The Scientific Investigation Division (SID) Criminalistics Laboratory received its national accreditation by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board in December 1998, reaffirmed SID its position as one of the nation’s premier laboratories.

Around 4:00 p.m. on March 18, 1997, undercover LAPD officer Frank Lyga shot and killed off-duty LAPD officer Kevin Gaines following a case of apparent road rage. An investigation into the shooting found Lyga acted in self-defense, according to department policy and no action was taken against Lyga.

On March 2, 1998, an officer signed out three kilograms of cocaine for court in Frank Lyga’s name. When the cocaine was not returned, the Commanding Officer of Property Division sent a notice to Lyga’s commanding officer. Lyga disavowed any knowledge of the cocaine and the Property Officer who handled the original transaction verified Lyga had not checked it out. The investigation soon focused on Officer Rafael Perez, whom they suspected, at the time, of targeting Lyga in retaliation for the shooting of Gaines. Perez was assigned to Rampart CRASH but had been loaned to narcotics for six months just prior to the theft. In August 1998, LAPD internal affairs investigators arrested Perez.

In 1998, Terry Hara became the first Japanese-American to hold the rank of Captain.

In 1999, the LAPD was hit by its worst scandal in 60 years when former officer Rafael Perez alleged that he and other Rampart Division officers engaged in illegal actions including perjury, staged shootings, false arrests, false evidence, witness intimidation, beatings, theft and drug dealing. Perez offers to cooperate on these allegations in exchange for a reduced sentence in his cocaine theft conviction. The L.A. District Attorney begins a review of hundreds of cases related to these allegations. The convictions of four men are consequently overturned and they are released from prison.

The Department’s website, LAPDOnline, was launched on August 18, 1998. (→)

On November 23, 1998, the LAPD absorbed approximately 60% of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Police Department.

Officer leading children from North Valley Jewish Community Center

Community Policing has effectively been institutionalized at the LAPD. Gone are the days of only one senior lead officer liaison per Basic Car area. The Department’s new philosophy in 1998, “Ideal Basic Car in the Ideal Area,” required every field officer to act as liaison to a community for any concern at any given time. The new system provided a mechanism for better accountability to the community’s needs at all times.

On October 26, 1998, a new 44-acre state-of-the-art police training facility opened in Granada Hills and was named the Edward M. Davis Emergency Vehicle Operations Center and Tactics/Firearms Training Facility for former Police Chief and California State Senator Edward M. Davis.

On August 10, 1999, the North Valley Jewish Community Center in Granada Hills came under attack by a heavily armed suspect, firing a possible Uzi-type weapon, at women and children, causing sheer pandemonium. A total of three children, one teenage counselor and an adult receptionist were wounded by gunfire. LAPD officers lead 36 children and 12 adults from the center to a protected area.

In 1999, the Los Angeles Police Foundation bought 10,000 Trauma Shooting kits, one for every officer, making the LAPD the first police department in the nation to have this type of equipment issued to all its officers.