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Police Reserve Officers Honored

By Sophie Braccini



Photo Sophie Braccini

The Moraga Town Council recently paid tribute to four volunteers, Greg Haskell, Ben Ho, Darrell Lee, and Jack Lucas for their combined 100 years of service to the town. The four men are Police Reserves who work eight to ten hours every month for the Moraga Police Department. On October 26, the Council signed a proclamation in their honor as they received a standing ovation from the audience. The four come from very different avenues in life, they serve Moraga with a sense of duty and take pride in making the town a safer place.

There were no incidents reported in Moraga on Halloween night, due in part to the reserve officers who volunteered alongside Moraga's regular officers. "Our first goal is to protect the children," said Ho, "Early on that night we kept an eye on the little ones who are so excited that they pay no attention to cars; between 6:30 and 9:00 p.m. we looked out for the kids in dark costume wandering right in the middle of street; and we checked on the teens and pre-teens. Most of the time, our presence is enough to keep everybody safe."

The Reserves' task does not stop at supplementing the Police Department for big events.

In Moraga, Reserves wear the same uniform as the full time paid officers and can perform the same police duties. Level 1 Reserves, such as Lee, can be out by themselves in a police car. Level 2 Reserves go out in tandem with a regular officer.

Greg Haskell is a business man who wanted to be a police officer since he was in the 4th grade. Unfortunately, less than perfect eye sight stopped him from pursuing that career. Serving as a Reserve allows him to live his dream, to share with acting officers and to be trained on an ongoing basis.

Ben Ho was in the Navy for 24 years, he is a firearm instructor, a former eye surgeon, a search-dog handler and has been involved in numerous rescue missions all over the world. He moved to Moraga 31 years ago to raise his family and has been a Reserve for 29 years.

Also known as Moraga Orinda Fire District Division Chief Darrell Lee, 21 years ago Lee added volunteering for the Moraga Police to his to-do list. He has received extensive training in law enforcement, as well as paramedic and search and rescue. Giving back is a way of life for Lee, who believes it makes him a better human being.

Jack Lucas, who is a banker in Orinda, became a reserve in 1985 after a tragedy hit his family. He too wanted to become a police officer as a kid, but went the business route instead. Like his fellow Reserves, he undergoes regular

training for certification.

In most police departments, Reserves are young people on their way to the Police Academy, waiting to get a permanent assignment. It is rare that a municipality can keep such experienced Reserves for so many years. "These four men bring invaluable service to the Department," says Moraga Chief of Police Bob Priebe, "they are such high caliber individuals and offer their unique sets of skills, to make our community safer."

The four men all agree that being a reserve officer is not for everybody. "There is risk involved," says Ho, "we carry a firearm and conduct the same police operations as any other officer." They also all agree that they get a lot of satisfaction from the time they give to the community. "My favorite time is working in support of regular officers," says Lucas, "we have a lot of respect for them and we feel a part of the Department family." They also have the satisfaction of really making a difference in Town.

"I love working the big events like the 4th of July or Halloween," says Haskell. He tells the story of one 4th of July at the Commons-late in the evening, a young couple came up to him in a panic as they had lost their parents who suffered from dementia. "That's where the bike patrol I started for the Town was very efficient to quickly search all the adjacent areas," he says. The elderly folks were located.

Ho thinks that one of the reasons residents believe the town is safe is because of the Reserves' presence. "Very dangerous areas where high levels of criminal activity occur on a daily basis are just 20 minutes away from here," says Ho, "having enough police here, visible on the streets, is a deterrent to the escalation of violence." Ho lives in Moraga and is always ready to slip in his uniform and report for duty when he hears of an incident on his police radio, like he did a few months ago when an officer was attacked in the hills off Rancho Laguna Park.

Lee, who also spends a lot of time in Moraga where his MOFD duty calls him, says he enjoys the added responsibility; like his fellow reserves, he is proud to serve the community.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

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