

► **Debatable:** When does a fatal traffic accident become a crime? B1

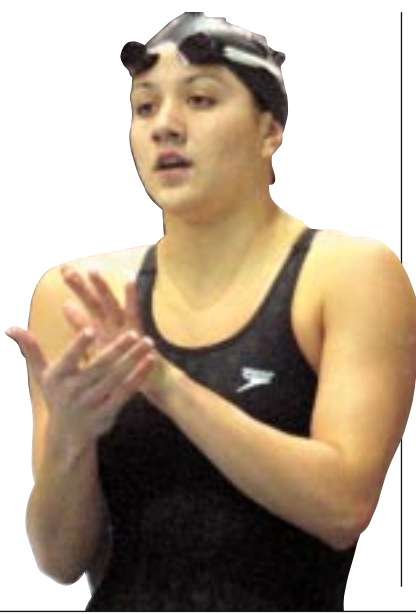
► **Job hunting:** Employers look for hands-on experience. D1

Parade magazine: Pay attention to the early warning signs of teen depression.



Where are they now?

Danielle Townsend starts slow but finishes fast in her freshman year at Texas A&M. C1



Personal histories: Book recounts life in Bakersfield's Chinatowns. B1



Wire to wire: War Emblem wins run for the roses. C1

SUNDAY

MAY 5, 2002

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SUNDAY PROFILE

Supporting your local sheriff

Gaggle of admirers wish Sparks well at end of his colorful career

By **STEVE E. SWENSON**

Californian staff writer

e-mail: sswenson@bakersfield.com

People like Sheriff Carl Sparks. Not everyone, of course. But enough to keep him in good stead with the public and, in recent years, with his own troops. That goodwill has given him a lot of leeway, which he has put to use. It's helped him face 12 years of going before the Kern County Board of Supervisors in bad budget years and good — usually coming out even or sometimes ahead. It has helped him increase the size and scope of the Sheriff's Department, including taking over a completely separate county department.

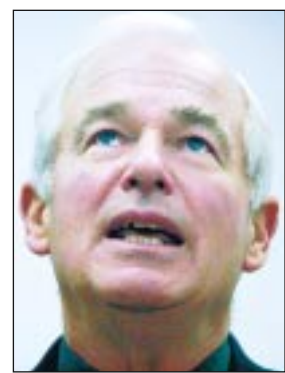
It allows him to get away with his own brand of "John Wayneisms" such as "He should get piped-in sunlight until they put him in a coffin" about a sexual predator caught in southwest Bakersfield.

It has afforded him strong credibility with his constituents, for the most part, even after he went back on a promise not to endorse anyone for sheriff during the recent primary.

And that goodwill has been brought to bear, even increased, during the many times Sparks has publicly teared up at a variety of events: remembering deputies who died in the line of duty, talking about deputies hurt in the line of duty, listing deputies' accomplishments, arguing for more money during budget hearings and discussing his feelings about the American flag.

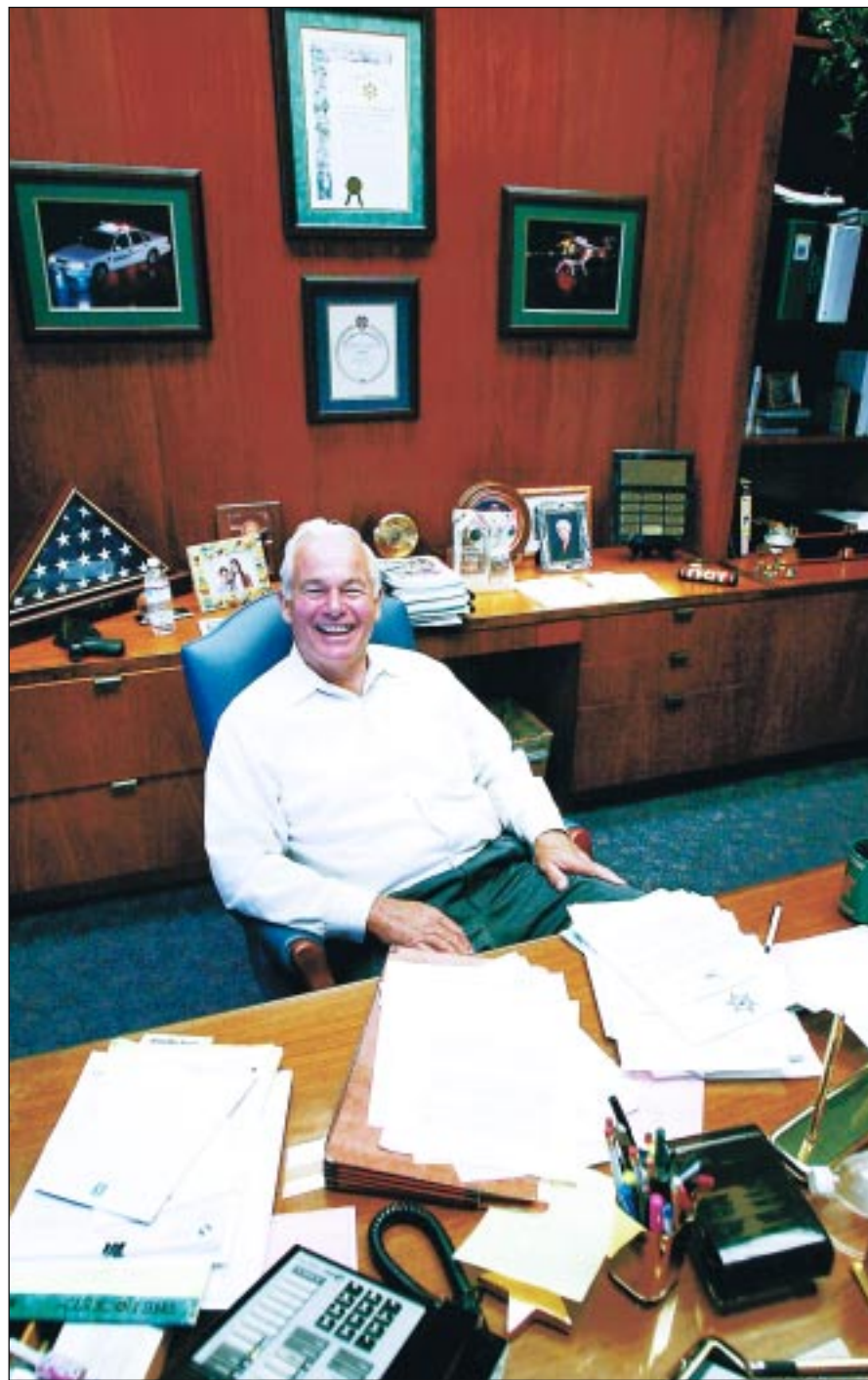
It's a lot for a guy who might have become a Bakersfield police officer if he had been able to pass the department's spelling test. He failed the test, missing six of 22 questions, so he set his sights on the Sheriff's Department, which didn't have a spelling test. He became a deputy in 1965.

