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Alive! photo by Summy Lam

LAPD

CSI:LA

On the Scene

When the LAPD investigates a crime, the evidence starts with the Field Investigation Unit, tasked with collecting and documenting evidence found at crime scenes.

From left: Erol Egun, Criminalist II, and Kristin Honig, Criminalist II, at a crime scene demonstration.

— SEE PAGE 6



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...GO TO PAGE 11

LAPD

On the Sc

■ LAPD evidence investigations begin with the Field Investigation Unit.

Photos by Summy Lam, Club Director of Marketing, and courtesy LAPD

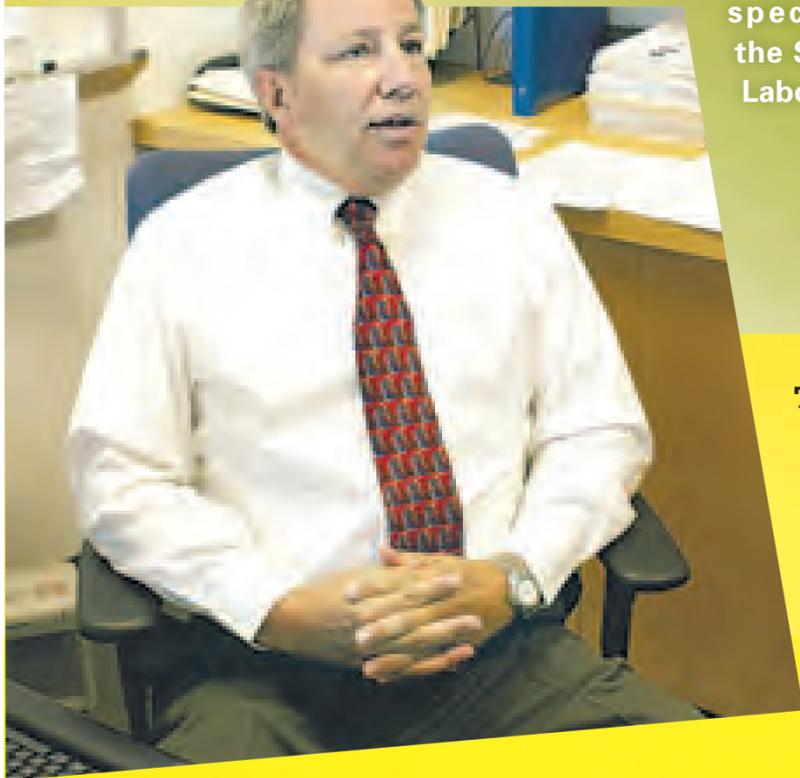
To analyze evidence from a crime scene, first you have to collect it.

That's the job of the LAPD Field Investigation Unit, headed by Supervising Criminalist Lennard Henkhaus. The unit differs from all the other units within the department's Scientific Investigation Division (SID) in one important way – the unit's main purpose is to identify, collect, and document of evidence. The evidence is analyzed by other specialties within the SID Criminalistics Laboratory.

The Field Investigation Unit is responsible for performing scientific investigations at crime scenes: scene assessment, evidence identification and collection, field tests and documentation of procedures performed. Follow-up activities include writing reports, packaging and booking evidence, consulting with detectives, and providing expert testimony about the results of the field and follow-up investigations.

*The following depicts a typical crime scene procedure. The scene was set up for the cameras and readers of *Alive!*, for instructional purposes only. ■*

Lennard Henkhaus, Supervising Criminalist and head of the LAPD Field Investigation Unit.



THE ALIVE! INTERVIEW

'The Evidence Starts With Us'

■ Supervising Criminalist Lennard Henkhaus talks about the unique role of the Field Investigation Unit.

*On June 22, *Alive!* editor John Burnes sat down with Lennard Henkhaus, the head of the LAPD's crime scene unit, to talk about the unit, which was formed five years ago. The interview took place in Lennard's office in the LAPD Scientific Investigation Division headquarters on the campus of Cal State LA. Lennard has worked for the City for 29 years. – Ed.*

***Alive!*: Thanks for the tour today. As you mentioned, the Field Investigation Unit is fundamentally different than most of what happens here at the LAPD crime lab because you don't analyze, you collect.**

LENNARD HENKHAUS: That's correct. Essentially my unit responds to crime scenes. These scenes could be homicides, sexual assaults, or serial-type burglaries. We look for, identify, collect, and preserve physical evidence. That's everything like blood, shoe prints, fibers, paint, DNA, and bullets. Any sort of physical evidence that might be left at a crime scene is what we're trying to collect and preserve, so that when we get it back to the lab, it can be analyzed by other units and then linked to suspects and victims.

