

THE CHIEF'S QUEST

An Arresting Interview With Former Los Angeles Police Chief, Daryl Gates



When Sierra On-Line decided to publish another game in their *Police Quest* series, they decided to guarantee that the game illustrate proper police procedures and exploit the celebrity status of a well-known law enforcement official. The company contacted former L.A.P.D. Chief Daryl Gates and signed him as the celebrity designer. As the game neared completion, Sierra provided an opportunity for CGW to interview the controversial police chief. Rather than trodding over the well-beaten ground of past controversy, the interview focused on Gates' involvement in *Police Quest 4: Open Season*. Gates was joined in the CGW offices by Tammy Dargan, the *Police Quest* Project Manager and former television producer with credits for *America's Most Wanted* and other television series.

CGW: So, what's a successful talk show host like you (Gates hosts an evening talk show on Los Angeles radio station KFI) doing helping to develop an adventure game about the police? (polite chuckle)

The Chief: Well, when I retired, I told myself that I wouldn't do anything that wasn't fun. This has turned out to be a lot of fun. I've learned a lot. In playing the game, though, I'm not very good (laughter). I'm still a novice.

CGW: So, what was your first reaction when Sierra approached you about this product?

The Chief: For years, I worked with mainframes, but my staff worked with PCs. The only games I had contact with were those reflex-oriented games for kids. When Ken Williams called me, I told him to send me the game and I'd run it by a couple of kids to see if I wanted my name on it. When he actually sent the *Police Quest* games, I thought, "Uh, oh! What have I agreed to?"

CGW: What was your actual involvement in *Police Quest 4: Open Season*?

The Chief: I started right from the beginning—looking at the script. They sent me the first draft and I suggested a lot of changes, particularly adapting the language they used so that it would be more like authentic police procedure. I originally thought the script was a pretty bizarre case. But then I thought back to some of the actual experiences that I'd had as a detective and thought of several that were even more bizarre.

CGW: How many cases were you involved in as a detective?

The Chief: That would be hard to say since I supervised all the detectives for eight years under [former Police Chief] Ed Davis, as well as when I was chief, of course. You know, every chief is a detective at heart. That is something that never leaves you. As a result, you sometimes drive the detectives crazy looking over their shoulders and offering your "suggestions."

CGW: So, how realistic is *Police Quest 4*?

The Chief: I'm very happy with the realistic aspects of the game. We made some compromises, of course. For instance, in a shooting where an officer is the victim [as happens in the game] we wouldn't have merely two officers, one detective and a criminologist. We'd be all over the place. As it is, though, there is more burden and involvement on the player. It probably has more of the feel of the old days when detectives were responsible for one case. Today, each detective is responsible for *too many* cases.

Anyway, the game points out that *systems* solve crimes. You gather a lot of information and clues. There are a lot of things that turn up that look kind of interesting and you may want to go off [on a tangent], but an officer has to stick to his focus to solve crimes.

CGW: Will the player have to use actual police procedures?



CGW Editor Wilson deliberates whether or not to play "bad cop" in CGW's interrogation of Chief Gates.

The Chief: Essentially, yes. One of the first things I did was encourage Tammy [Dargan, the Project Manager] to go through the L.A.P.D. manuals. I was surprised that she read them all. These are thousands of pages of fine print! The department manual comes in 5 parts and the homicide manual is pretty thick [indicating 3-4" with his fingers]. After she read them, she cross-referenced them for direct relationships to the game.

Tammy Dargan: For example, in Homicide, all paperwork for each case is placed in its own blue binder called a "murder book." When you go there, the desks and shelves are filled with these murder books.

In fact, the documentation is sectioned just like it was an abridged version of the L.A.P.D.

Department Manual. It's broken down into subjects, like the officer's oath, deadly force and Sam Brown belts. I didn't know before I read these manuals, for instance, that officers can wear velcro belts.