Please turn to **SPARKS / A18**



HENRY A. BARRIOS / THE CALIFORNIAN

Sparks announced in January 2001 that he would not seek a fourth term as sheriff.



CASEY CHRISTIE / THE CALIFORNIAN

Kern County Sheriff Carl Sparks relaxes behind his desk in his office at the Norris Road facility.



JOHN HARTE / THE CALIFORNIAN

Carl Sparks prepares to take part in a race at Mesa Marin.

More bombs stuffed in mailboxes

Though devices did not explode, Midwest remains on edge.

By **KEVIN O'HANLON**

The Associated Press

OHIO, Neb. — Five pipe bombs were found Saturday in rural Nebraska mailboxes, heightening fears among Midwesterners already on edge after similar bombs injured six people in Iowa and Illinois the day before, authorities said.

Federal officials had described the earlier bombings as an act of domestic terrorism and said anti-government propaganda and notes warning of more "attention getters" were found nearby.

It appeared that the five devices discovered Saturday also were accompanied by letters, and at least one of them was identical to those found in eastern Iowa and northwestern Illinois, FBI Special Agent Jim Bogner said.

Unlike the bombs found Friday, authorities said, none of the bombs in Nebraska exploded.

After Saturday's discoveries, postal inspectors in Iowa and Illinois cur-

tailed inspections planned for thousands of mailboxes. Mail was suspended in the area and officials did not say how soon it would resume.

"We're using all of our resources for investigation and apprehension of whoever is responsible," said Rick

Bowdren, inspector-in-charge of the Midwest division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

He urged people across the Midwest to use caution in opening their mailboxes and said

anyone who sees tape, wire or anything unusual around a mailbox should report it to the local post office.

"We are asking postal patrons to keep their mailboxes open. We would recommend they tape it open," Bowdren said. "That way the carrier making a delivery can look in and patrons can look in and that anxiety factor will be alleviated."

The devices found Saturday, near



Bogner

Please turn to **BOMBS / A2**

Most state lawmakers tool around in 'gas hogs'

Drive to promote fuel efficiency apparently doesn't begin at home.

By **STEVE LAWRENCE**

The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO — Assemblywoman Gloria Negrete McLeod drives around her Los Angeles area district in a car that's easy on the environment and gets good gas mileage.

"I really don't like those great big cars that are gas hogs," she says.

But most of McLeod's colleagues don't seem to share her dislike for gas guzzlers, at least in the state cars they pick. In the campaign to reduce

dependence on foreign oil, they're not big role models.

Nearly half of the lawmakers who have state-purchased vehicles drive low-gas-mileage sport utility vehicles or pickups, and most of the sedans picked by legislators through that program also have less-than-average fuel efficiency.

"Those are not the best choices of vehicles either for fuel economy or emissions," said Sandra Spelliscy, general counsel for the Planning and Conservation League, an environmental group.

"Elected officials should be setting good examples for the public. There

Please turn to **CARS / A2**

Hopes of flowing river look to be going down drain



HENRY A. BARRIOS / THE CALIFORNIAN

Well water from this pipe will discharge into a canal to replenish water that flows downstream on the Kern River through Bakersfield.

City officials seeking way to keep riverbed wet with pump system despite lack of funds, water.

By **JAMES BURGER**

Californian staff writer

e-mail: jburger@bakersfield.com

The dream is to have the Kern River wet from bank to bank through urban Bakersfield from May to September every year.

But even \$23 million in state bond money can't guarantee that dream will come true in this semi-arid city.

Two years ago, the city of Bakersfield and the Kern County Water Agency came up with a plan to run water in the river during the summer —

the same time crops like cotton, carrots, almonds and pistachios have the greatest demand for water.

Water agency leaders would only agree to fill the river if farmers and ranchers didn't lose irrigation water in the process.

"If I was going to say, 'Take water away from ag to put water in the river; there would be hell,' said water agency President Tom Clark.

So the plan uses pumps to pull groundwater to the surface where it can be run down the river — without impinging on ag's needs.

The water agency, which acts as a clearing-house for state water for local water districts, got no complaints from the ag industry and the project moved forward.

The agency and the city lobbied Gov. Gray

Please turn to **WATER / A18**

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WEATHER

High: **86**
Low: **56**

See page B14 for complete weather information

FOR THE RECORD

Meena Sanghera and Kuldip Tut of the Sikh Society were misidenti-

fied in a photo caption in Saturday's Religion section.

Subscriber services: 392-5777 or 1-800-953-5353

To report a news tip: 395-7364 or 1-800-540-0646



MORNING BRIEFING

NATION

Bush decides to back out of a world court treaty

President Bush has decided to renounce formally any involvement in a treaty creating an international criminal court and is expected to declare that the signing of the document by the Clinton administration is no longer valid, government officials said. **A10**



Bush

WORLD

Airliner crashes into neighborhood in Nigeria

A Nigerian airliner taking off with 76 people aboard tore a three-block swath through mosques and homes in the northern city of Kano on Saturday, scattering charred corpses and blood-and-soot covered plane seats through a terrified working-class neighborhood. **A15**

WAR ON TERROR

Tribes angered by U.S. troops in Pakistan region

U.S. Special Forces scouring Pakistan's lawless frontier region for fugitive Taliban and al-Qaida have angered heavily armed tribesmen, who warn they are ready to do battle if the American soldiers don't leave soon. **A17**

STATE

Conflict-of-interest probed in state computer contract

A possible conflict of interest violation is looked at in a state computer contract. **A3**



Cars.com

Whether you're buying, selling, or simply own a vehicle, cars.com is your comprehensive online resource. Vehicle listings from thousands of dealers and classified ads ensure the best selection of new and used cars. You'll also find comparison tools, reviews, recall info, maintenance tips and more. Go to www.bakersfield.com and click on cars.com.

Home & Garden

Look to bakersfield.com for timely lawn and garden, decorating, maintenance tips and special offers from your local retailers. Just click on Home & Garden.

