

## AMID NEW REVELATIONS, ALEX ODEH'S ASSASSINATION IN 1985 REMAINS UNSOLVED



Courtesy of the Odeh family

A retired Santa Ana police lieutenant speaks publicly for the first time about being on the scene of '85 bombing and the investigation that followed.

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

**O**n the morning of Oct. 11, 1985, Santa Ana police officer Hugh Mooney received an urgent call from the department's watch commander about a bombing. Around 9 a.m., a thunderous blast demolished the second-story of an office building on 17th Street and left one man, Alex Odeh, critically injured.

Mooney sent homicide investigators over to Western Medical Center in Santa Ana where doctors desperately tried to save Odeh's life.

"The information I had was that he had a traumatic amputation of one of his legs," said Mooney, who hasn't spoken publicly about that day until now. "It didn't look good for him. I wanted to get a dying declaration if one was available."

But Odeh, a Palestinian American activist, never regained consciousness and died two hours after a rigged pipe bomb detonated when he opened the door to the Santa Ana office of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee; Odeh served as West Coast regional director of the civil rights organization formed in 1980 to combat anti-Arab stereotypes in U.S.

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**RIGHT: A STATUE** dedicated to Alex Odeh, a Palestinian American activist killed in a 1985 office bombing, stands outside the Santa Ana Public Library.

Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer



## Santa Ana officials address police killing

They react with criticism and hopes for justice after a councilman's cousin was fatally shot by Anaheim officers.

BY BEN BRAZIL

A week after a Santa Ana councilman's cousin was shot and killed by Anaheim police, city officials addressed the incident on Tuesday night.

Councilman Johnathan Hernandez's cousin Brandon Lopez was killed on Sept. 28 after a car chase and hours-long standoff with police at a construction area on Santa Ana Boulevard in Santa Ana. Lopez was allegedly driving a stolen car and was wanted for armed robberies.

Hernandez has said Lopez was suffering from a mental health crisis and Anaheim police unnecessarily escalated the situation.

California Atty. Gen. Rob Bonta announced last week that the California Department of Justice will investigate the shooting under Assembly Bill 1506, which requires the department to investigate all police shootings resulting in the death of an unarmed civilian in the state. Anaheim police spokesman Shane Carringer said the department's Internal Affairs unit will examine if the officers' actions were within the scope of department policy and the Major Incident Review Team will conduct an examination of the incident with regard to tactics, training, equipment, policy, communication and command and control. The MIRT investigation will focus on how employees performed in those areas and what improvements can be made, Carringer said.

Carringer said four officers were involved in the shooting, but they are not being publicly identified yet.

During a somber speech at the Santa Ana council meeting, Hernandez spoke about the need for police reform and said his cousin

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## OCC's Doyle Arts Pavilion explores humanity and nature's connection

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

**E**xamining the inseparability between humanity and nature is a task that requires a certain vigilance, since humanity and nature are constantly changing. Orange Coast College's Frank M. Doyle Arts Pavilion exhibition, "What Will Remain: Art in the Time of Human Dominion" explores that theme and recognizes that "humans have clearly marked the Earth in a way that may be detectable millennia from now when future archaeologists dig through sediments yet to be."

The group show, running Oct. 11 until Dec. 4, is curated by the

Doyle's director, Tyler Stallings, and features work from faculty in the departments of Art, Digital Media and Design, Film and Television, and Photography from the Visual and Performing Arts Division at OCC. Twenty-five individual artists and one collective of five artists for a total of 30 participants are featured.

"What Will Remain" frames the connections of humans to nature through a variety of lenses.

"Through lyrical visions, metaphor and visual play, and using varied media, ranging from painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, photography, video, digital media and documentation, these artists explore ramifications on the envi-

ronment resulting from a human-centric viewpoint," Stallings said.

Laurie Hassold's "Fossils from the Future" series, for example, uses sculpture to imagine "cross-breeds" of rock, bone, tree and flesh bridging the separation of living and unliving things. Hassold said her series reflects what might remain after we've become extinct and what other things might be allowed to flourish and grow.

"They might evolve or use whatever we left behind for ornamentation, or defense even, armor or attraction mechanisms for mates," said Hassold, a member of OCC's Art Department.

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Courtesy of the Frank M. Doyle Arts Pavilion, Orange Coast College

**MATTHEW NEWMAN**, "Gorehoundz Action Figures and display," 2021, cardboard, plastic, resin figure.

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# O.C. Sheriff’s Department is rolling out body camera program after years of consideration

BY BEN BRAZIL

Following in the footsteps of other Orange County law enforcement agencies, the Orange County Sheriff’s Department finally started rolling out body-worn cameras this week after years of consideration.

The move is meant to promote transparency and aid investigations.

“I think some of the most important aspects are that collection of evidence of course, but also just enhancing public trust and having that accountability for everybody that’s possibly involved in whatever incident that is being recorded,” Sgt. Matthew Timmins said.

Timmins said the body cams will be rolled out in phases from the north to south divisions.

The first cameras were deployed this week in Yorba Linda. Eventually, 40 deputies will be using them in the city.

The department is aiming to have all the cameras — slightly more than 1,000 — deployed by the end of next year. In late July, the county Board of Supervisors approved a \$12.7-million contract for 1,051 body



Spencer Grant

**ORANGE COUNTY** sheriff’s deputies are shown in riot gear in 2017.

cameras and 335 in-car cameras.

