



July 1, 2011

Celebrating 25 Years!



Fernando Gomez, MRCA Law Enforcement Ranger

When were you in the Corps and for how long?

I started with the Corps in 1985 and left in 1992.

What Corps Programs did you participate in? What training or projects were the most helpful to you and why?

I was in the Clean & Green program. When I was assigned to the middle school, I worked in the field and planted trees, removed graffiti, picked up illegally dumped items and helped beautify a preschool off of Budlong by planting trees and repainting the playground. At the In-Center, I worked for Candy Rodriguez and made sure that all of the necessary maintenance was done on the building and that the tools were working and oiled. We also washed the vehicles and issued them to drivers and did all t-shirt and helmet orders as well. I did that until 1992, when I became a corpsmember and interned with the Mountain Education Program – the internship was a collaboration between the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) and the Corps. As young adults the program gave us the opportunity to lead, teach and interact with inner-city kids. We received naturalist training and taught the kids about the environment, the wildlife, Native American culture & history, and the fire ecology of the Santa Monica Mountains. The internship program was only supposed to last for 6 months but the MRCA ended up extending it for 6 more months and offering full-time positions to 6 corpsmembers – and I was one of those corpsmembers.

That internship was the most helpful part of my time with the Corps but everything I did was really helpful. When I was assigned to the “In-Center” I was a 17 year old kid with keys to the center – I had to help open it each morning – and that kind of responsibility was what actually got me going to where I’m at now. The Corps was my steppingstone to where I’m at now.

Please tell us about your life now, both professionally and personally.

Professionally, 18 years after my internship, I’m still working with the MRCA – I’m in my 15th year as a law enforcement ranger. We manage over 70,000 acres of wildland. I’m a Supervising Ranger 3 so my responsibilities include dealing with emergencies related to overdue and injured hikers, supervising

and scheduling other rangers' work dates, managing a public officer program for non-sworn, civilian officers. My next promotion would be to Deputy. It was that internship with the MRCA that actually led me to where I'm at now. When I was doing that second internship, I started managing and working with afterschool programs at El Cariso Park in Sylmar County. I got the opportunity to go on ride-alongs with rangers because they needed me to translate for them. Everything about that experience really interested me – I loved being in a park and being outdoors and it all just sealed in my mind that being a ranger was what I wanted to do. I got sent to the San Bernardino Sheriff's Academy and in 1995 I became a ranger.

Personally, I'm married and have 3 kids. I love spending time off-roading, dirt biking and doing watercraft stuff out on the water. I also love camping. We do some pretty strenuous hikes and my kids love it. This summer we went to Mt. Zion in Utah and made it to Angels Landing, which is a breathtaking hike. It's 5 or 6 miles and for the last half-mile the trail is about 2 feet wide and on the other side of it is a 1000 ft drop. But this is the sort of thing that excites us.

Please tell us why you joined the Corps.

I used to live 2 houses away from the site and I would see the young kids in the green shirts and khakis doing their PT in the morning, working with the Corps' vehicles and getting ready for different projects. I thought to myself "I can do something for my community" – I wanted to do something for my community instead of just sitting back and watching. So I went and interviewed and got hired.

Is there anything particularly memorable about the Corps that you would like to share?

There are so many memories! I think what I really enjoyed was going with the Clean & Green program out to Temescal Canyon to do the ropes courses out there. I used to do some pretty tricked out maneuvers called short hauling where you're up high and just have to be confident. Now for my job I go out and am slung to the bottom of a helicopter and have to hang on with a rope for rescues and special operations. That first experience in Temescal Canyon is what led to my the ropes work that is used pretty heavily for my job– in water rescues and cliff rescues. My ability to do that stems from that lack of fear that originated from my early experiences on the ropes in Temescal. I also remember Bruce taking me to my first Dodger game with a few other Clean & Green members.

This week, the LA Conservation Corps received a \$5,000 grant from the Employees Community Fund (ECF) of Boeing California in support of SEA Lab. This funding is generated by Boeing employees' personal contributions and two committee members visited the SEA Lab for a tour and to learn more about our programs. Carrie Bollwinkle, Executive Director of ECF of Boeing California and Jim Herr, from Boeing Global Corporate Citizenship, presented the check to Viki Goto, Assistant Director of Development (pictured below).



LA Corps receives ECF of Boeing California donation for SEA Lab

Young Adult Corps

On Saturday, June 25th, the LA Conservation Corps participated in the Grand Opening ceremony for the Drew Street Garden. Corpsmembers from the ELA Center joined members of the LA Garden Council, City Councilman Eric Garcetti, and local residents in a ribbon cutting ceremony at the Drew Street Community Garden. This garden replaced a known drug house that was demolished. The crime rate in this community has drastically declined, from an average of 1.5 crimes per day to 1 crime per month. It was a great experience for our corpsmembers, transforming a fenced in lot full of weeds and debris to a meeting place for local residents to tend to their crops. Participants for this project included (left to right): Isidro Ortiz, Edwin Esquivel, Jesse Espinoza, Maria Hernandez, Luz Miranda, and Steve Anderson.



Steve Anderson and corpsmembers from ELA participate in the Drew Street Opening Ceremony.

Vocational Programs

Thursday, June 30th marked the first Water Efficiency Job Training Program graduation. Family members, staff, advisory board members and project and community partners gathered to celebrate the achievements of the first water efficiency crew. The five graduates spoke about how much they learned about the importance of preserving our clean water and being part of the green jobs movement. Corpsmembers also spoke about the hard work and teamwork they learned being part of the LA Corps program.



Corpsmembers Omar Castro, Marira Ramirez, Ricardo Gonzalez and Marion Cortes present their experiences in the program at graduation



Hop Hopkins, Director of Vocational Services, spoke to the corpsmembers about the importance of their role in helping to make the world a better place

Meanwhile, the current Water Efficiency Job Training Program class was busy putting their newly learned skills into action, installing rainwater catchment systems at the Long Beach Community Action Partnership (LB CAP) demonstration garden under the direction of Jeffrey Adams from the American Rainwater Catchment System Association (ARCSA). The project included installing a 650 gallon rain barrel that will collect water from the roof of their chicken coop and a mulch bioswale that will absorb the over-flow to help hydrate nearby citrus trees. Great job, team!



Corpsmembers work on bioswale and installing rain barrel



Jeff Adams from ARCSA gives corpsmembers directions on installing the pipes

Recycling Across Los Angeles

RACLA will be recycling this Friday at STAPLES Center for the New Kids on the Block concert. Make sure all you Jordan fans stop by to say hello!

Have a safe and happy 4th of July Weekend!