It's meticulous isn't it?

LENNARD: That's a critical part of our work, especially with DNA. The way that we used to collect evidence 10 years ago is not the way that we do it today. We're all wearing masks. We're all wearing gloves. That's to prevent contamination or cross transfer.

What kind of person is really great at this kind of a job?

LENNARD: There are many traits that are important to success in criminalistics. You have to be mentally prepared. The subject matter is sometimes very traumatic. Homicide investigations are the typical crimes scenes we respond to. If you have an aversion toward violent crimes, this would not be the career for you.

In addition, you have to be prepared to think on your feet. When you go to a crime scene,

you follow a routine pattern of documentation. However, all scenes are different. We have to rely on our experience and insight on how we proceed. You have to use different techniques depending on the situation.

Also, you have to be able to function at 2 in the morning. Crime scene processing is not a 9 to 5 job. And finally, you have to be confident and have the ability to defend your findings in court.

People might think that you're always out in the field, but the majority of your work is here doing your reports, doing your administrative work, really locking everything down.

Alive! Feature

CSI:LA LAPD SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION DIVISION:
Field Investigation Unit

ene



See how
EVIDENCE
is collected



PAGE 8

Erol Ergun, Criminalist II, places numbered cards next to materials that could be collected as evidence.

LAPD

Collecting the Evidence

The LAPD Field Investigation Unit demonstrates how it collects evidence.

Arriving at the Scene



The Field Investigation Unit uses its own response vehicles to get to crime scenes. Here, Erol Ergun, Criminalist II, 5 years of City service, arrives, ready to work.



Field investigators remove necessary supplies from the crime scene kit. Kristin Honig, Criminalist I, 1 year of City service, shows how it's done.

Coroner Coordination



Liz Nation, Lab Tech II, 7 years of City service, coordinates with the Coroner's office to secure evidence that is collected by Coroner Investigators at the crime scene. Liz is in charge of securing that evidence and entering it into the City's chain of custody.

Crime Scene Survey & Scaled Diagrams

Sometimes reconstruction of a crime scene, where evidence has been collected, can play a critical role in a case. The LAPD FIU can create two-dimensional scaled diagrams in computer format or even three-dimensional scale models when necessary.



Yulie Contango, Architectural Drafting Technician, 4 years of City service, produces two- and three-dimensional scaled models of crime scenes for court presentation. Here, she sits at her desk with a two-dimensional computer printout (foreground) and a three-dimensional scale model (right).

Vehicle Bay

The Field Investigation Unit has set up a vehicle to be inspected.

The LAPD has Vehicle Examination Rooms at the Hertzberg-Davis Forensic Science Center on the California State University Los Angeles campus. Vehicle searches also occur at Official Police Garages throughout the city. This is done to store and examine the vehicle in a secure and controlled location.

The first part of the investigation involves photographing the vehicle. Overall photos are taken to capture the vehicle in its original state. The criminalist searches for and identifies evidence. Yellow evidence markers are placed next to the item that will be collected. Then, close-up photos are taken of each item. The criminalist measures and documents the location of the evidence, prior to collection.

The SID Latent Prints Unit, featured previously in an *Alive!* article, collects the fingerprints from the vehicle. Fingerprints require specialized treatment; that's why Latent Prints is called in for this action.

The Field Investigation Unit typically recovers biological fluids (blood, semen, etc.), trace (paint chips, shoe prints, etc.), touch DNA and any other physical items that may be relevant to the case at hand.

Time is of the essence. "Evidence is sometimes perishable. DNA can degrade in warm vehicles," says Lennard Henkhaus, Supervising Criminalist of the Field Investigation Unit.



Evidence markers are placed near items that Criminalists believe are evidence.



Erol Ergun, Criminalist II, uses chemical reagents that assist in determining possible crime scene evidence.