Orange County Sheriff Don Barnes’ department has contracts with 13 cities, including Aliso Viejo, Dana Point, Laguna Hills, Laguna Niguel, Laguna Woods, Lake Forest, Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, San Clemente, San Juan Capistrano, Stanton, Villa Park and Yorba Linda.

Undersheriff Jeff Hallock said the department has

been considering body cameras for a number of years.

In recent years, Huntington Beach, Anaheim, Santa Ana and Fullerton adopted body cams. Irvine and Costa Mesa green-lighted programs last year.

About 47% of small- and medium-sized law enforcement agencies use body-worn cameras in the U.S., according to a 2018 report from the Bureau of Justice

Statistics. About 80% of large police agencies, similar in size to that of Los Angeles or Boston public safety agencies, have body-worn camera programs.

“We were very slow and deliberate about reviewing the technology and making sure that we chose the right company, the right contract to implement the program,” Hallock said.

Michael Gennaco, who has provided independent

oversight of law enforcement agencies for a number of years, said it’s “about time” that the Sheriff’s Department implemented body cams.

“Many of the leading agencies in that county have had full activation and deployment for six years or longer,” said Gennaco, who is founder of the Office of Investigative Review Group, which has been contracted with the city of Anaheim to provide investigations and reports on the police department since 2007.

Gennaco believes body cams will help encourage transparency.

“In my experience, I think that the deployment of body-worn cameras has been really a game changer with regard to the ability to have an unvarnished assessment of what has transpired,” Gennaco said.

“You don’t always get that, sometimes the cameras get dislodged, sometimes they get blocked from view because of officer’s being tactically engaged. More frequently they do capture at least some of what occurred if they are effectively deployed, consistent with the department’s expectation, so I think it’s long overdue.”

But Jennifer Rojas, policy advocate and organizer with the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, said that body cams have been present in the county for a number of years, yet there still isn’t accountability from law enforcement.

“I think at this point we have to question the extent that body cameras can result in accountability,” Rojas said. “... Body cameras were introduced as a policy reform to try to prevent people being killed by police and to respond to the demand by community members to prevent people being killed by police. And yet, we have not seen body-worn cameras result in that measure of accountability.”

She also said that body camera footage has been used to “exonerate” law enforcement officers and “prosecute” victims of police violence.

She specifically referenced the killing of Hector Hernandez, a Fullerton resident who was shot by a police officer in his front yard. A coalition of about 20 organizations has been working to hold the officer accountable, though Dist.

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# Prolific jail informant takes his own life with a new prison sentence looming

BY MEGHANN M. CUNIFF

A central figure in Orange County’s jail informant scandal took his own life recently.

Oscar Daniel Moriel, 40, was found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound in Huntington Beach the morning of Sept. 14, police spokeswoman Jennifer Carey confirmed to TimesOC this week.

Moriel was to be sentenced Oct. 22 after pleading guilty to felon in possession of a firearm in June.

The charge could have resulted in a life sentence under California’s three-strikes law, but a plea deal negotiated with prosecutors called for him to instead receive two years behind bars. It would be the second time he’s avoided a life sentence after receiving 17 years for a second-degree attempted murder conviction in December 2017.

Federal prosecutors made an unusual visit to Orange County Superior Court to support Moriel’s exceptionally light sentence, praising him as “instrumental” in a federal case against Mexican Mafia leaders.

The 11 years Moriel spent in the Orange County jail before his case was resolved was credited against his 17-

year sentence, and he was released on May 23, 2020, after also receiving credit for good behavior. He was to be supervised for three years by a parole officer from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation; it was that officer who filed a parole violation report in August 2020 that led to the new gun charge.

His case was being prosecuted by the state attorney general’s office. A spokesman said the state took the case because it originated with a state parole officer.

Moriel had been out of jail on \$200,000 bond for nearly a year when authorities say he committed suicide.

He’d spent most of his adult life in custody, and he became a prolific jail informant in not only the federal Mexican Mafia investigation but other cases as well. Moriel testified in 2013 he’d killed “up to five, maybe six” people, but Orange County prosecutors said the Santa Ana Police Department had not located any victims of those purported murders.

Moriel isn’t the informant who talked to Seal Beach mass murderer Scott Dekraai in jail, leading to years of court hearings that resulted in a judge dismissing the death penalty as a

sentencing option. But Dekraai’s lawyer, Orange County assistant public defender Scott Sanders, pointed to Moriel’s jailhouse work and prosecutors’ repeated failure to properly disclose it as evidence of a pattern of misconduct involving informants. Other cases were affected, too: A murder defendant Moriel questioned was released on a probation deal in 2014, and another had his conviction vacated.

Given his status as a trained informant, Moriel was legally considered an agent of the government and thus couldn’t legally question anyone who was charged with a crime and represented by an attorney.

Further, defense attorneys facing Moriel as a prosecution witness had a right to know information about him that could help their clients, such as a 2009 interview between Moriel and Santa Ana police detectives in which he speaks of grabbing “spots of my memory and [making] it seem like it was yesterday,” according to a transcript.

Moriel’s defense attorney in the gun case, Christian Jensen, did not respond to interview requests.

