the attitude and focus of the LAPD under **Parker and his successors** would be **not to find the best way to comply with the law, but the best way to work around it.** If the courts ruled, for example, that you could not search the interior of a vehicle without probable cause, that is, without actually seeing drugs or other contraband, the letter of the law would be examined and a **way found so you could.** Officers stories would be gotten straight. **One officer’s account would always confirm the other’s.** There would be **no deviation from what was decided.** It would be the **suspect’s word against two or more sworn police officers.**

Page 265: The same applies to more serious incidents. For example, the **killing of unarmed civilians by the LAPD (one of three civilians shot by the LAPD in the late 70s would prove to be unarmed, would have extenuating circumstances: PCP in the bloodstream, a struggle with police before a typewriter was raised to be thrown, a nervous officer in fear of his life.** And the inquiries that followed would be characterized by a **bending over backward** to justify the officer’s actions by a **department investigating itself** and operating under what seemed a set of unwritten but inviolable rules: **(1) an officer involved in a shooting or choke-hold death is never wrong; (2) department policies and procedures are the best in the nation and therefore are in no need of change; (3) a story favorable to an officer will be released just hours before an investigation has begun and remain the department’s official position no matter what evidence subsequently emerges.** After every controversial killing would engender a devastatingly accurate parody on the streets of South Central: “**Subject reached into his waistband and pointed a black, shiny object at the officer, which subsequent investigation proved to be his finger.**”

Watch the news, and you will find that this remains prevelant today.

Page 282: The job of the SIS was not to protect people being robbed, but to remove undesirables off the streets. Permanently. The LAPD saw the SIS as an elite unit doing elite work. But among civil rights attorneys, they were rated as an **execution squad** that had shot and **killed 23 people between 1967 and 1990**, wounding at least 23 others. Many were **gunned down in cold blood – deliberately**, unnecessarily, in a kind of **LAPD final solution**. The L.A. Times in 1988 examined 32 shootings by the SIS. In 28 of them the suspects had **not** fired at the officers; and, that **SIS detectives over the years had shot 13 unarmed people**.

Page 171: At his closing campaign press conference **Sam Yorty** also **promised to name a new police commission** that would no longer be a **Chief Parker rubber stamp**. Then, after his election, **Yorty held a press conference charging that Chief Parker had used his intelligence division to spy on him**, aides, contributors – hundreds of people. That this was a misuse of department time and **perfectly obvious** that the **LAPD had conducted a “gestapo operation.”** Yorty declared to the public that when sworn in he’d use his power of **“subpoena”** against the LAPD.

When Parker learned of this, he reacted as if a slightly annoying fly buzzing ‘round his head. **They met in Yorty’s home high atop a hill in the San Fernando Valley**, then to a restaurant where “all conflicts were clarified to their mutual satisfaction” as they declared in a joint news conference. They also **asked the DA to halt the investigation of Yorty’s spying charges against Parker**.

It was later found that **Chief Parker had shown up at their meeting with an attaché case bulging with Yorty’s intelligence files** and that **when he returned the briefcase was empty**. A cop and reporter overkill, for a **mere whisper in Yorty’s ear** would have sufficed.

The LAPD used blackmail to control politicians and judges.

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"To Protect and to Serve".

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful:

Outstanding!, April 3, 2000

Reviewer: [Ken Jackson](#) (Fresno, Ca.) - [See all my reviews](#)

I am a veteran police officer and a native Angeleno whose hobbies include the history of Los Angeles and the L.A.P.D. Joe Domanick's book is an obviously well researched piece that skillfully weaves together a view of historical L.A. and it's police dept. I have read the book three times and enjoy it anew with each revisit. I am deeply aware of the Department's history and can say that the author has hit his mark with this very intriguing and thoroughly researched book. I recommend this book to anyone that wants to familiarize themselves with the true psyche of The Los Angeles Police Department. My hat is off to you Joe Domanick!

Was this review helpful to you? [\(Report this\)](#)

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful:

Fantastic and enlightening., March 14, 1999

Reviewer: **A reader**

Joe Domanic documents the secret culture of the LAPD which an amazing eye for detail. He notes how the political structure has impacted policing nearly since the turn of the century (when the LAPD ran Goon Squads to crush the unions and "Commies") and how the efforts by Chief Parker in the 50-60's to free them Police from politics ultimately made them accountable to no one, except themselves. And certainly not to the public. This situation only exerbated the racial tensions of Civil Rights movement, but rather than declining as the years wore on, things grew worse at Parker's protege, Darryl Gates took command and continued to try to rule with Parker's Iron "Grip". After living in the city of Los Angeles most of my life, now many of the things I (and others) experienced with the LAPD, now make sense. A riveting book.

Was this review helpful to you? [\(Report this\)](#)