LOCAL

City debates business tax for rental property owners

Two local Realtor and apartment associations are seeking the elimination of a city tax levied against those who collect money from their rental properties. At least one councilman supports them, while another official disagrees. **B1**

New book chronicles the history of local Chinese

A tale of the Old and New Chinatown districts in Bakersfield, and more is part of "The Chinese of Kern County, 1857-1960." The book, which is due for release June 14, captures tragedy, comedy and intrigue. **B1**

EMPLOYMENT ZONE

Education vs. experience: Employers weigh in

Want that job? You'll have to earn it, employers say. When it comes to the old debate of education vs. experience, employers say education helps, but experience is key. **D1**



Baffert wins another Derby with War Emblem

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — War Emblem did what was expected at the start and then sprang a surprise at the finish: Bob Baffert's colt went wire to wire and won the Kentucky Derby on Saturday. The trainer, "horseless" just three weeks ago, was lucky enough to have War Emblem land in his barn when Saudi Prince Ahmed Salman bought the dark bay after he won the Illinois Derby. The victory at Churchill Downs was Baffert's third in the last six derbies; he won with Silver Charm in 1997 and Real Quiet in 1998. **C1**

ers say education helps, but experience is key. **D1**

REAL ESTATE

Home-buying requires research, assistance

First-time home buyers Virginia and Michael McGlade thought the sale was legit: A three-bedroom, two-bathroom home with a pool for \$117,000, which they bought directly from the woman living there. Four months later, their savings are gone — along with any trace of the woman — and they have discovered that she may not even have owned the home in the first place. **E1**

BUSINESS

Office space booming near The Marketplace

If Bakersfield were a Monopoly game, the area surrounding The Marketplace in southwest Bakersfield would be the Boardwalk of office space. A slew of buildings is popping up east and west of the Castle & Cooke development south of Cal State Bakersfield, and more are on the way. **G1**

BC ends up-and-down year with 8-2 victory

Before the season, the Bakersfield College baseball team envisioned Saturday's season-ending game against Los Angeles Valley would have playoff implications. But after an up-and-down year, the Renegades finished the season on an up note, beating L.A. Valley, 8-2, at Gerry Collis Field. **C3**

Red Wings take 2-0 series lead with win over Blues

DETROIT — The Detroit Red Wings wasted little time taking control of the game — and their playoff series with the St. Louis Blues. Steve Yzerman scored on the first shot of the game and Dominik Hasek made 35 saves as Detroit beat the Blues 3-2 Saturday to take a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven Western Conference semifinal series. **C6**

EYE STREET

Easter this weekend for Eastern Orthodox Church

If you thought Easter was celebrated back in March, you'd be right — and wrong. For fol-

lowers of Eastern Orthodox, a faith with roughly 250 million adherents worldwide but a modest following locally, Easter is traditionally observed one to five weeks after the rest of the Christian world. **F1**

Herb Benham knows a love story when he sees it

Meet David and Rosemary Lewis, relative newlyweds having married four years ago, but who first met in 1942. Yes, it's one of those stories. You've seen them a thousand times. The true-love-is-like-a-river story. The one where the river meanders, bends back, is blocked by a dam or two, but eventually finds the ocean. Sound corny? Maybe. But the facts speak for themselves. **F1**

New business going for success in potty game

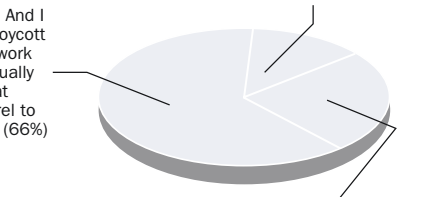
Brian Phillips is vice president in charge of sales for Phillips Environmental Products, a family company that has developed what it maintains is a better portable toilet, one that weighs only 7 pounds, one that you can fold up and carry on a backpack, and one that renders everything odorless and ready for disposal. **F5**

PULSE POLL

Question: Would you watch a daytime talk show with former President Bill Clinton as the host?

No way! And I would boycott any network that actually paid that sounder! to appear (66%)

I think it's great that a man of such power would want to be so accessible to the public. I'd definitely tune in. (13%)



To participate in the Local Poll, visit www.bakersfield.com/Local

Depends. Are we talking "Jerry Springer" style with Monica and Hillary boxing? Or "Oprah" style with Bob Dole sharing his feelings about Viagra? (21%)

BOMBS: Authorities have some leads on who planted bombs in Illinois, Iowa

Continued from A1

the central Nebraska towns of Ohio, Columbus, Dannebrog, Dav- enport and Scotia, had been placed in the mailboxes, not sent through the mail, said Weysan Dunn, assistant special agent-in-charge of the FBI's Omaha office. He said four were found by mail carriers and one was discovered by a resident.

"For the individual or individuals who may have been responsible for this and who may be listening: You have gotten our attention," Dunn said. "We are not certain we understand your message. We would like to hear from you. You do not need to send any more of these devices."

Earlier Saturday, Bogner said authorities had some leads on who may have planted pipe bombs in at least eight rural mailboxes in eastern Iowa and northwestern Illinois on Friday, but they didn't know if one person or several people were responsible.

Four postal workers and two residents in Illinois and Iowa were injured in the explosions, including one woman who remained hospitalized in fair condition Saturday.

The note that had been left with the pipe bombs said more "could be delivered to various locations around the country," and postal officials in Washington on Friday had advised mail carriers across the country to be cautious.

A map of the bombs found Friday forms a jagged circle straddling the Mississippi River and covering part of eastern Iowa and the northwest corner of Illinois.

Saturday's pipe bombs were found about 350 miles west of there, not far from Interstate 80, which runs through both regions.

"You might find a beer can in a mailbox every once in a while around here, but not a bomb. Somebody obviously is screwed up in the head," said Cathy Meyer, an Ohio resident and former postmaster in the area.



BRIAN RAY / THE GAZETTE VIA AP

Postal Inspector Virgil Guralski demonstrates the technique that will be used to inspect 10,800 rural mailboxes in Iowa and Illinois.

Corlyn Nun said he wasn't aware of the explosions in Iowa and Illinois when he walked down his gravel driveway Saturday morning, opened his mailbox and found a pipe inside with a battery attached to it.

"I opened it up, my mail was there and there was a clear Ziploc bag in there. I could see it was a pipe and it had a nine-volt battery in there," he said.

The 59-year-old carpenter said he took his mail and left the device behind, then called the sheriff. Officials later arrived and donated the bomb.

Postal officials said the bombs that were found Friday were accompanied by typewritten notes in clear plastic bags that began: "Mailboxes are exploding! Why, you ask?"

Then it said, in part: "If the government controls what you want to do they control what you can do. ... I'm obtaining your attention in the only way I can. More info is on its way. More 'attention getters' are on the way."

It was signed, "Someone Who Cares."

Officials described the bombs as three-quarter-inch steel pipes attached to a nine-volt battery, which appeared to be triggered by being touched or moved.

Jon Petersen, a special agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, said some bombs went off when the mailbox was opened and others went off when moved.

Postal officials were working with the Iowa state crime lab to devise a gadget similar to a fishing pole that would allow inspectors to open a mailbox without having to get close to it, said Ron Jensen, a postal inspector from Des Moines, Iowa.

In Illinois' Carroll County, Sheriff Rod Herrick spent Saturday morning opening mailboxes for worried residents. He fastened a clamp to the mailbox handle, tied fishing line to the clamp, then stepped behind his car and pulled on the line.