CGW: *What are the other realistic elements in the game?*



Tammy Dargan: One of my favorites is the shooting range. Did you know that you have to qualify once a month in real life? The range pictured in the game is the actual Police Academy shooting range for the L.A.P.D. It not only provides the player a chance to do better in the game, but also reveals the necessity of qualifying.

The Chief: That's right. If you don't qualify, you're suspended for a day, just like in real life. This sequence offers good evidence for why police officers want to switch from 6-shooters to 9mm guns [with 15 shots per clip]. They're trained to fire three round

bursts per target: two to the upper body and one to the head.

I like this feature. The police department runs an officer through large-screen scenarios to teach them when to shoot and when not to shoot. The game is similar and will give the player some of that feel.

CGW: *Anything you don't like about the game?*

The Chief: Well, the language seems kind of unrealistic. "Bugger off" is not representative of what you're going to hear when you knock on a person's door and they don't want to talk to you.

CGW: *What's different about this Police Quest?*

Tammy Dargan: It's the first game where we've used a digital camera [Kodak's DCS-200] to capture the backgrounds, all of which are actual locations in Los Angeles, selected by Daryl. Then we video-captured the actors in 236 colors (20 colors of the 256-color palette were reserved for Windows) and transposed them over the top using a chromakey process.

CGW: *We've seen this product as it's come along and the lines around the characters seem much smoother than in earlier versions. Have you learned a new trick in handling the radial aliasing [smoothing the outside lines]?*

Tammy Dargan: Yes. Our 255th color is gray. We get smoother lines by dithering all of the outside lines with a gray dither.

CGW: *Since you used real sites, did you have to pay extra for their use?*

Tammy Dargan: We didn't pay site fees, but we did get releases from all of the building owners.

CGW: *Were there any sites that have particular memories associated with real cases?*



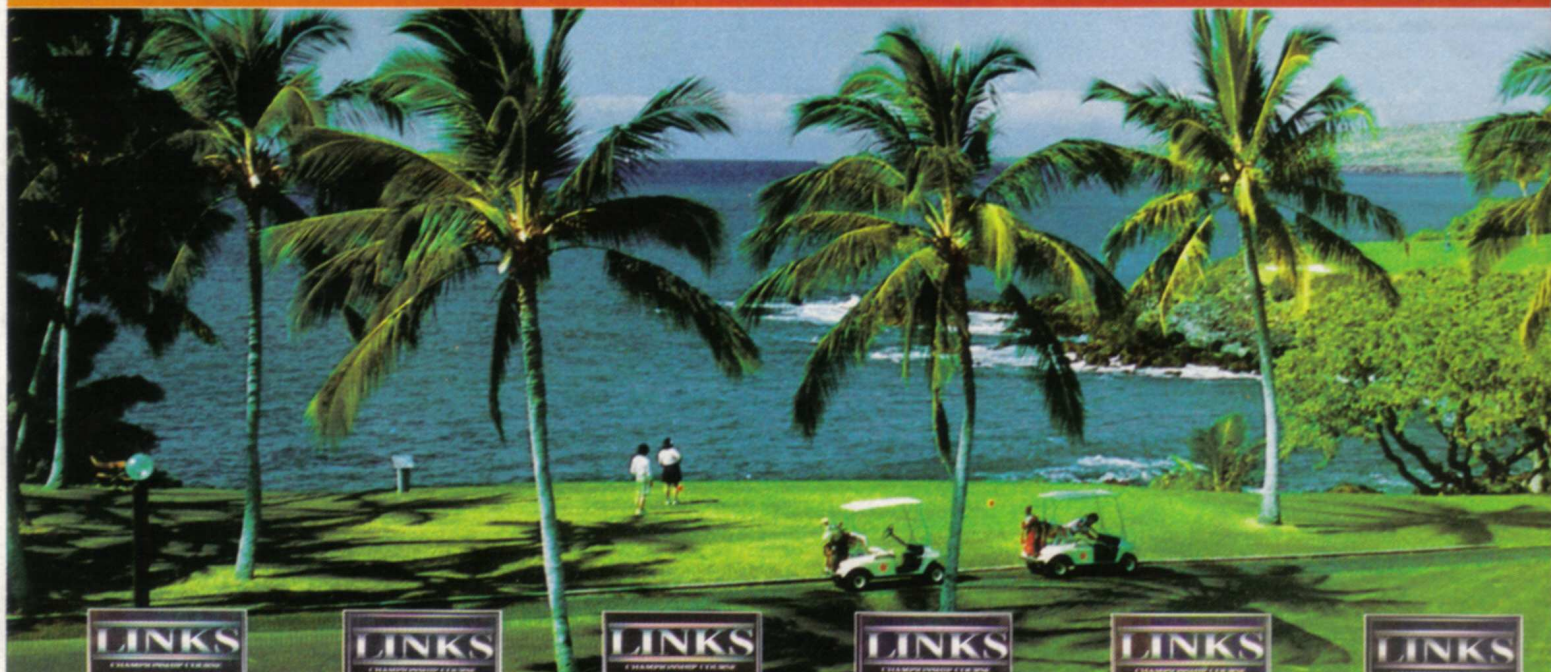
The Chief: Outside of Parker Center and the Police Academy? I can say that the opening crime scene isn't an actual one, but I've seen crime scenes identical to that one. And the map that you use to go from place to place uses the actual map and numbering system that is used by the L.A.P.D.