**MEGHANN M. CUNIFF** is a contributor for TimesOC.

## KILLING

Continued from page R1

in’s shooting won’t be the last. “Let the mental health professionals help people in need because a mental health crisis should not equal death,” Hernandez said. “Long live Brandon Lopez and everybody else who has been a victim to police violence.”

Footage of the shooting circulated on social media last week. In the short video, police are seen firing flash bangs into the vehicle Lopez is in. He exits the vehicle and is shot while running. Multiple gunshots can be heard in the video.

In response to a question about why police fired the flash bangs, Carringer said he would not comment on specific tactics or equipment deployed because it’s an ongoing investigation. However, he did say that “flash bangs are typically deployed as diversionary devices.”

Santa Ana Mayor Vicente Sarmiento said at the council meeting that the Anaheim police appeared to be “a firing squad” in the video footage.

“Brandon was not perfect, as all of us aren’t perfect and that doesn’t mean though that he wasn’t enti-

**“Why make a provocative decision to fire a flash grenade into the vehicle, rather than simply wait? Why was there a forced evacuation of the vehicle? Why was that met with lethal force?”**

— Santa Ana Mayor Vicente Sarmiento

tled to due process, or did he abdicate his civil rights,” Sarmiento said. “As with other police pursuits, this one should have ended with an arrest ... But it shouldn’t have ended with a murder.”

Sarmiento later questioned why the police escalated the situation with Lopez and why the city was forced to relinquish control of the crime scene to Anaheim police.

“Why make a provocative decision to fire a flash grenade into the vehicle, rather than simply wait?” Sarmiento said. “Why was there a forced evacuation of the vehicle? Why was that met with lethal force?”

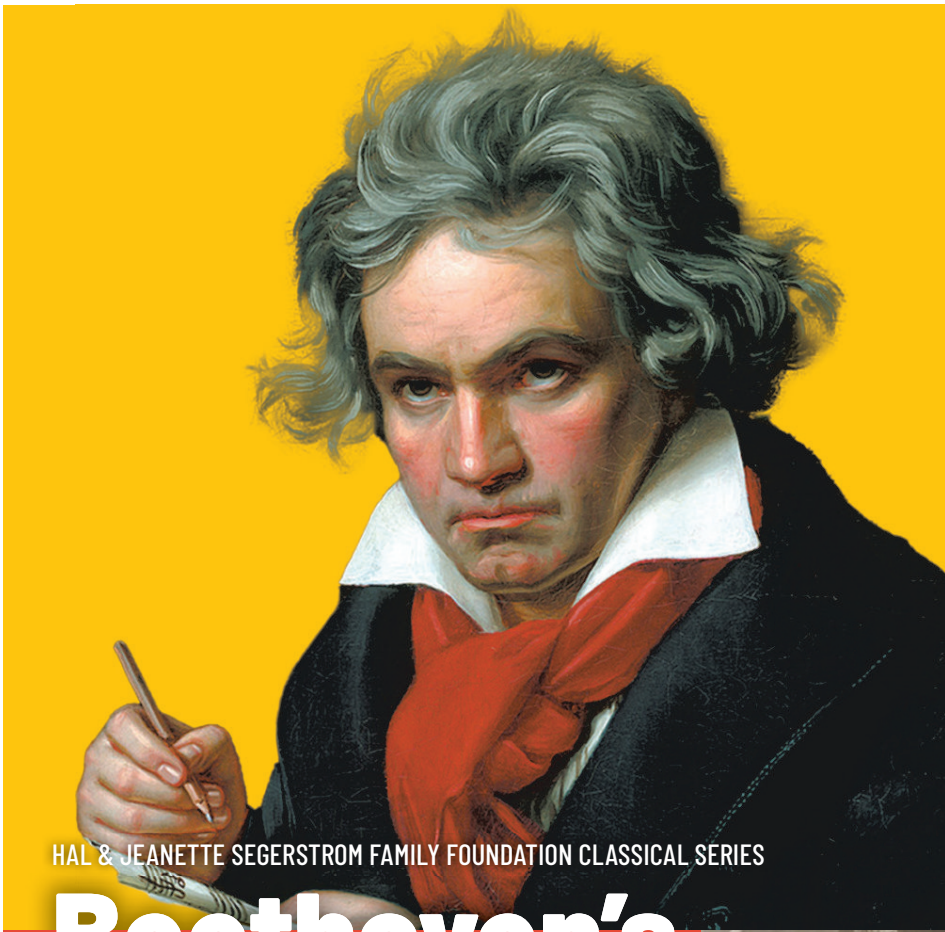
Antonio Lopez, Brandon’s father, also spoke at the Santa Ana council meeting. He described the Anaheim police who shot his son as a “death squad.”

“On behalf of my son, I

don’t want him to die in vain,” Antonio Lopez said. “As far as if he had to die for a cause, I want it to be for him to help people that have mental illness. And if there can be reform or some kind of restructure for teaching officers to be more respectful and more self controlled, so be it. But I just want to have justice and peace for my son. Because if there’s no justice, there’s no peace. And if there’s no peace, there’s not going to be any justice.”

Also during the meeting, the council unanimously approved a contract with homeless service provider CityNet to provide street outreach and care to homeless people, particularly those suffering with mental illness. The pilot program will steer these calls for service away from the po-

See **Killing**, page R4



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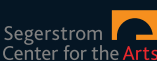
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## UNSOLVED

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media while promoting balanced reporting on Middle Eastern affairs.