Thomas M. Regan and his wife, Gayle, had been married for seven years, intent on having children, but frustrated. Then, two years ago, they were rewarded with twins, Allaistar and Connor.

The twins were born prematurely, so there was a cascade of extra work. The parents shared the duties as equitably as possible.

Regan, 43, commuted from Cranford, N.J., to the World Trade Center, where he was managing director and sector leader of the pharmaceutical and chemical division of Aon, and even in the aftermath of a sleepless night, he would be smiling and bursting with energy.

How proud was he of the twins? Within the first five minutes of any conversation, he would digress into how much they were sleeping, what they were eating, how they were growing. Co-workers knew to check the screen-saver on his computer, because he constantly updated it with the latest picture of the twins. One day his boss came across him intently reading a book and highlighting sentences. He sneaked a look. It was a book about how to become a better father.

Christy A. Addamo is a traveling homebody. Christy A. Addamo was beautiful. She had big dark eyes and brown hair as shiny as mink, which she liked to have her mother, Rita, fix in an up-sweep. And smart: She made the dean's list at Queens College, where she got a degree in accounting that led to a job at Marsh & McLennan on a high floor of the World Trade Center.

Brave, too: She loved to travel, to places where she could swim with stingrays. She also liked to be home, learning Italian cooking at her mother's side. She melted chocolate and poured it into umbrella-shaped molds that became lollipops served at her friends' bridal showers.

At 28, she had begun thinking about being a bride herself one day. She had a pack of friends, who accompanied her to Yankees games (she liked Paul O'Neill, and saw him and the rest of the team capture the 2000 World Series) and on long walks around the city (she kept a pair of sneakers at the office).

For birthdays and other milestones, she would compose poems. For her parents' 25th wedding anniversary, she and her sister organized a big party. At Christmas, she took the whole family to Radio City for a show.

"Ah," her mother said the other day, remembering. "She was the best."

Vehicles and gas mileage for selected state legislators

State-purchased cars driven by California legislators, and the Environmental Protection Agency's city and highway fuel-efficiency estimates for those vehicles. Estimates for some vehicles vary depending on styles.

THE SENATE

LEGISLATOR	VEHICLE	CITY	HIGHWAY
Jim Costa	1995 Lincoln Mark VIII	18 mpg	25 mpg
Pete Knight	2001 Chrysler 300M	18 mpg	26 mpg
Charles Poochigian	2001 Mercury Grand Marquis	18 mpg	25 mpg

THE ASSEMBLY

LEGISLATOR	VEHICLE	CITY	HIGHWAY
Roy Ashburn	1999 Ford Expedition	12-13 mpg	16-18 mpg
Dean Florez	2001 Mercury Grand Marquis	18 mpg	25 mpg
Phil Wyman	2002 Lincoln Continental	17 mpg	25 mpg

CARS: Legislators should 'put money where mouth is' over vehicles, official says

Continued from A1
are plenty of good cars out there for people to choose from."

The Legislature buys cars for its members to use on state business, and lawmakers who participate in the program pay a share of the cost. How much they pay varies depending on the price of the vehicle and the payment plan the lawmaker picks.

For example, senators can choose to pay off their cars in two or four years, with the state paying up to \$500 a month under the two-year plan and up to \$350 under the four-year plan.

If it costs more than those amounts, the lawmaker pays the difference. If it costs those amounts or less, the legislator pays 10 percent.

Typically, a senator's share comes to about \$96 a month, said Greg Schmidt, the Senate's top staffer.

The Assembly has somewhat different three- and four-year plans.

Lawmakers can pick any American-made vehicle they want. The Assembly also allows its members to choose foreign cars that use alternative fuel systems, said Jon Waldie, the Assembly's chief administrative officer.

Legislators can also get state credit cards to pay for their business-related gasoline purchases.

The program has been around since the 1950s, and it's cheaper than paying lawmakers mileage for their business-related driving, says Schmidt.

"I would have to add three or four people (to the staff) to verify mileage claims," he said. "That's the way I look at it."

McLeod's state car is a 2001 Toyota Prius, a hybrid sedan that has both a gasoline engine and electric motor and averages 48 miles per gallon of gas, according to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates.

It also produces only four tons a year of greenhouse gases that are blamed for global warming.

In contrast, the most popular vehi-

cle among California legislators, the Ford Expedition, a full-size SUV, gets as little as 12 mpg in the city and 16 mpg on the highway and produces 11 to 14 tons of greenhouse gases annually, depending on the year and style of the vehicle.

The most popular sedan driven by legislators, the Chrysler 300M, averages about 21 mpg and generates about nine tons of greenhouse gases annually.

The federal government requires that a manufacturer's passenger cars have a fleet average of 27.5 mpg and that SUVs, vans and light trucks average 20.7 mpg.

McLeod, D-Chino, says she picked the Prius because she is "concerned about the environment and also about gas prices." She says legislators who approve environmental legislation "should put their money where their mouth is, so to speak."

But Assemblyman Mike Briggs, a Fresno Republican who is the vice chairman of the Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials Committee, says there are other considerations that go into picking a vehicle.

Briggs, whose state vehicle is a 1999 Ford Expedition, says he needs four-wheel drive to get around his mountain-and-valley district.

"Everything comes into consideration (in picking a vehicle), but the most important is the Assembly member needs to get from the snowy mountain area down to Sacramento without being impeded," he said.

Nine legislators don't take part in the program. One of them, Sen. Sheila Kuehl, D-Santa Monica, says she prefers to drive her own 1964 red Porsche convertible, which she says gets 24 mpg.

"When you drive a car for 40 years it's like part of the family," she says. "It's the best car ever made. I am in worse shape than the car."

Lottery

Saturday's Lotto numbers	
9-10-25-26-40	
Megamember	8
Jackpot	\$7 million
Saturday's extra rewards number	
30372166	
Fantasy Five	69-25-29-31
Daily 3	4-5-6
Derby	Horses 11-6-8 Time: 1:43.58
Wednesday's Lotto numbers	
39-40-45-46-47	
Megamember	11
Wednesday's winners	
	Prize each
5 of 5 with Mega	\$135 million
5 of 5 without Mega	23 \$8,831
4 of 5 with Mega	64 \$1,586
4 of 5 without Mega	1,939 \$87
3 of 5 with Mega	2,547 \$59
3 of 5 without Mega	69,047 \$10
2 of 5 with Mega	34,220 \$11
1 of 5 with Mega	174,630 \$2
Megamember only	289,336 \$1

VICTIMS OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER ATTACKS

THOMAS M. REGAN: proud father of twins

The sleepless nights, the bottles, the diapers — none of it bothered him. He would go off to work glowing.

