



Hemet News

San Jacinto park honors fall deputy



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By **DIANE A. RHODES**
Special to The Press-Enterprise

After 11 years, the memory of Deputy Michael P. Haugen was given a permanent resting place as Haugen Park was dedicated in San Jacinto on Saturday.

The Riverside County sheriff's deputy was shot to death Jan. 5, 1997, in the line of duty along with his partner, Deputy James W. Lehmann Jr.

In keeping with its newly adopted policy of allowing public parks to be named after fallen law-enforcement officers, firefighters and military service personnel, city officials originally scheduled the dedication for Jan. 5.

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Diane A. Rhodes / Special to The Press-Enterprise
The Haugen family unveils a marker for the new San Jacinto park dedicated in memory of Deputy Michael P. Haugen. From left: Dale Stubblefield, Jim Potts,

John Mansperger, Katie Haugen, Stephen Haugen, Elizabeth Haugen and
Riverside County Sheriff Stan Sniff.

Heavy rain postponed the ceremony until Saturday, the 20th birthday of Haugen's son, Stephen.

"His dad died two weeks before his 9th birthday," said Elizabeth Haugen, widow of the slain deputy.

Riverside Sheriff's Association President Pat McNamara talked about how Haugen's death affected him personally.

"Since 1997, I had the privilege of spending 11 birthdays with my children, I watched three graduate from high school and one from college and I was there for the birth of my grandkids," McNamara said. "Eleven years after the fact, we can never repay the debt. All we have is the promise that we will never forget. I want to applaud and thank the city of San Jacinto for helping us keep that promise for all Michael and his family sacrificed."

"I'm happy they are honoring Mike this way," said Banning Police Chief Leonard Purvis. "I'm glad that I can talk to his kids and tell them stories about their dad. I've got a lot of good memories."

Riverside County Sheriff Stan Sniff spoke of what happened when Haugen and Lehmann answered their final call at 3 a.m. near Cabazon.

"It was a complete contrast to what we have today," Sniff said as he stood under a cloudless, sunny sky. "It was sprinkling, cold and blustery, and the area has no street lighting, so it was really dark. It was a terrible place to end up perishing on behalf of us."

"We have a lot of heroes that work for us day in and out," he said. "We have 4,207 men and women (of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department) that work in the shadows of two giants who fell before us."

"This tribute was a long time coming, but I'm happy the decision was finally made," said family friend Terri Bowen. "It's great for Katie and Stephen. They will be able to come and see their name on this park and know how their father was honored."

More than 150 people, including many uniformed officers, witnessed the unveiling of a planter in the shape of a sheriff's badge.

Inside were blue and yellow flowers.

Soon a plaque will be added that will tell Michael Haugen's story to future generations.

The park is on Peaceful Lane, northeast of the intersection of Cottonwood and Palm avenues in San Jacinto.

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