Tammy Dargan: There's the Shortstop Bar!

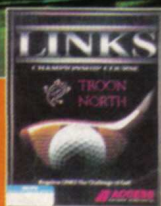
The Chief: Right, that's a story. Sierra

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wanted a bar where police officers hung out. There was this one bar that I really hated when I was chief because a lot of officers hung out there, drank too much and got into trouble. When we asked for permission to use it in the game, the owner couldn't believe it. "The Chief wants to use my bar?"

CGW: *Speaking of sites and releases, we're curious. Did you have to get a license to use the L.A.P.D. name?*

The Chief: No, everybody does it—good and bad.

CGW: *Did the police department cooperate in the game?*

Tammy Dargan: They were very cooperative, thanks to Chief Gates. They took me up in a helicopter and we participated in establishing a perimeter. I found out that police helicopters orbit to the left all the time because there is always an observer on the left. On one occasion, we saw a perpetrator drop a knife after a gas station robbery.

CGW: *Are some of the more unpleasant aspects of police work simulated in the game? After the ambush does the character have to explain to Internal Affairs that it was a good shooting?*

The Chief: Actually, Internal Affairs doesn't investigate a shooting unless some-



Chief Gates chuckles as Tammy Dargan shares her real life experience in a police helicopter fly-along.

thing seems irregular. It's the Officer-Involved Shooting Team that investigates and that is in the game.

Tammy Dargan: Yes. After the ambush scene, the player's character is stripped of his weapons because they've gone to the S.I.D. for ballistics testing.

CGW: *What about that other unpleasant aspect of police work, dealing with the media?*

The Chief: Oh, that's in there, too. It's another compromise in that you only have to deal with one reporter instead of a whole group, but she makes up for it.

CGW: *She's a composite of all your worst nightmares?*

The Chief: You've got it.

CGW: *So, what's next for Daryl Gates. Are you going to consult on any more computer games?*

The Chief: Well, it's just like anything else, a lot of it is going to depend on how this one is received.

Tammy Dargan: Actually, we've thought a little bit about it. Chief Gates instituted S.W.A.T. (Special Weapons And Tactics) when he was with the L.A.P.D. and this would be an ideal opportunity to blend strategy and role-playing. Nothing definite has been decided, though.

The Chief: I have particularly enjoyed working with Sierra, though. I really appreciated their allowing us to put some D.A.R.E. [Drug Abuse Resistance Education] references in the game, and there is a public service announcement on the CD-ROM version of the game.

CGW: *We want to thank you for your time. Is there anything else you want to say about the game?*

The Chief: I think it's a tough case to solve.

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