

Orange County Sanitation District

Honor Walk Nominee

My name is Thomas Blanda a former employee with Orange County Sanitation District.

I would like to nominate a retired employee, Jack Ellis from the Collection Division to be considered for the Honor Walk.

To gather some history about the retired employees Jack Ellis, I contacted Gary Marsalek and Larry Rood (former employees) who worked with him in the past as I did.

Jack Ellis was a pioneer in our industry and the cornerstone of the Collection Division and the District. There are only a few names of past retired employees of the District that symbolize the hard work that brought the District to where they are today and no better example is this gentlemen.

The dedication he had for his job and realizing the responsibilities he had to the public and the environment was his trademark before it became fashionable. The willingness to do a good job and to pass on his knowledge is only some of many traits that he shown during his employment.

He helped manage a large sewer system that was forever changing in size and responsibilities including 35 lift stations.

With new technology across the industry coming out were some of the challenges he faced with the pump stations and line maintenance.

His leadership and management skills for that time were strong and yet compassionate earning respect from employees from across the departments for being fair and understanding. He was always supportive of staff in education and employment advancement in the organization or the industry.

Information below is gathered from myself, Gary Marsalek, Larry Rood, and the District's archives. The events that took place during his watch were many with only a few listed, each having lessons learned that helped establish a standard of operations being used today.

Some notable Events and Responsibilities of the Division during his watch

Airplane crash at Westside PS, Sealbeach Force main break(s), PCH Force main break(s)

Inheriting pump stations and sewer lines from other cities to manage and maintain with little or No drawings.

Sewer lines and sewer interceptors running through farm land and oil fields.

House lateral maintenance in some areas through-out the district

Pump stations 35 total with a lot of submersible PS / all pump station shut downs, cleaning, and by-passes done by staff.

Inter-divisional assistance for both Plants 1&2

Easement maintenance for access and cleaning

Notable Standards

Started Preventive Maintenance Program for Pump Stations / valve exercising (stations and force mains) established a trouble spot and siphon cleaning program for the Line Maintenance side

Invented the (PVC) plastic / rubber face gas flap

Established stand-by duties

Encouraged staff to obtain certification from CWPCA (CWEA)

Contributed Questions for the CWPCA Collection grade tests when it first started.

Tools / Equipment available during that time

Small rodder, Med rodder trailer mounted (no Hydro Flusher until mid 70's)

Pump Station maintenance Rig / three pull rigs and trailer rigs.

Walkie talkies for line cleaners (no two way radios until later) pay telephones or visits to the field

A lot of the equipment used in the pump stations and line cleaning were from the Oil fields and War surplus / piping, valves, tools, cable rigs

Thomas Brothers Maps with colored outlines for identifying jurisdiction

Very little safety equipment compared to today standards and no record of a fatality to-date in the Collection Division.

Telemetry for pump stations very limited

Jack Ellis (Shop Foremen) (if now Sr. Supervisor) 1957 - 1979

Jack's Grand-Father's farmland is what the District's Plant 1 is sitting on and the street was named after the Ellis family.

Before starting at the District, Marshall visited Jack many times on the farm to discuss and or fabricate items, for the District.

After a few years in college he started working at the district 1957

A master of fabrication, heavy equipment operator and problem solver

Built the old maintenance shops at Pl.1 (the two rolls of wood buildings—used Digester gas to heat the shops

Managed numerous force main breaks and by-passes on PCH, Seal Beach, and a airplane crash at Westside PS. Almost all the work was done by in- house staff that maintained, repaired, and replaced equipment.

Annual Collection's budgets were hand written on yellow legal paper and then sent to be typed

Designed, layout, and installed pumps at the District Pump Stations

Always took the time to explain the job or answer questions and carried a piece of soap stone in his pocket to work problems out or describe the task on the black top.

Jack Ellis was presented with a 15 Year Districts' Service Award, March 8, 1972.

In Closing

Jack left the District in a whisper when he retired with only the memories of his accomplishments left for others. He was able to do so much with so little to make the District what it is today. It's only suitable for the District to put his name in a place of honor for his achievements and dedication to the District, the environment, and the public.

Thomas Blanda