Thomas M. Regan and his wife, Gayle, had been married for seven years, intent on having children, but frustrated. Then, two years ago, they were rewarded with twins, Allaistar and Connor.

The twins were born prematurely, so there was a cascade of extra work. The parents shared the duties as equitably as possible.

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CHRISTY A. ADDAMO: a traveling homebody

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SPARKS: Struggle to get more deputies on street was always at top of agenda

Continued from A1
Growing the department

Through it all, it's been a lot of fun for Carl Leroy Sparks, 61, who says he's still thankful his mother kept his father from naming him Julius Melbourne Sparks II.

Says his wife of 37 years, Linda, "It's got to be fun if he's going to do it, and if it's not fun, he will find a way to make it fun."

Still, his tenure hasn't been all bliss. In 1990, he rode the crest of popular support by defeating incumbent Sheriff John Smith with 70 percent of the vote, but he quickly let down his officers by failing to put more deputies on the street.

"The deputies thought I was the same snake with a different head," Sparks said. "I got my feelings hurt constantly. My inability to put more deputies on the street was my No. 1 failure."

It wasn't for lack of trying. He got state and federal grants, staffed the jail with lower-paid detention officers so that deputies could be freed from jail duty to street patrol, and made pitch after pitch to supervisors for more money.

He expanded the helicopter pro-

gram; added substations in Rosedale, East Bakersfield and Walker Basin; contracted with Maricopa to assume law-enforcement services in the town; put deputies in the schools; expanded narcotics enforcement; and established a rural crime unit.

Search and rescue got new equipment for river and snow rescues, the bomb squad picked up a new truck and X-ray equipment, technical investigations obtained a mobile crime lab, and top-rate shooting and driving-test simulators were added.

He also took over the Coroner/Public Administrator's department in 1995.

Just last month he announced a \$1.5 million federal grant — to be combined with a county commitment of \$2.8 million — to put 20 additional deputies on the street in the next three years.

He said there were 0.8 deputies per 1,000 population in 1990. There are now 0.7 per 1,000 population. The addition of the new deputies in the next three years will bring that ratio back up to 0.8 deputies per 1,000 residents.

While the ratio hasn't gone up as he would have wished, Sparks pointed



CASEY CHRISTIE / CALIFORNIAN FILE

Sparks reads Dr. Seuss' Green Eggs and Ham to Chrystie Hulsev's class at William Penn School to commemorate what would have been Dr. Seuss' 95th birthday in 1999.

out that since 1990, the crime rate has dropped significantly.

Slowly, he said, deputies have realized he's behind them. And he believes he now has the support of a solid majority of the 500-plus sworn deputies.

Comments from just a few of his

own troops and department observers appear to back up that statement:

- "He's tenacious and doesn't give up." — Assistant Sheriff Mike LeFave.
- "He's a good one to rally the troops." — longtime sheriff's secretary Cyndee Street.
- "I admire that he still has the

deputy in him, ready to jump into a patrol car and respond to a call. He's worked hard to make sure we work with the community to solve problems." — Cmdr. RoseMary Wahl.

• "My whole goal is to be a sergeant in patrol like Carl Sparks was. He brought a lot of good morale back to

the department." — Sgt. Mike Moore.

• "When the sheriff is as popular as Carl Sparks has been, the board pays attention." — retired Assistant Sheriff Paul Montgomery.

• "When you can show broad support throughout the county, that gives you a definite advantage. Carl has been a good sheriff." — Former Sheriff Larry Kleier (1982-1986).

• "Carl presents good material and makes a good case for programs. But he really does understand the big budget picture. That's one of the hallmarks of a good department head. He is very effective." — Kern County Supervisor Barbara Patrick.

Sparks has his detractors. But no one contacted for this story wanted to criticize the sheriff on the record.

Tough days

Sparks has weathered his share of controversies in his 12 years as the county's top law enforcement officer. They include several high-profile cases involving staff misconduct or poor judgment, and public outrage over a string of nine officer-involved shootings in the first half of 1995 — all ruled justified — that left five people dead.

In one of those shootings, a videotape showed a deputy shooting and killing a woman on the side of Taft

Please turn to SHERIFF / A19



HENRY A. BARRIOS / THE CALIFORNIAN

Construction workers prepare one of the wells that will be used to pump groundwater into a canal. The water will be used to replenish water that will be allowed to flow downstream through Bakersfield.

WATER: 'I can't turn off your tap to put water in the river,' agency official says

Continued from A1

Davis for \$23 million of the \$1.9 billion Proposition 13 water bond passed in 2000 to build the Kern River Flow Restoration Project, which is expected to create a temporary "recirculating" river using a network of wells and pumps. The agency was awarded the money and has had control over how it's spent.

In dry years the wells would be used to collect water during the winter, then release it during summer to coat the riverbed with a 1- or 2-foot deep blanket of water.

The wells are built, the pumps installed and the \$23 million has been spent.

But it will cost the city up to \$1 million a year to run the pumps in years when the annual river runoff drops beneath the historical average of 470,271 acre feet. Even with the help of the pumps in those dry years, city residents would only see a semi-full river from May to September.

The river pumps should be powered up and running by the end of this month.

But the city only has a fraction of the money needed to run them this summer.

City water officials say they may be able to scrounge up as much as \$100,000 and are planning to ask the Bakersfield City Council for an extra \$300,000 at budget time in June.

But those amounts would only pay for a "river" for three weeks around the Fourth of July and up to a week around Memorial and Labor days.

The problem is the weather. City officials were hoping the weather would cooperate with two or three good water years so the city could save up for pump operations during a crummy water year, said city Water Resources Director Florn Core.

But the weather didn't cooperate, squeezing out enough rain for only 47 percent of average river runoff and there was no time to save up cash.

"We weren't able to budget for (the pumping project) — you can't budget for a project that isn't there yet," Core said.

City Councilman David Couch said the occasional \$1 million cost to run the pumps is worth paying.

But he sees the biggest benefit as the quality of tap water in Bakersfield homes.

Core said that, over time, the flow restoration project will put high quality Kern River water into the drinking water aquifer under Bakersfield. "The premise for getting the money from the state was improved water quality — with the huge side benefit of added recreation activity and water in the river," Core said.

The water agency won't help with pumping costs because its job isn't to provide water for recreation, Clark said.

But in cases of individual swaps between farmers and the city, which

Where grant funds flow for Kern

The \$23 million grant that the Kern County Water Agency received from governor Gray Davis was spent on the following projects.

