



# Warning Bells

*"Never send to know for  
whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."*

*— John Donne*

GARY INGEMUNSON, Attorney at Law

## A life well lived

Ed Jokisch died last week. His serial number was 180, three digits instead of five. He almost had three digits in his age, too. He was 97. I was honored to be a pallbearer. The burial was attended by his family and some of his old police buddies. They had four digits in their serial numbers. Just kids to Ed.

The Navy was there playing taps and handing out flags to the relatives of this Iwo Jima veteran. The LAPD showed up, too, handing out its flag as well. Nearly 40 years retired, and the Department still remembered.

The chaplain asked us if anyone wanted to tell a story about Ed. The old-timers told a few anecdotes to illustrate what a tough yet tender man we were there to bury. His relatives added their favorite memories. I realized there was more to tell. Ed was part of Tom Brokaw's "Greatest Generation." He came on the job in 1940 and retired as a captain in 1972. I want to respond to the chaplain and tell a story about Ed. Sometimes, knowing where we have been helps us understand where we are going.

Ed was born in 1914 and raised in St. Louis, Missouri, a pure Midwestern upbringing that taught him about self-reliance and hard work. In 1934, he joined the Navy for a four-year tour. He was initially assigned to the battleship *California*, an ill-fated ship that would be sunk by the Japanese when Pearl Harbor was bombed. Ed served on it for a year and a half, then transferred to a transport ship. In 1937, during their invasion of China, the Japanese sank the U.S. gunboat *Panay* in the Yangtze River, causing an international incident. Ed's transport ship assisted in the evacuation of civilians from Hong Kong and Shanghai, among other places, to escape the Japanese occupation.

His enlistment was up in 1938, and he probably would have spent the rest of his life in the Navy, but his father died. Ed went back to St. Louis to help his mother. He wanted to be a cop, so he explored joining the St. Louis P.D. St. Louis officers were quite open and frank in their insistence on a \$250 bribe for the job. This didn't sit well with Ed, so he came out to Los Angeles and attended Los Angeles City College (LACC). He got a job cleaning the locker room for 35 cents an hour. He'd played football in high school and for the Navy, so he played for LACC also. He recalls playing in a game against Jackie Robinson, who at that time played for Pasadena Junior College. Ed's team lost.

Ed still wanted to be a police officer, but Los Angeles was struggling with the same problem that St. Louis had — bribes. Appointments and promotions in the LAPD had been for sale. Los Angeles was in the throes of attacking the problem, however. After a big scandal, Mayor Shaw had been thrown out of office, and the police officer appointment list for 1938 had been thrown out with him because the payoffs had been discovered. There hadn't been an Academy class for a couple of years. But, fortunately, applications again opened, and the necessity of paying a bribe was gone. Joint testing was started for LAPD officers and L.A. sheriff's deputies. There were 3,500 applicants, and Ed ranked No. 7. Because the sheriff required a residency in the county of three years, and the LAPD only required residence in the city for one year, Ed became a Los Angeles police officer on September 3, 1940. Pay was \$170 a month. To Ed, this seemed like a fortune since his salary in the Navy had been \$72 per month. Of course, each officer had to buy his or her own gun and uniform, but he recalled, "I was on cloud nine when I came on the job. I didn't care if I had days off or not."

There were 78 people in his Academy class. Among his classmates were Tom Bradley, future mayor; Ed Davis, future Chief of Police and state senator; and John Powers, later an LAPD legend known as "Two-Gun Powers." His first assignment after graduating from the Academy

was Central morning watch. In those days, the new recruits wore a tunic with a blue shirt and black tie. "You were a marked man," Ed said, "because the suspects knew that you were a rookie by the way you dressed." The Department eventually figured that out, and all officers began wearing the same uniform around a year later.

Ed's watch commander at Central was Thad Brown, who would later nearly become Chief of Police and was another LAPD legend. In 1941, Ed would work for an even bigger legend. LAPD started Accident Investigation Division (AID), and Ed put in for the school. He got it and was assigned to AID. The captain was William H. Parker, future Chief and namesake of Parker Center.

Then came the attack on Pearl Harbor. The start of World War II depleted the LAPD as officers left for the military. This worked to Ed's advantage. He had been doing an outstanding job in Accident Investigation, and even had a Superior Court judge write a letter of commendation about him to the Department on the excellence of his investigation before the court. That letter got him into Homicide Division, unusual for an officer of his age and tenure. At that time, Homicide Division and Robbery Division had not become Robbery-Homicide Division. This joiner was 20-some years away. Both divisions operated out of City Hall. The whole second floor of City Hall was LAPD.

He worked Homicide for six months, but felt the call to come to the aid of his country too strongly to continue in this job that he loved. He signed up again for the Navy. Because of his previous experience, he was selected to be the captain of an amphibious assault ship. He was dispatched to Pearl Harbor to begin training for the invasion of Iwo Jima. In February 1945, Ed found himself carrying three tanks outfitted with flamethrowers and a platoon of Marines in his LSM to the shores of Iwo Jima. The ship was under fire and repeatedly made runs transporting men and materials to the island during the five-week battle. During the battle, he impressed a one-star admiral who slated him to be the beach master for the invasion of Japan. Since 1 million casualties were expected for this invasion, this was a dubious honor. "The atom bomb saved my life," Ed said.