Kristin Honig, Criminalist I, collects trace evidence from the vehicle seat with an adhesive lift.



Erol Ergun, Criminalist II, is collecting blood evidence from the steering wheel.

Alive! Feature

CSI:LA LAPD SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION DIVISION: Field Investigation Unit

Accessioning Room

The accessioning room is a general processing room, where evidence recovered from crime scenes is processed. Further evaluation of evidence may be performed:

Bethany Streiffert, Criminalist II, 2 years of City service, Club Member, performs a phenolphthalein test, processing a stain to determine whether or not it's blood. A color change indicates a positive test.



Here, Mandel Medina, Criminalist II, 7 years of City service, uses oblique lighting to visualize shoe prints in dust on an electrostatic dust lift.



By using an alternate light source (ALS), Betsy Swanson, Criminalist II, 17 years of City service, is looking for body fluids, fibers or other materials on the evidence on a pair of jeans.



Chain of custody – keeping everything logged and documented – is a critical part of the process. Here, Jeff Lowe, Criminalist II, 11 years of City service, logs in evidence.

Administrative

Paperwork plays a substantial role in the Field Investigation Unit's daily workflow.



Bethany Streiffert, Criminalist II, Club Member, produces property reports that are critical in the chain of custody of a piece of evidence.



Pre-made forms are an important part of standard documentation for case packages.

The LAPD Field Investigation Unit Team

The LAPD Field Investigation Unit team, outside their processing areas:

BACK ROW, FROM LEFT: Mandel Medina, Criminalist II, 7 years of City service; Jeff Lowe, Criminalist II, 11 years; and Bethany Streiffert, Criminalist II, 2 years of City service and Club Member.

FRONT ROW: Liz Nation, Lab Tech II, 7 years; Erol Ergun, Criminalist II, 5 years; Lennard Henkhaus, Supervising Criminalist, 29 years; Yulie Contangco, Architectural Drafting Technician, 4 years; Kristin Honig, Criminalist I, 1 year; and Betsy Swanson, Criminalist II, 17 years.



THE ALIVE! INTERVIEW, continued



Lennard Henkhaus, Supervising Criminalist, in his office.

LENNARD: That's absolutely correct. For every hour that we spend at a crime scene, we spend two to three hours in the laboratory preparing the evidence for booking, writing reports, going over our field notes, doing tech reviews, admin reviews, double-checking our work, and looking at photographs. These things are all necessary to ensure case notes are accurate and complete in order to recall activities and results that took place at the crime scene years from now.

phrase – the “CSI effect” – a lot of those TV programs create the illusion that things get solved in 60 minutes and that of course is not true. They are a little more creative with the speed at which results are generated. We do have some equipment seen on shows, such as the 3D laser scanner. That's relatively new to crime scene processing. But for the most part, what we do is good old fashioned astute observations. It's not as whiz-bang as much as it is hard work.

Real Criminalists

The crew that works here, they actually come from other parts of the crime lab. They might come from trace analysis or firearms, for example.

LENNARD: That's correct. This unit is composed of Criminalists who have transferred from other units (Serology/DNA, Narcotics, etc.) in the laboratory. They have specialized training to perform evidence analysis. The FIU Criminalists are qualified to analyze evidence in other units, but also have additional training in crime scene processing. The FIU Criminalists work as a team at crime scenes with detectives, photographers, latent print personnel, coroner investigators and arson investigators.

What are the myths that aren't true that some people commonly think of with the Field Investigation Unit?

LENNARD: There's a well-known

A Job Well Done

Is this satisfying work?

LENNARD: It is satisfying for me, and I think I could say the same for my crew. Crime scene processing is critical so that analysts in the lab have relevant evidence to analyze. We take pride in identifying and properly recovering evidence used to help solve crimes.

I think criminalistics is a great career. It's very practical. It's applied science. For me, fieldwork has always been the most interesting part of my job. I like getting out there in the real world working with detectives who take their job seriously. It is rewarding.

As a supervisor, I coordinate the activities of this unit. However, I continue working in the field by being on-call for the Hazardous Chemicals Team.

I think you enjoy it that way! In any event, thank you for the tour today.

LENNARD: You're welcome.