A deputy chief assigned Mooney to manage the crime scene; he didn't know it at the time, but "Area B," the police-designated section of the city he commanded, became a smoldering site of a seemingly far-removed Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Santa Ana police and the city's fire department established a command center at an office across the street. About 20 minutes after taking control of the scene, Mooney noticed a helicopter hovering overhead before it landed on a vacant lot.

Four men exited the chopper.

"These guys come out and they come walking over to us — a couple of FBI agents and a couple of LAPD Joint Terrorism Task Force members," Mooney said. "They told us that they had been tracking a couple of guys from New York out to Los Angeles and they lost them at LAX. They were probably responsible for the bombing. At that time, they gave us two names."

An anonymous "police official," which Mooney says wasn't him, previously disclosed similar details to Village Voice reporter Robert Friedman more than 30 years ago, an account that disclosed the names of Andy Green, Robert Manning and Keith Fuchs.

Mooney recalled being told about Manning and Fuchs.

The three men belonged to the Jewish Defense League, an extremist group founded by the late Rabbi Meir Kahane that the FBI initially suspected of carrying out a series of bombings that year, including in Santa Ana. A month after Odeh's murder, FBI spokesman Leon Bonner publicly attributed the attack to the JDL — a claim that disappeared from all future comments made by the agency.

The case remains open and unsolved 36 years later



*Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer*

**LATE RADIO PERSONALITY** Casey Kasem helped raise funds for the Alex Odeh statue sculpted by an Algerian American artist. Odeh was the West Coast director of the Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee when he was killed in 1985.

with the FBI having never publicly named suspects despite the immediate intelligence Mooney says he received at the scene.

Without arrests, every anniversary since the bombing has become a ritual of frustration for the ADC as it continues to press for answers and accountability. In 1986, Rep. John Conyers chaired a congressional hearing on Odeh's assassination. Ten years later, the Justice Department and the FBI announced a \$1-million reward for information leading to a conviction in the crime.

The case continues to grow colder by the day despite all efforts.

Ahead of the Alex Odeh Memorial Conference this weekend in Garden Grove, the ADC is again asking questions, this time of a new White House administration. The group feels more optimistic with U.S. Atty. Gen. Merrick Garland at the helm of the DOJ.

"If any attorney general over the past 36 years should have a deep-rooted understanding of the importance of prosecuting

these cases, it's him," said Abed Ayoub, ADC's National Legal and Policy Director, citing Garland's past as a federal prosecutor in the Oklahoma City bombing.

The ADC is demanding Garland make public the names of any suspects and their whereabouts along with other key details of the case.

A person of interest, Manning's location is well-known; he's serving a life sentence at the Federal Correctional Institution in Phoenix, Ariz.

After being extradited from Israel in 1993, a jury convicted him for a mail-bomb murder that killed a Manhattan Beach secretary in 1980. During the Obama administration, the DOJ took an extraordinary step in 2016 and recognized the ADC and Odeh family as Manning's victims.

"It's kind of a paradox where they recognize us as a victim but they haven't charged him with the crime that they recognize us of being a victim of," Ayoub said. "What's the holdup?"

The internal classification cleared the way for

Helena Odeh, Alex's eldest daughter, and Samer Khalaf, ADC president, to speak at Manning's parole hearings in 2018 and 2020.

In addition to the campaign for justice, a proposed resolution from Rep. Lou Correa (D-Santa Ana) seeks to memorialize Odeh as a matter of record.

On Sept. 30, he introduced H. Res. 695, which expresses "profound sorrow" over his death as a victim of domestic terrorism. It recounts Odeh as a poet and a lecturer at Coastline College, in addition to his ADC activism.

"This is a man [who] was murdered, it would appear, because of his anti-discrimination activities," Correa said. "This is something that is not tolerated in America."

Michigan Rep. Rashida Tlaib, the first Palestinian American woman ever elected to Congress, co-sponsored the resolution.

Correa hopes that more of his House colleagues do the same, not just as an act of remembrance but also to renew interest in the investigation. He plans a future House speech on the floor

in that effort.

"This is a cold case and in murder there's no statute of limitations," Correa said. "We want to find out what happened. There's a lot of allegations. It becomes even more critical what the answer is given our concern with domestic terrorism."

More than a decade passed before Mooney got another close — and final — look at the Odeh case. In 1996, he accompanied Santa Ana Police Department homicide Det. Ferrell Buckels as they traveled to the FBI's Los Angeles office for an hourlong meeting about it.

Alongside Buckels, the lead Santa Ana police investigator on the case, Mooney recalled being seated at a table with FBI agents, New York Police Department officers and a State Department official.

The FBI appeared frustrated with the prospects of prosecution.

Earlier on, they allegedly enjoyed some cooperation with Shin Bet, Israeli's internal security service, in the effort to locate Green and Fuchs, both long ru-

mored to have lived in Kiryat Arba, an illegal Israeli settlement near Hebron.

But after the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 by an Israeli right-wing extremist, the working relationship cooled.

The Arab League briefly arose as a possible alternative at the meeting. According to Mooney, the State Department official intervened around that time with a lecture about the "bigger picture" of international relations.

"That was the end of it," Mooney said.

The FBI, citing the ongoing 36-year-old investigation, declined to confirm or deny Mooney's accounts from the scene in 1985 or the 1996 meeting.

