

KEY WEST POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Protecting Paradise

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2007 Torch Run benefits Special Olympics



Photos by Christie Phillips

The KWPD was well represented at this year's event, with some officers running and others serving as bike and motorcycle escorts for the runners.

KEY WEST — Representatives from various local law enforcement agencies came out in force this month for the 2007 Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics.

The run, which carried the torch from the Monroe County Sheriff's Office to the Southernmost Point and finally ending at Mallory Square, is an annual event to show law enforcement's support of and to raise awareness for the Special Olympics.

This year, the KWPD had a strong showing in the event, as several officers chose to either run the course or provide bike and motorcycle

escorts for the runners. Chief Bill Mauldin met up with the group at the Southernmost Point, where he posed for pictures with some of the Special Olympics athletes.

Runners stopped at Poinciana Elementary, Key West High and Horace O'Bryant Middle School, and met with young Special Olympics Athletes at those schools. The first stop on the run was at Publix, the main Torch Run sponsor statewide.

Every year, law enforcement officers from around the state participate in the run as a kick-off to the Florida Special Olympics

Summer Games. This year's 35th

Annual Special Olympics Games are in Tampa on Florida State Summer April 27-28. □



Chief Bill Mauldin and Sheriff Rick Roth pose with Special Olympic athletes at the Southernmost Point.

PAL girls basketball team wins state championship title, boys win regionals

KEY WEST — The Key West Police Athletic League’s girls basketball team won second place in the PAL statewide tournament held at Walt Disney World this month.

“This is history,” said Police Department Coordinator and PAL board member Charnette Valdez. “A Key West PAL team has never made it to the championship in Disney, much less place in the state.”

The girls team traveled up to Orlando March 29 through April 1 for the tournament, held at Disney’s Wide World of Sports Complex in the Milk House Gym.

The girls played five games, winning three of those, which ranked them high enough to move on to the championship game.

The girls lost in the championship by only 11 points to Holly Hill PAL,

the best-ranked team in the state.

The Key West PAL team was awarded the 2nd Place trophy in the girls 14 and under division, which ranked them 2nd in the State of Florida PAL conference.

“We are very proud of the ladies and we encourage them to be proud of their accomplishment,” Valdez said.

In addition, two Key West players stood out in the Hot Shot competition. Talia Jackson won 1st Place in the 10 and under girls division and Gabrielle Young won 2nd Place in the 14 and under division.

“The girls truly took over this tournament,” Valdez said. “They did a great job, and I know they’re already looking forward to next year.”

The Key West PAL boys 10 and under basketball team won region-



From left, Coach Glenn Hayes, Alexa Rahming, Shelisa Page, Shaniya Watson, Ashley Grinion, Ja’Taure Mathis, Tanisha Mitchell, Coach Tony McDowell. Kneeling: Mikayla Stansbury, Jasmine Winn and Gabrielle Young.



Photos courtesy of Charnette Valdez
Talia Jackson, left, and Gabrielle Young pose with their Hot Shot medals and trophies.

als this year and progressed to the state championship, where they lost in the second round.

PAL is a recreation oriented juvenile crime prevention program that relies heavily on education, athletics and recreational activities to tighten the bond between police officers and kids in the community.

First incorporated in 1910, PAL has a long history of developing bonds between police officers and children in the community.

One of PAL’s main goals is to provide local youth with focus and direction to help them become responsible citizens.

The program also seeks to provide quality youth sports and educational programs designed to develop children’s skills, self-esteem, trust and respect. □

Special Ops still fighting the war on narcotics

KEY WEST — The Key West Police Department’s Special Operations Unit has already made 23 arrests this month in two operations.

In the first, Operation April Fools, detectives arrested 17 people with a total of 25 warrants, mostly for the sale of cocaine.

Special Ops started the month-long operation in early March, working undercover to conduct street-level drug buys.

On April 1, the team conducted a sweep of the city to execute those warrants and arrest the individuals involved.

Weeks later, Special Ops turned the tables, conducted reversals in which detectives posed as drug dealers and arrested those who approached them and solicited them to sell drugs.

Six people were arrested in that operation, conducted April 14 in the downtown area.

For the full list of those arrested in each of these operations, please visit the department’s website at www.keywestcity.com. □



Chief meets Kennedy assassination detective

LEXINGTON, KY — At the Federal Bureau of Investigation's recent Law Enforcement Executive Development Association conference, Key West Police Chief Bill Mauldin had the unique experience of meeting a man who became a part of history when President John F. Kennedy was shot in his jurisdiction.