- \$11.2 million — Acquiring the lower river water rights, an annual average of \$50,000 acre feet previously owned by the Nickel family. Four-fifths of the water will go to agriculture uses. \$1.2 million of that money paid for land involved in the sale.
- \$4 million — Improving the Cross Valley Canal and creating connections to the Kern River canal and the Kern Water Bank canal to allow better transfers for the restoration project.
- \$3 million — Forty acres at Stockdale Highway bridge and the Kern River for a city soccer park that will double as a water recharge area.
- \$3 million — Six new water wells and the connections that will allow them to divert water into the Kern River channel.
- \$250,000 — Kern County Water Agency costs to administer the grant.
- \$1.55 million — Leftover money, which hasn't been earmarked.

can become very complicated, the agency would pay for some of the costs to move the water around as needed.

However it works out, many people believe having some kind of river running through the city is vital on a number of levels.

"It provides a different perspective when you drive over the Highway 99 bridge and see water and trees rather than a riverbed runs through it," said Sheryl Barbich, who led the Vision 2020 project.

The thousands of Bakersfield residents who expressed their opinions about the city's future during the Vision 2020 project believed the river was important in bringing more jobs and a more attractive look to the city.

"It attracts people to want to live here," Barbich said. "If you've got some knowledge workers who want to live here, either they're going to start their own business or they're going to bring their employers here."

For most of the last century, the river has existed only in heavy water years.

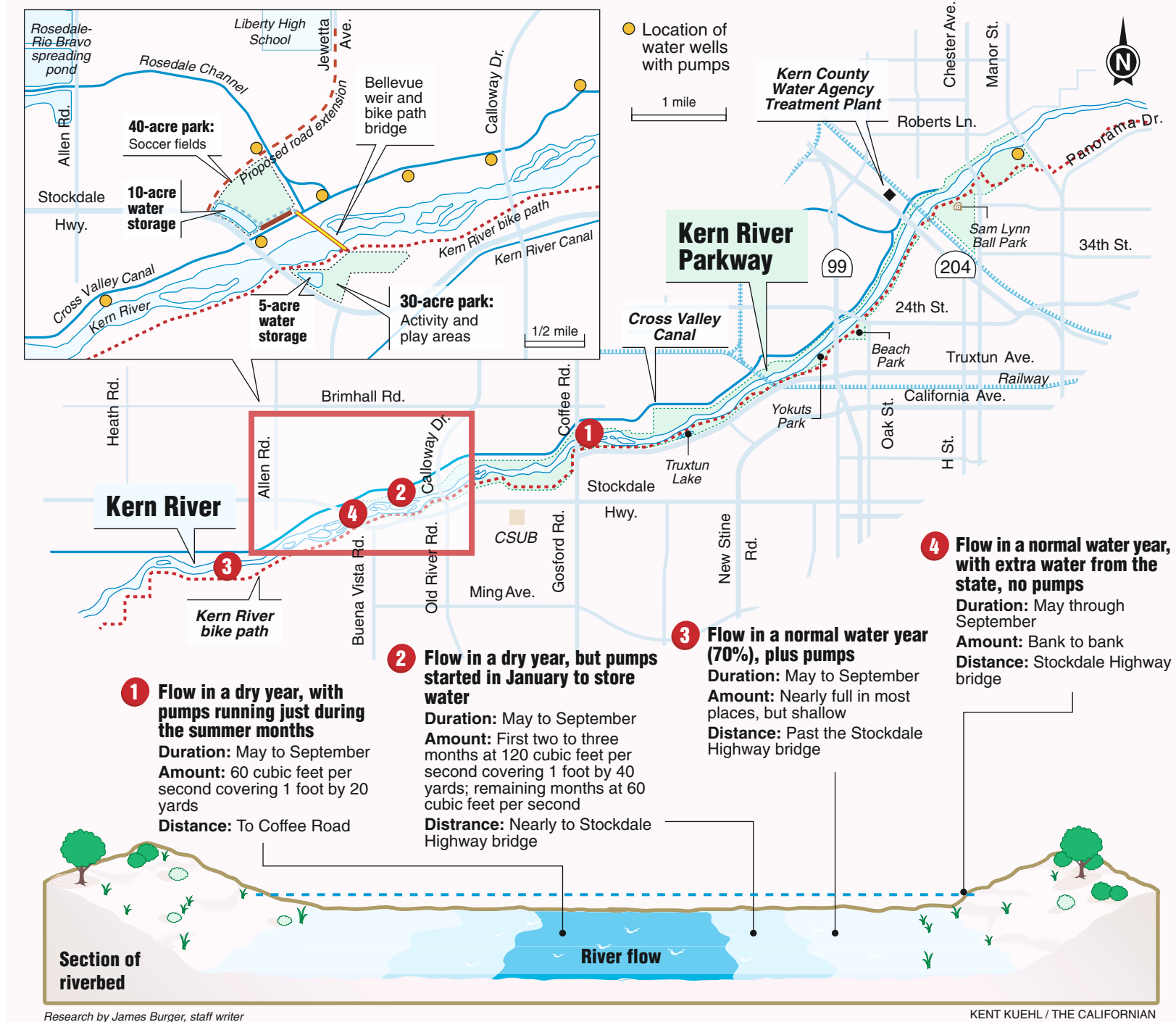
To water officials, the aesthetic value of a river has always been a lower priority than providing water to agriculture and urban users.

"I can't turn off your tap to put water in the river," Clark said. "Those things that are discretionary go by the wayside. The river has always been discretionary."

That Kern River Flow Restoration Project changes the river from an

Projected Kern River water flow

The amount of water in the river depends on the weather, somewhat. In dry years, project pumps will supply a minimal flow. Wet years will allow the pumps to provide a larger flow. If officials see a dry year coming, they can use the project's pumps and wells to store water for later use.



CASEY CHRISTIE / THE CALIFORNIAN

The Kern River flowing into Bakersfield near the Chester Avenue bridge where two women are seen walking in the water.

amenity into a community priority — but it cannot change the county's weather patterns, which means river flows aren't guaranteed.

Runoff from the Kern River watershed has been above the historical average in only nine of the last 22 years.

In dry years, the best the city has been able to do for river lovers was save up enough water to cover the sand at Beach Park for a few days around the Fourth of July.

The city didn't have a real chance to bring a summer river back to town until March 2000 when Proposition 13 was passed by California voters.

It took two years to get the \$23 million from that bond, buy rights to river

water and craft the agreements that will allow the project to work.

Drilling on the wells for the project began in December 2000 and was finished by October 2001.

Last July, the Kern County Water Agency asked Pacific Gas & Electric to connect power to the well sites. In November the water agency started installing pumps, motors and pipelines.

There were delays in getting power and finishing the pump work. But all of that work should be done by the end of this month — and the pumps will be ready to be powered up.

Everything was in place except the rain.

Back in December, snowfall in the

Kern River basin was well above normal and it looked like the pumps wouldn't be needed.

But the great rain year was cut short in January and weather stayed mostly dry through February, March and April — dropping Kern River supplies to a pitiful 47 percent of average. It is the fourth terrible year in a row.