Both Santa Ana police officers left the FBI office that day feeling like their time had been wasted.

"[Buckels] was visibly upset when we were coming back," said Mooney of the long ride home. "His idea of the law was that the law is the law, regardless of who you are."

Later that year, Buckels retired from the Santa Ana Police Department. He died in 2017. Nobody on the force is currently assigned to the Odeh case.

Mooney retired as a lieutenant in 2002 and is transparent about the case's gaps, too: According to him, no witnesses were interviewed, no surveillance footage existed nor were any fingerprints found at the scene.

How the bomb made its way to Santa Ana before being planted remains a mystery.

For all questions left unanswered, Odeh, a local citizen, husband and father of three daughters, was murdered and the investigation languishes on — not for an apparent lack of leads.

"It was a very solid case and easy to prosecute," Mooney said. "I feel really sorry for the family, especially the kids. They were so young. [Odeh] was a good man — a man of peace."

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## CAMERA

*Continued from page R2*

Atty. Todd Spitzer's office cleared him in August.

The Fullerton Police Department released body camera footage of the Hernandez shooting online. It was accompanied by commentary from the department.

"The department released a highly editorialized video of their body-worn camera footage," Rojas said. "It's unfortunate because it builds a narrative that really prosecutes victims of police violence, just as in the case of Hector Hernandez."

Hallock said the department decided a few months ago to move forward with the company Axon. The department held a pilot program with the company's cameras in 2018.

"Based on the size of their company, the speed they could get us equipment, and infrastructure that surrounds Axon, we just felt like it was the best choice for our organization," Hallock said.

Hallock said the company also uses the platform *evidence.com*, which is the same platform used by the Orange County district attorney's office to move video back and forth between



*Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer*

**THE ORANGE COUNTY** Sheriff's Department headquarters on Flower Street in Santa Ana.

the agency and law enforcement agencies while prosecuting cases.

Axon body cams will also work in tandem with in-car cameras, which the department has been using for years.

Hallock said the plan is to put body cams on anybody who is "public facing," including deputies, investigators, special officers, as well as sheriff's employees at John Wayne Airport, and county and court buildings. Hallock said the department will also have a pool of cameras for emergency operations, such as "riot control."

Timmins said deputies will need to turn on their

cameras when responding to a scene.

Once they start recording, the camera records the first minute before it was activated, though there won't be any audio during that period.

Timmins said after the deputies are finished with their shift, they will put the camera on a docking station to upload footage and charge the camera.

Deputies will receive a three-hour training session on the body cams prior to using them.

Orange County sheriff's policy states that: "A member may activate the system any time the member believes it would be appropri-

ate and valuable to document an investigation, incident or contact. In general, [body worn and in-car camera] activation shall begin prior to arriving at a call or initiating enforcement action and shall terminate once the member has cleared their self from the call or the contact and/or the incident has concluded."

The policy provides a number of examples of when the cameras are required to be activated, including all calls for service, detentions and arrests, DUI observations, searches, witness and victim interviews, prisoner transportation, crowd management and contact with the public that may become confrontational.

The policy also provides a list of exceptions to the required activation of body cams, including if a recording would interfere with their ability to investigate and if a deputy isn't able to turn on the cameras "prior to initiating enforcement or investigative activities due to officer safety, public safety or any other critical circumstance."

There are a few other exceptions listed in the policy.

Sheriff's spokesperson Jaimee Blashaw said that the department's Media

Analysis Bureau will conduct periodic audits to ensure proper compliance, which includes camera activation, deactivation, video tagging and categorization. Other departments in Southern California have not fared well in maintaining compliance from their officers.

According to a review by the department's inspector general from earlier this year, 22% of Los Angeles Police Department officers failed to promptly activate their body cams in use of force incidents.

Also, a San Diego police oversight commission said in a memo in late June that officers aren't activating their cameras when they need to.

"It's a big concern if law enforcement agencies have body cameras and they're not activating the body cameras when law enforcement officers are engaging with members of the public," Rojas said.

Gennaco said that the Orange County Sheriff's Department's policy needs to provide effective guidance to deputies to ensure that they activate the cameras when they are supposed to. Gennaco said that auditing is important to ensure that law enforcement personnel are activating

their cameras.

"Most sound policies will instruct officers that whenever there is an expected encounter between themselves and the public, they're supposed to activate the cameras," Gennaco said. "What we'll often see is officers will be riding to a hot call and they'll get to the call and immediately jump out and go tactical and then there's no activation."

"There shouldn't be much discretion there, it should be if you're going to a call that's hot, or encounter a citizen on a stop, either a vehicle or pedestrian stop, you've got to turn that camera on."

Gennaco said deputies should be activating their cameras once they turn on their lights and siren. Blashaw said that once the body cam system is fully implemented, the in-car and body cameras will automatically activate when the lights and siren are turned on in an Orange County sheriff's vehicle. Blashaw said deputies are being trained to activate their cameras when turning on their lights and sirens as the department rolls out the program.

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## KILLING

*Continued from page R2*

lice department.

According to a staff report, 16% of the police department's calls for service over the last year were homeless-related, many of which regarded mental health concerns.

The goal of the program is to have experts respond to nonviolent mental health or substance abuse calls who have training in crisis intervention, mental health, addiction and other medical services in order to deescalate situations so they do not become violent, the staff report says.