Ed returned to LAPD in January 1946. His Homicide spot had been saved for him, and he had been promoted to sergeant during his absence. LAPD officers in the military at that time were allowed to take promotional exams, and Ed had taken the sergeant's exam while training at Pearl Harbor.

Ed had a fascinating career while he was working Homicide. He was assigned to take down an abortion ring that ended up being a statewide operation that resulted in multiple convictions. He was assigned to tail Anthony Brancato and Tony Trombino, two gangland figures known as the "Two Tonys." In an eerily familiar scenario, Ed and his partner were only allowed to follow them in the daytime (OT problems then, too?). Unfortunately, after Ed's end of watch on August 6, 1951, the Two Tonys ran into mob executioner Jimmy Fratiano on Sunset Boulevard. He killed them both while they sat in their car. The movie *L.A. Confidential* has this murder scene in it. Fratiano admitted to the murders 25 years later, after making a witness deal with the feds. He then wrote a book called *The Last Mafioso*. In the book, he dramatically writes about being surrounded by LAPD at his house and arrested. Ed laughs at this. "My partner and I went over to his house and got him out of bed," he said. "We drove him to Wilshire station and questioned him."

In 1953, Ed made lieutenant and went to Robbery Division. He stayed there working on cases until 1958, when he made captain and transferred to Wilshire Division as captain of detectives. "He expected a full day's work out of you," said one of his detectives. "We called him 'Poppa Bear,' but not to his face." He backed his people. When someone stepped out of line, they could expect to be called into his office and verbally whipped, but it never went to paper. He handled it personally. That was how he handled the murder of two of his detectives: personally.

On February 2, 1964, Sears' security called Wilshire station and requested an officer to respond to a suspected forgery suspect. At that time, Wilshire station was on Pico right next to Sears. Two of Ed's detectives, Charles Monaghan and Robert Endler, walked over to Sears. Felony Car Ofcr. Endel Jurman accompanied them. Sears' security had forgery suspect Leland Smith sitting in a back room and a female companion sitting in the adjoining office. Smith had tried to cash a forged check. Endler walked into the room and stood Smith up to pat him down. Smith drew a 2-inch five-shot Smith & Wesson revolver out of his waistband and delivered some of the unluckiest shots in LAPD history. Endler was shot in the face and killed instantly. Smith then fired one shot at Jurman, hitting him in the left arm. Jurman returned fire. Smith jumped over a desk and fired another round at Jurman, hitting him in the chest. Monaghan, who had just finished pushing a civilian down to get him out of the line of fire, raised his gun and he and Smith fired simultaneously at each other. Monaghan's round went high, but Smith hit Monaghan directly in the center of his forehead. As Smith fled, he fired another round at a Sears employee, hitting him in the shoulder. The security man, Thomas Winters, picked up Monaghan's gun and chased after Smith. Winters fired one round at him as he was running down the aisle, but missed. Smith escaped.

Ed was called in and immediately set up an investigative task force at Wilshire Division. “He led from the front,” one of the old-timers said.

“I went to two funerals and cried at them both,” Ed recalled 50 years later, “and I’m not that kind of guy.”

The intense investigative effort put out by all the officers paid off. Smith was caught in Chicago. Ed and two of his detectives flew out there with Deputy District Attorney Joe Busch, the future D.A. of Los Angeles County. They brought Smith back wearing an Oregon Boot, a weight attached to the foot to prevent flight. When the plane landed, Ed received an urgent order to call Thad Brown, the chief of detectives. He did.

“Take Smith right to County Jail,” Brown ordered.

“That’s what I was going to do,” Ed replied, puzzled.

“Parker’s worried,” Brown explained. “He saw you crying at the funerals, and he knows how you feel about your people. He was worried Smith was going to be killed trying to escape.”

“That had never crossed my mind,” Ed remembered. “I wanted to watch the son of a bitch fry.”

That was not to be. Ed assisted the district attorney with the trial, and Smith was convicted and scheduled for the electric chair. Then Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren granted Smith a stay of execution. Eventually, in 1972, the year Ed retired, Smith’s death sentence was commuted to life in prison. In 1978, Smith escaped and fled to Mexico. While down there, he raped and sodomized a woman at knifepoint. Although retired, Ed started a letter-writing campaign that resulted in Smith’s extradition and return to jail. Ed monitored every parole hearing thereafter and made sure that Smith never saw daylight again.

I have just scratched the surface of this remarkable man’s life. He was the epitome of the old-time detective, and his career cut a swath across LAPD’s most interesting historical period. LAPD legends were just friends to him. Telling his story will take more than a Warning Bells article; it needs something more like a biography. I think I will make that attempt.

If you have any Ed Jokisch stories, give me a call, especially if you have a four-digit serial number. There are stories out there that need to be told.

Be legally careful out there. ❖