So this summer, short of water and pumping cash, city officials will use some saved-up water and what pumping they can afford to wet the river during holiday weekends.

Next year there are no guarantees. The pumps will be ready to run and the city will hopefully have enough money to run them.

But politicians hold the purse

strings and the Bakersfield City Council members will have to decide if it is worth it to run the river. It is a decision they will have to make every year.

If the council cuts funding during a bad rain year the river will be choked to a trickle.

It could even dry up again if a very serious drought lingers for several years — dropping groundwater levels deep into the earth and drying up surface water reserves.

But, if the historical trend of three good water years between each bad one continues, City of Bakersfield Water Services Manager Gene Bogart said the city will have time to spread the cost of pumping over several budgets.

SHERIFF: Sparks known for blunt comments, tears

Continued from A18

Highway. The tape drew a shocked and angry reaction from all over the world as it was broadcast internationally.

The woman was armed and had made a threatening move toward a deputy, as was determined in a review that found the shooting justified.

In 1996 Sheriff's Cmdr. Don Fredenburg was convicted of misappropriating county property in connection with an alleged affair with a Lerdo Jail female inmate. He was sentenced to four years in prison.

Then last year, Sparks acknowledged inadequate attention to property-room operations led to the disappearance of 2 pounds of cocaine.

But the most blistering attacks on Sparks came earlier this year when he went back on his word not to endorse any sheriff's candidates and publicly announced his support of county Supervisor Steve Perez over Cmdr. Hal Chealander and California Highway Patrol Officer Mack Wimbish. Perez is a former deputy who worked under Sparks.

Chealander called Sparks' endorsement "disappointing." Wimbish said the sheriff's endorsement "is an act of desperation." Numerous letters to the editor condemned Sparks for his turnaround.

Perez and Wimbish claimed the majority of votes in the primary and are headed for a runoff in the November general election.

Asked if his credibility was damaged, Sparks replied, "Absolutely."

He said his mistake was saying initially he wouldn't get involved. He said he changed his mind after 18 of 20 commanders, all three assistant sheriffs and the Kern Law Enforcement Association asked him to support Perez.

"I had to do it for them and for the good of the organization," he said.

He said he'd do the same again, even knowing he would subject himself to such scathing criticism.

"While I make decisions some people don't agree with, they finally realize I make decisions from my heart and for what is best for the department," he said.

Shooting from the hip

Sparks' reputation for saying what he thinks has often kept his staff on the edge of its collective seat.

"If the guy killed is a doper or a child molester, we treat it like any other homicide" had some people hollering in 1997.

In context, he was defending his department's approach to solving all homicides no matter who the victim. In that same statement, he added that the egos of his detectives assured any killing would be investigated until there is an arrest.

There have been other "Sparkisms" over the years:

- On the crime rate: "Once you get on top of it, you want to keep it down."
- On neighborhoods: "I think people are tired of putting bars on their doors and windows."
- And just last month, Sparks had this to say about his more robust deputies: "I don't think anyone wants to see 25, 30 pounds hanging over (a deputy's) belt."

"If I'm a criminal and I see that guy getting out of his car, I know I can get away easy."

Some of his more colorful banter doesn't get quoted.

At a recent news conference with District Attorney Ed Jagels, Sparks



CASEY CHRISTIE / CALIFORNIAN FILE

Sparks rides in the 2001 Whiskey Flat Days parade in Kernville with the Kern County Mounted Posse along the parade route.

teased the county's top prosecutor for intending to personally handle the third retrial in a capital murder case.

"I think he's grandstanding," Sparks joked to reporters.

At the same time, Sparks complained that Jagels gets better-looking women reporters to attend his conferences than Sparks gets to come to sheriff's news events.

"Every time he gets up and speaks, I don't know what is going to come out," Montgomery said of his former boss.

Said his wife: "I wonder how he gets away with it."

Replied Sparks: "I think people know I am a kind person in my heart and I really am fair."

He acknowledged there probably isn't any other county in the state where a sheriff can get away with the things he says.

The waterworks

"I try to control it, but sometimes it's just out there," Sparks said of his very public and not-too-infrequent emotional displays.

"That is something that makes him real," Linda Sparks said of her husband's vulnerability.

And it hasn't been without benefit.

Facing possible budget cuts in 1992, Sparks reminded supervisors during a workshop early that year of what's needed to protect the public — backup, meaning more, not fewer, deputies.

He brought up Deputy Rick McHale, gunned down in 1989 by a domestic violence suspect before backup could arrive. Sparks had to stop his speech several times as he choked up at the memory.

"I can't handle a situation like the one with McHale," he told supervisors as he struggled for control.

The sheriff's budget went through that year unscathed by the deep cuts suffered by just about every other department.

In 2000 as Sparks talked about a gunpowder blast that seriously injured homicide Sgt. Glenn Johnson, who has since retired, he again found it difficult to maintain his composure. He cried on camera, apologizing and saying "I told myself I wouldn't do this."

And when he announced his retirement to the troops, "I was blubbering all over the place," he admitted.

Ruling the streets

Life in the sheriff's department has suited Sparks well, who's known as much for his gung-ho attitude toward fighting crime as he is for his softer, more emotional side.

The tales of his exploits are numerous and varied.

Early in his career, he was sent to

serve a warrant on a member of a notorious Bakersfield crime family. He was told the man wasn't there, but pushed his way inside after seeing a man run to another room.

All of a sudden, he was surrounded by several men in the family.

"I knew this wasn't good," he said.

A fight started. The men knocked his gun loose and it slid across the floor where a younger family member picked it up. The men told him to kill Sparks.

"I thought it was over," Sparks recalled.

But the kid tossed it out the window. Sparks somehow got the suspect cuffed and got out with his life, picking up his gun along the way.

The best time he had in the department was during a five-year stint starting in 1972 when he was a sergeant working midnight to 8 a.m., he said. It's a period he describes as the best time he had in the department.

"We ruled the streets," he said. "We put bad guys in jail."

That period also was when Sparks killed a man in the line of duty.

Sparks was responding to a report of a burglary at an Edison Highway bar in 1974. When he arrived at the bar he saw a man rifling through a cash register. When the suspect ignored orders to freeze and tried to flee, Sparks fired one blast from his shotgun, killing the man. In those days, the law allowed officers to shoot fleeing felony suspects with few restrictions. A review board ruled the shooting was justified.

"I truly believe I had no choice," Sparks told *The Californian* in 1995. "I believe in my heart I did what was right. I ordered him to stop, he saw me, he knew I had a shotgun."

For his final day as sheriff, on New Year's Eve, he plans to be at Niles and Mount Vernon streets, patrolling with the troops.

He was, and still is, legendary for speeding to crime scenes.