Many Orange County cities have been adopting similar programs in order to free up police and decrease violent confrontations between law enforce-

ment and people with mental health issues.

Many have criticized police responses to mental health calls because officers may lack the expertise to deescalate tense situations. Often, the sight of a law enforcement officer can aggravate a person suffering with mental health issues, they say. Besides the shooting of Lopez, this perspective hit close to home last year when Kurt Reinhold, a homeless Black man with mental health issues, was shot and killed during a confrontation with Orange County sheriff's deputies in San Clemente. The incident provoked outrage similar to the highly publicized Fullerton police killing of Kelly Thomas, a schizophrenic man who was beaten to death a decade ago.

Orange County isn't alone contending with the

issue. Since the killing of George Floyd more than a year ago, many have called for police to refrain from engaging in mental health calls. Los Angeles has been working on using trained specialists to respond to calls instead of law enforcement. Cities are pursuing these teams in a few different ways. Fullerton and Buena Park are partnering together in an effort known as Project HOPE.

Another method being considered by some cities is the use of mobile response teams provided by Be Well OC, which provides mental health support to county residents. It runs the first mental health and wellness campus in Orange County. Huntington Beach and Garden Grove have chosen to partner with Be Well OC to implement the response teams. Irvine is currently

exploring the program and figuring out how best to integrate it into the city's current health response system. Several other Orange County cities are considering the teams.

During the council meeting, Santa Ana moved forward with its potential creation of a police oversight commission, something it has been considering over the last several months. Sarmiento named council members Phil Bacerra, Jessie Lopez and Hernandez to an ad hoc committee that will study and discuss the ins and outs of police oversight models.

"I think unfortunately we had this officer-involved shooting just a week ago ... we want to get this thing moving quickly," Sarmiento said.

Also on Tuesday night, Anaheim Mayor Harry

Sidhu addressed the shooting. "Any loss of life involving police is tragic, and this incident speaks to the difficult situations our officers face keeping us safe," Sidhu said. "Our thoughts go out to Santa Ana Council member Hernandez and his family. Last week, I reached out to Santa Ana Mayor Sarmiento and expressed the same."

"We do not have a full understanding of what took place. We do know that this incident will undergo extensive review. We welcome that review, and we'll respect that process."

Anaheim Councilman Jose Moreno conveyed his support for the city to host a community forum on the shooting and the need for the city to be notified when the police body camera footage of the shooting is set to be released, which

must occur within 45 days under state law.

Moreno also said he hopes that the council's approval Tuesday night of a one-year pilot program with Be Well OC for the mobile response teams will help with preventing incidents like the Lopez shooting.

"According to the family, he was having a mental health breakdown," Moreno said. "It is unfortunate and devastating that the chase resulted in his death, and I'm hopeful that the Be Well OC contract tonight is one that will move us toward a more holistic approach when we believe that there may be a mental health condition happening in these circumstances."

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# ‘Hound Dog’ songwriter guest of honor at 21st Elvis Festival

BY LORI BASHEDA

If songs like “Jailhouse Rock” and “Hound Dog” hold a special place in your heart then warm up those hips and head down to historic Main Street Garden Grove this Sunday for a huge surprise.

Mike Stoller, who wrote both of those rock ‘n’ roll gems (and countless more) with partner Jerry Leiber, will be there — in the flesh — the guest of honor at the 21st annual Elvis Festival.

Stoller, now 88, will be serenaded by a gang of Elvis Presley tribute artists, who will take turns performing two dozen of the hits that he and Leiber (who died in 2011) wrote for the King back in the day.

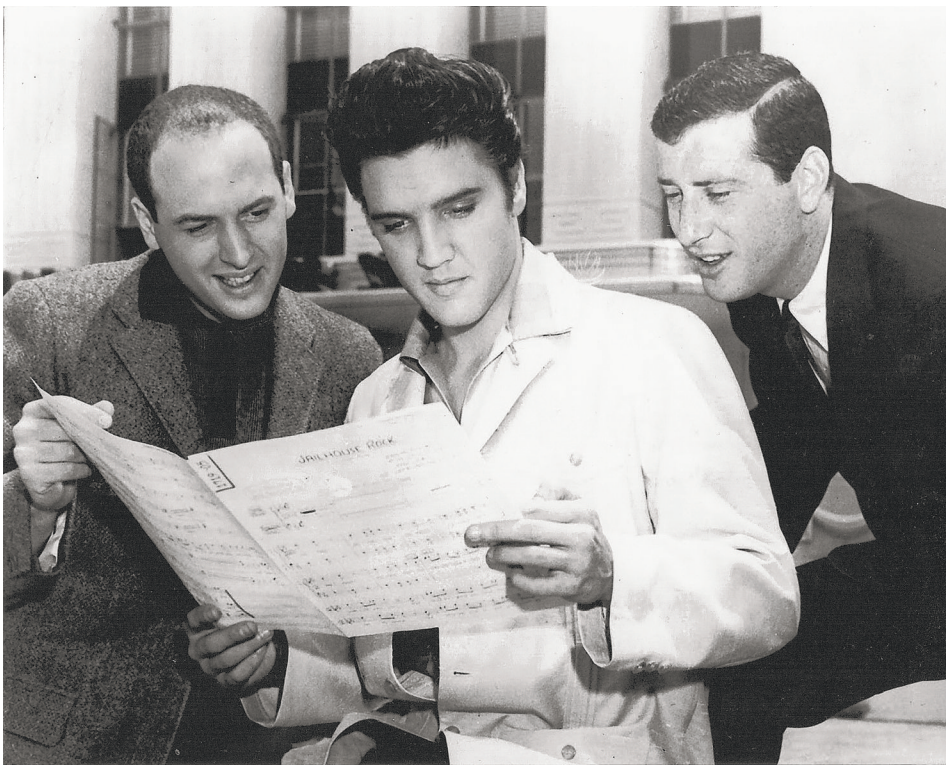
Elvis tribute artist Martin Anthony, who is co-hosting the event, said he can’t believe he’s going to be singing the Elvis songs that he’s been covering for 30 years to the very legend who actually wrote them.

