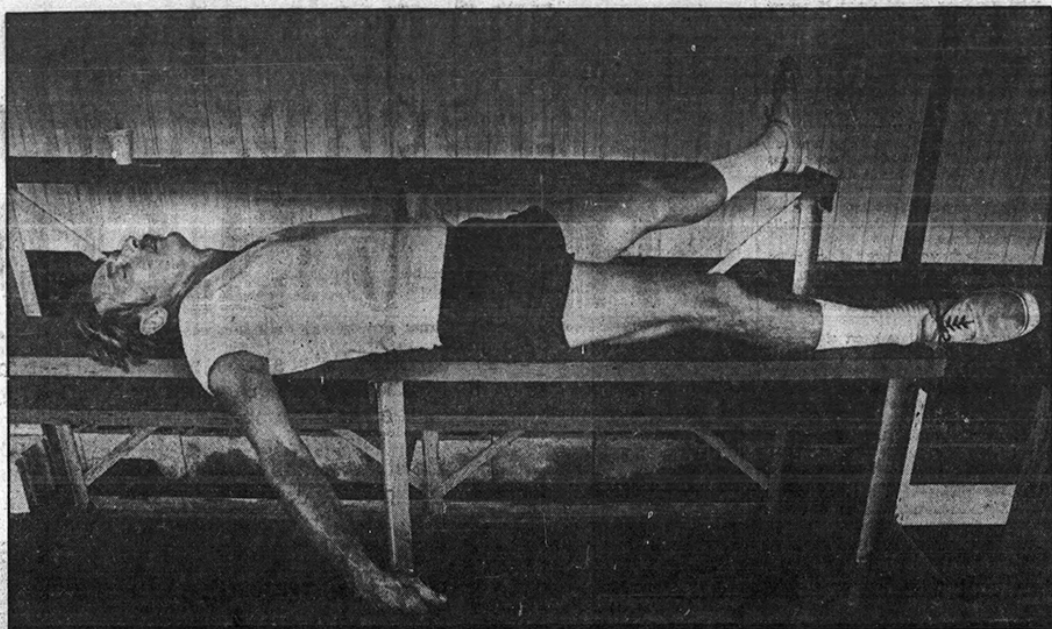


Copping A Diploma



Learning to be a police officer is not a strictly academic experience as these new recruits have found. Above, D.J. McGinnis stretches out after an exhausting run. At right, recruits go through the procedure of apprehending suspects. Below, Monica Lawson strains while taking the pullup test. Below right, Bernadette Hernandez does pushups, while Milton Pawley wipes away the sweat from a vigorous workout. (Staff Photos—Louie Favorite and Steve Deal)



Atlanta Police Recruits Training To Stay Alive

By Steve Dougherty
Constitution Staff Writer

Your teachers were strict? Here they carry guns. You hated weekly gym class? Every afternoon, students here force themselves into suffocating mile-long road races. They spend long grueling hours in daily exercise, gasping hot August air, pushing up, sitting up, pulling up, sometimes throwing up.

There are holes in your academic knowledge from missing the class on cosine curves? Try skipping the class here on "felony vehicle pull-over procedure." The penalty for your truancy could be death.

The 23 students at this exclusive preparatory academy are enrolled in a 12-week crash course aimed at readying them for one of the most difficult, unheralded, misunderstood and dangerous occupations in America.

They want to be cops.

Major Richard Davis, commanding officer at the Atlanta Police Bureau's training Academy off Key Road in southeast Atlanta, is lecturing an attentive classroom full of uniformed recruits on the dangers inherent in approaching a car carrying felony suspects.

"Every violator," recruits are warned, "is a suspect. When approaching a car, remember, it could contain a killer."

The recruits are told that foolish mistakes "in this business" can lead to an early grave.

Davis suddenly interrupts himself to pop a disturbing question: "Who," he shouts, "was the last policeman shot in the line of duty?"

