

# The Slain Officer-- 'A Very Good Man'

By Peter Stack

The anguish welled in her eyes, but somehow a gentleness and astonishing composure was cast by the small gray-haired woman who was the wife of police sergeant John Victor Young.

"I don't want any quotes in the paper about his murder," she said, standing in the tidy living room of her Sunset district home.

She thought it wouldn't make any difference, getting angry at some unknown gunman who killed the man with whom she had shared 24 years of marriage.

The man's most distinctive characteristic had been compassion, and there was no reason to dishonor that by invective.

"He was a very good man," Geraldine Young said. Those six words were uttered firmly.

## ROLE

And as the work of John Young's life was assessed yesterday, it became clear that the man known widely as "Jack" had served the living in a role far beyond the duties of policeman.

Jack Young and Geraldine both grew up in the Sunnyside section, not far from the Ingleside police station where he was killed by an almost point-blank blast from a shotgun Sunday night.

They both went to Balboa High School.



SERGEANT YOUNG  
A man of compassion

When he joined the police department 22 years ago, his fellow officers and superiors quickly found out about Officer Young's abundant concern for the people.

Across those years, Jack Young carried a strong religious devotion, as well as a quiet notion of how people should behave toward their fellows. He was an active Roman Catholic.

These qualities reached through the ranks to Chief of Police Thomas J. Cahill. Young's good works, the energies he had poured into the

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operation of Hanna Boys Center in Sonoma, led Chief Cahill to name him his aide.

One of his duties at the Hall of Justice was to look into the records of convicts who were seeking legal rehabilitation which would lead ultimately to having their records expunged.

Young made it more than a duty. He personalized it. When one of the cons was hard up for cash, he would dig into his own pocket. He gave the kind of guidance — not preachy or patronizing, but practical — which caused many ex-cons to revere him.

## FRIENDSHIPS

They knew one officer had gone out on a limb, had been human, and many friendships developed.

"It was all to help a guy out," said a close associate yesterday. "He really believed in helping guys."

Veteran reporters at the Hall of Justice, along with officers, were beguiled by the quiet way in which Jack Young worked with people and talked with people.

Ironically, it was his ability to serve people rather than police them which led to his reassignment to what officers call "street duties."

When Alfred J. Nelder took over as chief of police, one of the first things he did was send Young to a district station.

"Chief Nelder said he was just what was needed out there on the street," Mrs. Young said.

## PROMOTION

Officer Young worked briefly at Mission Station. He took the civil service examination for sergeant, and was promoted to the rank last St. Patrick's Day. He was assigned to Ingleside station, in his old neighborhood, as supervising sergeant to help on investigations in major cases.

His life ended there.

Sergeant Young and his wife had no children of their own. But together they developed an enduring family of friends from a variety of ac-

tivities.

They poured great energy into Hanna Boys Center, a home for "pre-delinquent" boys between 11 and 16 years old. Young was among the founders of the center 25 years ago.

"He was a counsellor and friend to these boys," said John Riley, assistant director of Hanna.

"He was the man to get in touch with when they got back to the city, when they wanted to re-establish their life in the community," Riley said.

## INVITATIONS

The Youngs frequently invited the boys home to dinner, and with absolute regularity the Youngs and other officers and families would drive the boys from Sonoma to San Francisco the first Saturday of each May.

"They had a day in the city just having fun," Mrs. Young said. "We always took them to Playland."

Before joining the police department, Young was in the Navy. During World War II he worked in naval intelligence, and was stationed for a long period in Panama.

When he got out, he worked for the Arabian-American Oil Co. here, but the firm moved its headquarters overseas and he quit, in 1949.

## DIRECTOR

He had served on the board of directors of El Retiro, the Jesuit retreat house in Los Altos. He was an active member of the Holy Name parish here.

The Youngs' trim home here reflected his clipped and polished appearance. The lawn in front of their tan stucco house has been carefully tended, and inside, the walls painted a subtle pink, rooms shine with care.

On a living room table lies a photograph of some of the Hanna boys. Several of them are now married.

Mrs. Young courteously declined yesterday to discuss her opinion of police deaths. Her husband was the department's 81st policeman to have died in the line of duty — the sixth officer killed in

the last 18 months.

"I'm just an ordinary person," she said.

She added, that among all the activities he had devoted himself to, Sergeant Young was also a leader — past president, in fact — of the Policeman's Orphans and Widows Association.