Roger Neth, longtime Police Chief and one of the Department's first sworn officers, passes away

With deep sadness, we share that our former chief, Roger Neth, a foundational leader in the history of the Costa Mesa Police Department, has passed away.

"Chief Neth's 33-year career in law enforcement was remarkable in both its longevity and its impact," said Chief Joyce LaPointe.

Click here to watch this CMTV video honoring Chief Neth.

Neth joined the Costa Mesa Police Department in 1953 as one of the city's first sworn officers. He proudly wore badge #2. From the very beginning, he helped shape the department's identity, becoming the first officer to patrol the streets of Costa Mesa.

Throughout his distinguished career, Chief Neth rose through the ranks, serving as patrol officer, sergeant, lieutenant, captain, and assistant chief before being appointed chief of police in 1965, a position he held with distinction for 21 years until his retirement in 1986.

Chief Neth's tenure remains the longest in the history of the department. His commitment to innovation and community-oriented policing helped establish many practices that became hallmarks of CMPD.

Under his leadership, the department built a state-of-the-art communication building, introduced vehicle-mounted computer terminals, enhanced DUI enforcement video technology, and

brought handwriting experts to Orange County law enforcement.

Chief Neth was the driving force behind early CMPD helicopter operations and was known for flying Santa to local elementary schools during the holidays.

Colleagues knew him as a dedicated professional who believed in being progressive, innovative, and above all, service oriented. He will be missed but his legacy lives on in our culture and community.