"Detective Jim Leavelle's notoriety and fame resulted from his being handcuffed to Lee Harvey Oswald on November 24, 1963, the day that Jack Ruby entered the Dallas Police headquarters and shot Oswald on national television," Chief Mauldin said.

"Talking with someone like Jim who was so prominent that day is like getting into a time machine and going back in time."

Chief Mauldin said that hearing Det. Leavelle talk reckoned back to the

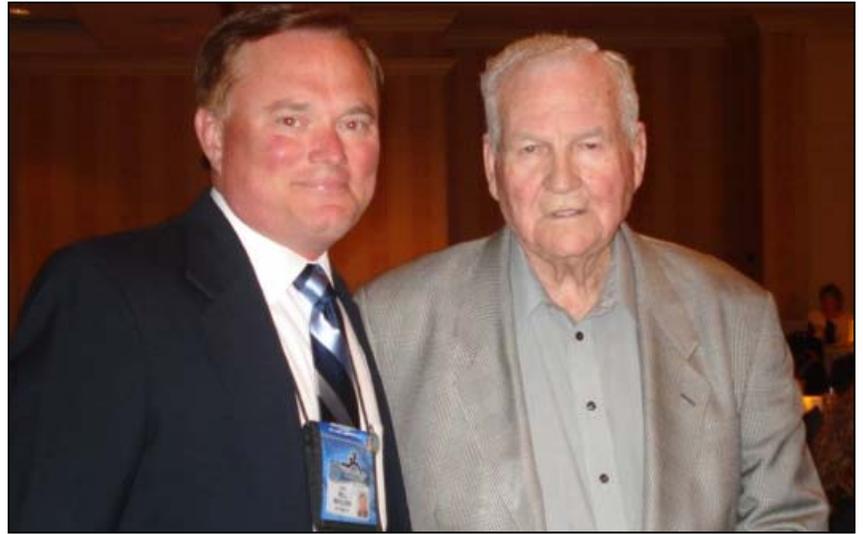
days of doing police work without the added benefits of technology and science.

"As he proceeded through the events of that day, it's quickly realized that one of this country's greatest tragedies is being told by someone who was as close as anyone could get," Chief Mauldin said.

Det. Leavelle was in the Dallas Police Department's Homicide Division the day the President was scheduled to drive through town. When shots rang out, the federal government took the lead in the investigation, leaving local police to investigate the shooting of a local officer in a seemingly unrelated incident.

During that investigation, police were alerted to Oswald, who was acting suspiciously, loitering in a nearby shoe store.

"Police moved in and took Oswald in for questioning in the officer's murder," Chief Mauldin



Photos courtesy of Bill Mauldin

Chief Bill Mauldin, left, with retired Detective Jim Leavelle in Washington, D.C.

said.

While in custody, the officers investigating the president's assassination found that Oswald was missing from his place of employment, the Texas Book Depository, the location from which they had surmised shots had originated.

"With that information, the connection was made: Oswald could be tied to both the assassina-

tion and the officer's murder."

Det. Leavelle was in charge of transporting Oswald to the county jail, what should have been a routine transfer.

"While escorting Oswald to the basement, Oswald commented that he felt like he would be shot," Chief Mauldin said of Det. Leavelle's recollections. "Jim assured him that he wouldn't, but in the event someone did, he hoped he was as good as Oswald.

"Jim recalled that upon hearing this, Oswald laughed. It was the first and last time he would hear him laugh."

After entering the parking garage for the police transport, Det. Leavelle saw Jack Ruby with a pistol at his side. Ruby approached Oswald and fired a shot.

Det. Leavelle attempted to pull Oswald behind him, but couldn't. Ruby was immediately taken into custody as an ambu-

lance arrived for Oswald.

"In route to the hospital, Jim attempted to obtain a pulse, but was unsuccessful. At some point Oswald gave a strong heave of the chest and Jim believes it was at that point he expired."

To this day, Det. Leavelle maintains that Oswald was a lone gunman and although he served as the technical consultant for Oliver Stone, he denounces the conspiracy theory Stone espoused in his movie.

"Jim had recent contact with Robert Oswald, the brother of the alleged assassin, and he states that Robert is adamant about his brother's lone role.

"Whether you believe Jim's lone assassin theory or the other theories that exist, what's most important is that Jim is still around to tell the story of an American tragedy, one which I hope will never be told again." □



Det. Jim Leavelle, left, was handcuffed to Lee Harvey Oswald when Jack Ruby shot him.