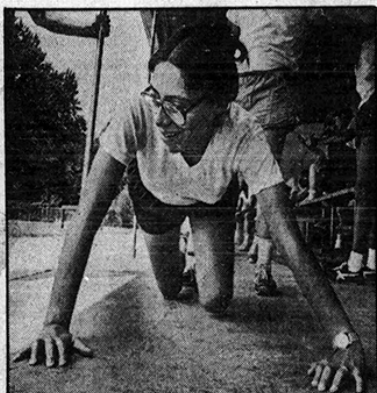
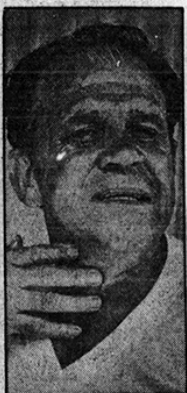
Twenty-three voices recite as one: "Frank Schlatt." The litany makes its point. Patrolman Schlatt, killed on May 13, 1978, while investigating a robbery at the Dixie Furniture Store in Northwest Atlanta, graduated from the Atlanta Police Academy in the summer of 1973.

Upon completion of the 12-week, 480-hour Basic Law Enforcement Training Course, the five women and 17 men now enrolled at the Academy are expected to have a working knowledge of an astounding range of "police functions."

The Academy's course of study covers everything from constitutional law, federal, state and city law, criminal procedure, motor-vehicle law and firearms to crisis intervention, mental health, courtroom demeanor and hostage negotiation.

Classes are held in juvenile law, police liability, community relations, patrol and observation and crime-scene search techniques, narcotics investigation, the routine mechanics of arrest, first aid and every one of the myriad bits of knowledge necessary to the performance of the single most complex duty found at any level in the criminal justice system.

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Police

Continued From Page 1-B

But there is one overriding concern that pervades the entire field of study — staying alive.

Students here are training for a business that can kill a business in which survival is a daily concern. And they're reminded of the fact at every moment.

The warnings are constant, and not always verbal. Lining the walls of the academy lunchroom are small brass plaques honoring police officers "killed in the line of duty." Each plaque bluntly details the circumstance of death. "Shot by domestic person." "Shot investigating a burglary." "Shot during robbery." "Shot quelling a disturbance." "Shot in gun battle."

This college for the police arts is a laboratory of the streets, with few of the illusions of academe. The pistol range features firing cross-bars set at the height of an automobile hood. Its targets are placed at 15-yard intervals. People, recruits learn, tend to exchange pistol shots at close range. "Bump shots."

Wrist-strapped dummy stands in a corner of the weight lifting room. The mite bad guy has suffered a broken neck. At the hands of police recruits studying tilly-climb technique. Everyday, recruits hear the statistics and are warned of the brutality and danger of "the streets": "A firearm is your last resort." Academy students are told, "Use it only if all else fails."

"Incapacitate a man (with a night stick)," recruits are instructed. "Don't bash his skull in. Hit him in the knee. He'll go down all right. You don't have to kill him."

"Crisis intervention," says instructor Sgt. Julius Derico, "is a 23-hour class. It's in such situations, domestic crises, that most officers mess up. And in this work, you can't afford to make 'just one' mistake. There was a time when recruits were simply sworn in, given a badge and gun and sent out on the streets. We're here to prepare them. There's no way of knowing though how someone will actually react in a situation. That's why the recruits will go through eight weeks of field training after they graduate from the Academy in late September. Each recruit will go into the field teamed with a seasoned veteran, working various areas and shifts, before they're allowed to go out on the streets alone."

"Do all you can," Derico tells recruits, "before you shoot the guy. You must know the proper searches and defense tactics. If you're not careful, you'll be on a plaque at police headquarters."

"On the pistol range," Derico says, "we used to hold on to all the shell casings in order to keep track of how many rounds were left. Then a California highway patrolman was found shot to death. They pried open his hand and found it full of casing. Out of habit, he was holding onto those casing. Maybe if he'd had a free hand, he might have survived. Now we tell (recruits) 'Drop 'em'."

"Count your shots," an instructor told the class recently. "It's easy to forget how many rounds are left in the chamber. If you're chasing a suspect and run out of shots at a critical moment — it's all over. Remember — count your shots so you have one left for him."

"You will all be carrying standard 38 service revolvers," recruits are told. "They won't go through an engine block. They're lucky to get through a door. You might be up against bigger weapons. Make sure you have a clear line of sight."