"Make sure you drive. He believes he's Parnelli Jones," said District Attorney Jagels.

His nickname was "Sparky," because: "He could be in Rosedale and beat you to East Bakersfield when you were five blocks away," said Moore, the sergeant over the homicide division.

Sparks admits to a lead foot, confessing that he told dispatchers he was closer to crime scenes than he really was so he wouldn't get in trouble for getting there too fast.

Political awakening

Sparks readily acknowledged he would have never been sheriff if he hadn't been assigned in 1980 to the Search and Rescue team.

"I could be on TV two or three times a day," he said. "I was never the bad guy."

He spent 10 years on that assignment. He and his crew would either rescue people or find bodies of drowning victims, bringing closure to families.

Sparks looked into the cameras and expressed the emotion of the moment, either joy or sadness, all the while building tremendous name recognition.

In the late 1980s, John Smith, a former Tehachapi police chief, was sheriff. Sparks said there was turmoil in the department and people asked him



CALIFORNIAN FILE PHOTO

In this 1985 photo, then-sheriff's Lt. Carl Sparks carries Cesar Luna to search-and-rescue team member Jeff Kirkorian. Luna, his right leg bandaged, became stranded on the north side of the Kern River near Richbar. Team member Lance Hilderbrandt holds the rope.

to run against his boss.

Smith was "stunned" in 1989 when Sparks told him he would be a candidate. He recovered in time to transfer Sparks out of his high profile job and into a Lerdo Jail farm job "where I was in charge of pigs and cows."

Smith's strategy backfired, creating what Sparks called the sympathy vote.

"John Smith gave me my issue," Sparks said.

Sparks knew nothing about politics then, calling Smith "sir" in their first debate and being very passive. His campaign manager, Diane Oglesby, told him to be more aggressive and forget Smith was his boss or to fold his tent.

Sparks won in a landslide and assumed control of the department in 1990. Four years later, Cmdr. Steve Del Tour launched a challenge.

The commander had Sparks' old job in Search and Rescue, but he was transferred to training in 1992, then to the communications center after he was soundly defeated in the 1994 election.

Del Tour would not comment for this story other than to say he and Sparks have "philosophical differences."

But Sparks denied hiding Del Tour the way Smith hid him in the 1990 election. Sparks said communications is the most important job in the department because that's where the public first calls and a decision is made on what to do. "He's doing a good job there," Sparks said.

No one ran against Sparks in 1998.

Life outside the law

When he retires after the first of the

year, he will go back to life outside the department.

He will miss the perks of the job. He liked driving a race car at Mesa Marin in an annual event for police chiefs; meeting celebrities such as former San Francisco 49er wide receiver Jerry Rice and former UCLA basketball coach John Wooden; riding horses in parades; and running in events such as the recent Baker-to-Vegas run, an annual law enforcement 120-mile, 20-stage fitness run.

He plans to putter around his seven rental properties, continue to volunteer for the Gleaners, visit his cabin above Glennville and spend more time with his grandchildren.

A motivating reason for his retirement was when his wife put her arms around him and told him she wanted to be his No. 1 priority, Sparks said. He owes her plenty, he said.

Later this month they will have been married 37 years. They met a year before they married on a blind date, which Linda recalled she didn't want to go on.

But the 23-year-old Sparks, who up until then consciously avoided getting tied down, impressed her on the date. "We pretty much liked each other from the very first," she said.

"He was different from anyone I ever met, three years older than me," she said. "He had been out in the world. He was mature, a lot of fun and had a great sense of humor."

Sparks said about his first impression of her, "I thought she was cute."

He came to realize she is a strong woman who always speaks her mind. "There is no guessing," Sparks said. She's been a devoted and guiding mother to their three children. He acknowledged he was a "Disneyland father," always willing to have fun with the children, but leaving discipline to Linda.

Their children are Shelley Kennemer, 32, who is married to Bakersfield police officer Brian Kennemer; Steven Sparks, 29, a researcher for an aspirin company; and Susanne Sparks, 26, a fourth-grade teacher.

Linda Sparks described her husband as "focused, loyal, faithful and a hard worker. He finds it difficult to relax."

He also "encouraged me to take up anything I wanted to do," including starting up her Creative Memories video business 11 years ago, Linda said.

Local boy

Sparks was born in Bakersfield, the son of a mail carrier, Julius, and a stay-at-home mom, Grannell. He had an older sister, Barbara French, and he did most of his growing up near Belle Terrace and Baldwin Road in south central Bakersfield.

He went to Castro Lane School,

Golden State Junior High School and Bakersfield High School where he graduated in 1958 and was described by his friends as "a pretty good guard" on the valley champion football team.

He spent a lot of time working on his grandparents chicken ranch off Casa Loma Avenue or working at his uncle's farm during the summers near Bisbee in southeast Arizona.

It was there, as he tanned up in the sun, that he was arrested as an illegal immigrant.

"They herded me on a bus and told me they were going to take me back to Mexico," Sparks said. "I was scared half to death."

His uncle, Ernest White, who had set up the "near deportation" as a joke, thought it was funny.

In Bakersfield, Sparks hung around a group of 11 Explorer Scouts that went on pack trips in the eastern Sierra every year with their fathers and took their mothers out to breakfast at the former Bakersfield Inn on Mother's Day.

Among the boys were lifelong friends Kenny Manes, now of Durango, Colo., and Steve Rice and Brad Peacock of Bakersfield.

Peacock remembered a time when Sparks ate a huge amount of food during the course of an hour, and then overheard Peacock's dad whispering that no one should tell Sparks there was ice cream in the freezer.

"He proceeded to eat half a gallon," Peacock said. "He was destined to be a pig."

Sparks also stayed busy traveling around the United States, serving in the U.S. Marines (including a stint in Vietnam in 1963-64 when Americans were consultants, not soldiers in combat), and then hitchhiking around Europe.

In Europe, he wrote Linda love letters (she still has them) and turned down a job as a cruise ship bartender because he didn't want to be a "bum."

After he came back to Bakersfield, he was hired as a deputy on June 11, 1965.

Shortly afterward he thought it was great fun to ride on the hood of a patrol car, laughing and waving to some guy in cowboy hat. That "guy" turned out to be then-Sheriff Leroy Gaylen, who transferred Sparks to Mojave two weeks later.

But that's where Sparks said he learned to talk to people, including criminals, because he was out there alone with no readily available backup.

"I wanted to be treated with respect," Sparks said. "The only way for that to happen, especially with a suspect, is you have to show them that first."

He said he wants people to like him. "I give them every opportunity."



COURTESY OF THE SPARKS FAMILY

Sparks with his father, Julius Sparks, who was a mail carrier in Bakersfield. Photo was taken about 1944.



COURTESY OF THE SPARKS FAMILY

Sparks playing football for Bakersfield High School in 1957.