

The River Oaks Police Department

(1947 - 1997)

(Information compiled by Linda Claridge)

In 1880, the Zack Castleberry family moved about 10 miles west of the Village of Fort Worth to build their home among the beautiful oak trees. The Castleberry's gained their wealth by working the rich farm land. People began moving to the area and they subsequently built a community called Castleberry.

In 1941, the government was making plans to build the Consolidated Vultee Corporation plant and Fort Worth Army Air Field west of Fort Worth. The residents in the area became concerned about problems that might follow these large businesses, so they began to organize and plan for the future. On October 28, 1941, a petition was submitted by the qualified voters in the area south of Ohio Garden Road, running from Churchill Road to a part of Meandering Road, to name the area River Oaks Village. From 1940 to 1944, River Oaks Village grew rapidly and soon had over 5,500 residents. On June 13, 1944, a petition was circulated to other area residents (in what is now River Oaks) asking them to become a part of River Oaks Village. On May 7, 1946, River Oaks Village officially changed its name to the City of River Oaks, by the Board of Alderman adopting Title 28, Section 1 to 10 of the laws of the State of Texas. On April 1, 1947, Ordinance #58 created the River Oaks Police Department and the office of Police Chief. On April 18, 1947, Dr Jewell advised the City Council that he and his committee had located a 1942 Ford 4-door sedan, in first class condition, complete with a two tone paint job at Frank Kent Motor Company (now known as Frank Kent Cadillac). The price of the car was \$1,215.00, and was to be used by the Chief of Police. (Future Chief Frank Blue has stated that the car was a retired five year old Texas Highway Patrol car.)

On April 29, 1947, John H. Boyd was hired as the first Chief of Police. His salary was set at \$240.00 per month. He was expected to work a 10 hour day, seven days a week, be on call 24 hours a day and attend all City Council and Court meetings. On this same day, Chief Boyd was allowed to hire one officer. The first officer of the department was O. C. Overton. His salary was \$150.00 per month. Several months later, Chief Boyd hired three more patrol officers, so there could be two on the evening shift and two on the midnight shift. Each officer furnished his own uniforms, weapon and any other equipment that might be needed. If an officer had to work overtime, there was no compensation.

(see the "Chiefs" page for a list of all Chiefs of the department)

On May 27, 1947, the City Council approved funds for a police car radio. The radio purchased was a standard car radio which had been converted to receive radio traffic from the Highway Patrol (the Texas Department of Public Safety), and operated much like todays scanners. Officers could hear (receive) the radio calls, but could not talk back (transmit). If anyone needed an officer, the dispatcher would call the Highway Patrol and they would transmit the call, on their radio, to the River Oaks Police. The radio cost the city \$22.00 per month, plus 37½ cents for all calls dispatched to the car. Needless to say, the radio was not very reliable, so in addition to the Highway Patrol transmitting the message to the patrol car, the dispatcher would turn on a light over

the door to the police station, indicating there had been a call. Officers would make frequent trips past the station to see if the light was on.

On May 26, 1948, Fred Heiser was named Chief of Police, with a salary of \$240.00 per month. He instituted the first departmental pay plan.

| Length of Service | Pay per Month |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| First three months of service | \$165.00 |
| Following three months | \$175.00 |
| Following six months | \$180.00 |
| Following nine months | \$185.00 |
| Following twelve months | \$190.00 |
| Following eighteen months | \$195.00 |
| Following two years | \$200.00 |

Police Sergeants were paid \$10.00 more per month. On September 13, 1949, the River Oaks Volunteer Fire Department was organized and Chief Hieser's new title became Chief of Police and Fire. He received a \$10.00 per month pay raise as compensation for the additional responsibilities.

From 1955 to 1972, L. B. Dorris was Chief of Police. During Chief Dorris' tenure, River Oaks was one of the nation's most peaceful communities. Officers averaged only 10 to 15 calls per week. In 1972, Johnny Jones was named Chief and served for seven years. His wife, Brenda, was the first female reserve officer to work for the department.

On August 1, 1990, D. W. "Dub" Bransom was named Chief. During his tenure, Chief Bransom was instrumental in getting incentive pay for officers, upgrading the department's computers and changing the color of the patrol cars to black and white. Chief Bransom, an avid antique car enthusiast, also used his Model A Ford tudor police car to represent the department. "Car 10", as it was called, had been restored to its original condition and was the oldest working police car in the nation. Car 10 was used for a number of assignments, including patrol, police surveillance, transporting prisoners, the D.A.R.E. program and also appeared at numerous car shows. On February 5, 1996, Edmund Terry Fiene was named Chief of Police. Chief Fiene is credited with the inception of the Crime Control and Prevention District (CCPD) and the hiring of a Community Resources Officer. With revenue from the CCPD, the department purchased 11 new Jeep Cherokee police vehicles, which allowed each officer to have an individually assigned vehicle. Chief Fiene also established a "Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums" (CRASH) program which primarily targets gang members. Chief Fiene had the distinction of presiding over the department's 50th Anniversary celebration in 1997.