"A police officer's chances for survival have narrowed," a recruiting film explains. "Too many brave, but foolish, untrained men have died. Prepare for survival. . . . With proper training, the odds against you can be narrowed."

The police officer labors daily in the shadow of death. And "The key," a sign in the academy offices reads, "is common sense."

In late May, of this year, U.S. District Court Judge

'No Problems' With N-Test

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (AP) — The Nevada announced underground nuclear test of the year was detonated Thursday at the sprawling Nevada Test Site. The Department of Energy said. The weapons-related test, code-named "Panir," had a yield of between 20,000 and 150,000 tons of TNT. DOE spokesman Dave Miller said there were "no problems as far as a test, everything was fine."

POLICE ACADEMY



Police Recruits Take Off For A Run

Charles A. Moye agreed to allow the City of Atlanta to hire 100 new police officers, ending a year-long freeze on the police hiring that had left the city police force "critically understaffed." While charges of racial bias in the promotional procedure were being argued in federal court, the police bureau's staff of 1,100 sworn officers was well below its one-time employment level of 1,700.

According to police commissioner Ben Brown, the Atlanta force loses about nine officers each month from resignation and retirement. By December, when the Academy's 23 recruits assume their full duties after completing classroom- and field-training programs, the department will have already lost more personnel than the current recruit class will be able to replace.

The current crop of recruits includes men and women who have been waiting as many as four years for a place in the city's police ranks. Among the recruits are eight college graduates and four men and women with "some college level education." There is one former female officer from Washington, D.C., several "police guards" who served apprenticeships as police assistants in cabinets, subways, and around the hiring freeze, a 42-year old Baptist minister, a 42-year old art dealer, an emergency medical technician, an Army MP and a former University of South Florida mass communications major who "just wanted a job and look the first thing that came along."

One recruit, who requested anonymity because he "just wants to do (his) job without any added pressure from publicity," has a master's degree in sociology. He became so impressed with "the police function" while interviewing working officers as a researcher for the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration he decided to become a police officer himself.

"If done correctly," he says, "police work is the most difficult, challenging job I can think of. It's a function so incredibly vast. So much is demanded of you at all times. You're constantly called upon to respond to crisis situations. There are dozens of things you must do properly, all at once."

"The job demands that you be in top shape, mentally and physically," he says. "I believe that the president of the United States has an easier job than the ordinary police officer. The president has a staff of 150 people working with him, examining situations, weighing alternatives before taking action. As a police officer, you're a staff of one and constantly faced with crucial, split-second decisions. The police function is so complex, I can't think of any line of work that would be more challenging, more demanding."

"I think attitudes toward police officers are changing," says 31-year old Bernadette

Hernandez, a veteran of four years with the U.S. Marine Corps, as well as two years with the Washington, D.C., police department. "Being tough and authoritarian is NOT a prerequisite of police service."

Minister, Pawley says, "I'm not supported by any parish. I've always supported myself in my ministry, preaching at meetings, revivals, visiting nursing homes, jails, hospitals. The Bible tells us that we must help relieve the pain and suffering and heartbreak of the people. The police officer has a unique opportunity to do that. He's the God Samaritan who gets down in the ditch with those who are suffering, helping the man who has been beaten and robbed."

"Ministers," Pawley says, "mustn't be afraid to leave their church and go right to the people. They shouldn't be afraid to see profanity and suffering and depravity. Christ went to the sick, to those suffering. As a police officer, I think I can go where I'm most needed."

Monty Lawson says she's becoming a police officer "out of necessity." Recently graduated from the University of South Florida's mass communications school, Ms. Lawson says "I haven't been able to find a job anywhere. I figured this was a way to go back to school without having to take out another loan. They pay us to go to this school you know. Besides, can you think of any job more interesting than police work?"

Someone asked a recruit "why in the world (he wanted) to be a cop?" David

Elliot, who worked as a police guard while awaiting an end to the police hiring freeze, replied: "You paint houses for 20 years and what have you done? You've painted a bunch of houses. So what? But you work as a cop for 20 years, brother, you've done something."

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