“I’m just really nervous, excited, you know just really giddy to be in the presence of true rock ‘n’ roll royalty,” Anthony said.

The Stoller-Leiber-Elvis partnership all began with “Hound Dog.” What many fans don’t know is that, Stoller and Leiber originally wrote the song (in a car in 12 minutes) for R&B singer Big Mama Thornton.

But it was Elvis who, after hearing the song, recorded it in 1956 with his own style, giving it a whole new sound that is widely considered to have helped spark the rock ‘n’ roll revolution.

Stoller says he didn’t even like Elvis’ version of “Hound Dog” because he fiddled with the lyrics. The song they wrote for Big Mama was about a woman scolding her free-loadin’ man. Elvis was singing about a dog that



Courtesy of Mike Stoller

**MIKE STOLLER**, left, with Elvis and songwriting partner Jerry Leiber in 1957.

couldn’t catch a rabbit. “I was disappointed the first time I heard it, but after it sold about 7 million singles I began to see some merit in it,” Stoller said, laughing.

Elvis began telling everyone that the young songsmiths (they were 23 at the time, two years older than Elvis) were his good luck charms, according to Stoller. Elvis even asked them to be in the studio when he recorded, lighthearted sessions fueled by peanut butter sandwiches and orange pop.

“Elvis was completely open and never acted like a diva,” Stoller said in his and Leiber’s autobiography “Hound Dog.”

One of Stoller’s favorite Elvis memories dates back to ’57. The boys, then living in L.A., were flown to Manhattan so they could write some songs for the King’s latest film



Piotr Pieczonka

**SONGWRITER MIKE STOLLER**, 88, works in his home studio, as photographed by his assistant Piotr Pieczonka.

See **Elvis**, page R6



Sarah Delgado

**THE WOODEN FLOOR** students, from left, Jasmine Lopez, Paola Ross and Daniela Salazar, in rehearsal in 2021.

## Santa Ana group to hold auditions for higher education

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Students will be given the chance to dance their way to higher education when the nationally recognized nonprofit the Wooden Floor holds its annual auditions on Saturday.

The nonprofit serves students with financial need at no charge. The average family of five at the Wooden Floor has an annual household income of about \$42,420, which is classified as low income in Orange County. More than 150 alumni of the organization are currently enrolled in colleges, and some receive merit-based college scholarships from the Wooden Floor.

“Our annual auditions mark the day these students take the first step toward a bright and successful future,” the Wooden Floor chief executive Dawn S. Reese said in a statement.

Founded in 1983, the Wooden Floor is not just a dance studio. Children do not need dance experience nor are they required to have anything prepared for the audition. The privately funded creative youth development organization is dedicated to serving those with financial need at no charge in

order to empower underserved students through its year-round holistic model. The organization chooses dance education and performance as the core of its program because of the transformational elements of the medium.

In addition to free dance education and performance opportunities, families participating in the Wooden Floor program also receive access to free tutoring and college and career readiness workshops, and family counseling and parent workshops. The organization serves 475 students. Since 2005, 100% of their seniors have graduated from high school on time and immediately enrolled in higher education, according to the nonprofit.

“We make a 10-year commitment to boys and girls in third through 12th grade and on to college enrollment. Most are the first in their families to enroll in higher education and they effectively become change-agents in their community,” said Reese.

The annual auditions come on the heels of the organization’s three-week-long community engage-

See **Auditions**, page R6



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**HOPEFUL** students of the Wooden Floor in the organization's last in-person audition in 2019.

*Courtesy of Kris Anderson of the Wooden Floor*



**AUDITIONS**

*Continued from page R5*

ment program, Dance Free Weeks, when children from Orange County's most disadvantaged elementary schools are given free week-long dance instruction workshops. The Wooden Floor particularly seeks out potential students in Title I elementary schools prior to its auditions. Previous years have seen over 300 students try out, which the Wooden Floor says speaks to a growing need in Orange County. Last year, auditions were held virtually, but this year they will return in person. Taking place at the Wooden

Floor in Santa Ana on North Main Street auditions will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Saturday. Potential candidates will have an enthusiasm for movement, a financial need and be in the third through fifth grades and 8 to 10 years old on or before Saturday. While walk-ins are welcome, reservations are highly recommended and can be made by calling (714) 541-8314, Ext. 128, or visiting [TheWoodenFloor.org/Auditions](http://TheWoodenFloor.org/Auditions). Students in line by 1:30 p.m. are guaranteed to audition.

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**ELVIS**

*Continued from page R5*

vehicle "Jailhouse Rock." A piano was pushed into their hotel suite so they could work, but Stoller and Leiber had trouble staying put with all the action right outside their window. There were Broadway shows — and boozy jazz clubs where cats named Miles Davis, Count Basie and Thelonious Monk were blowing minds. At the end of the week Elvis' producer knocked on their hotel door asking for their songs. "Don't worry you'll get them," the duo assured him, a little nervously. "Oh, I'm not worried," came the reply. "Because I'm not leaving until I get them." He then pushed a sofa against the door, sat down on it and fell asleep. Stoller recounts what happened next. "Jerry and I lit some cigarettes — cigarette smoking was a mandatory part of our writing

process," he wrote in "Hound Dog." Then they flipped through the movie script. Stoller sat down at the piano and Leiber started tossing out lyrics. By 6 p.m. they had four songs, including the iconic "Jailhouse Rock." Stoller says they were in the studio the day Elvis recorded the hit. On Sunday, Anthony will sing "Jailhouse Rock" to Stoller. Six other Elvis impersonators will serenade him with other hits he wrote for the King, including "Hound Dog" and "Treat Me Nice." The 40-minute tribute is set for 1 p.m. and will end with "Stand By Me," another song Stoller and Leiber wrote with soul singer Ben E. King. In all, Leiber and Stoller wrote (and often arranged and produced) over 70 Billboard Chart hits, including pop classics like "Yakety Yak" and "Charlie Brown" for the Coasters and "I'm a Woman" for Peggy Lee. "I'm proud of all of my songs," Stoller said. "They're like children." Asked where the tunes

come from, how the magic happens, Stoller (who fell in love with boogie woogie at an integrated sleep-away camp in New Jersey in 1941) said he still doesn't know. But sometimes he awakens in the dead of night, humming tunes "and then I can't wait to get up in the morning and finish them." He is still writing, by the way. He works most days (currently on a musical with Iris Rainer Dart, author of the novel-turned-movie "Beaches") in his Hollywood Hills home, which is filled with art, harps and pianos. The harps belong to his wife Corky Hale, a star musician in her own right. Hale, now 85, played jazz piano for Billie Holiday and harp for Tony Bennett and Liberace. Stoller says that if he ever gets writer's block he looks up at his Songwriters Hall of Fame certificate and tells himself: "Hell, if I did it before, I can do it again." The craziest thing is that most of this story

would have never happened had Stoller gone down with the Andrea Doria ocean liner in 1956. He was returning from Paris (where he had just seen Edith Piaf sing a French twist of the Leiber and Stoller song "Black Denim Trousers and Motorcycle Boots") on the ship when it sank. Forming a human chain with other passengers he managed to drop into a lifeboat and was rescued by a freighter. Twelve hours later he sailed into New York Harbor to find Leiber running toward him with the news that their song "Hound Dog" was a smash hit. By Big Mama Thornton? Stoller asked. "No," said Leiber. "Some white kid named Elvis Presley." And the rest, as they say, is history. The 21st annual Elvis Festival is 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday on Historic Main Street in Garden Grove.

**LORI BASHEDA** is a contributor to TimesOC.

**DOYLE**

*Continued from page R1*

Similarly, Matthew Newman's "Gorehoundz Action Figures" uses stylized re-imagining of action figures of the late 1980s and early 1990s to explore the way contemporary artifacts might be examined in the future. "For me this is an other dimensional relic from the '80s that was recovered after our world has ended," Newman said. Stallings notes that toys can also be a signifier of the times in which they were created. "This takes it down to the lessons that are taught to young people, through toys," Stallings said. Newman is in OCC's Film and Television department, and an analogue-style video accompanies his classic 4.5-inch figures. "I did it like a VHS was recovered, and if you saw a commercial from back then, what would it look

like?" Stallings said his description of the show intentionally leaves out the word "anthropology." "I purposely did not use that word in the description because one of things that struck me as I was doing research was that there is some disagreement around the word," Stallings said, "because it keeps the human at the center of conservation." All of the work in "What Will Remain" asks humans to reframe their viewpoint about their connection to nature, a process that Stallings said is only just beginning. "There are other words, like symbiosis, that suggest a mutual relationship. So I tried to suggest that in the description and to get a different orientation," Stallings said. Besides Hassold and Newman, other artists include Cheryl Cotman, Rebecca Erbstoesser, Blade Gillissen, Ed Gomez, Will

Hare, John Hesketh, Chelsea Mosher, Kevin Myers, Dakota Noot, Kerri Sabine-Wolf, Kevin Scianni, Richard Kraft, Katherine Sheehan, Natasha Shoro, Timothy Robert Smith, Yuki Toyooka Smith, Noah Thomas, Holly Topping, Cora Volkoff/Debbie Dunne, Roger Whitridge, Sam Yip, Dean Abernathy, Joy Brennenman, Kim Garrison, Leland Means, Steve Radosevich and Kelli Elliot. A preview reception is set for Thursday from 5 to 7 p.m., and an opening reception is set for Saturday from 2 to 4 p.m. Admission is free, and parking is free throughout the campus during the fall 2021 semester. Modified gallery hours for fall 2021 are Tuesday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and First Saturdays, noon until 4 p.m. The gallery is closed on Fridays and school holidays.

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*Courtesy of Frank M. Doyle Arts Pavilion, Orange Coast College*

**LAURIE HASSOLD**, "Fossils From the Future," wall installation, 2020-21, mixed media.



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