

## Sheriff Pins a Badge on Dying 13-Year Old

*Hemet boy with leukemia realizes his dream as he becomes Riverside County's first honorary deputy.*

Article by Joe Vargo - [Press Enterprise](#)



"Christian Unfried always wanted to be a cop. But doctors say the Leukemia that's destroying his immune system will probably kill the 13-year-old before he can realize his ambition.

"Doctors, however, don't know everything. And on Saturday, Christian became a law officer when Riverside County Sheriff Larry Smith deputized the Hemet boy in a powerful ceremony at St. Martha's Catholic Parish in Murrieta.

"Christian got a badge, handcuffs and the special utility belt all cops carry on the street. He also picked up a uniform--a tailor made pair of green pants, a tan shirt and green tie with gold clasp-- as he became the first honorary deputy in Riverside County's 104-year history.



It was an emotional ceremony. The sheriff estimated 200 people attended.

As Smith handed Christian an authentic deputy's badge, the audience clapped enthusiastically. Christian beamed, his face covered with an appreciative grin.

" This is overwhelming and exciting," he said. I knew there'd be a couple of surprises, "but this was way bigger than I expected."

"After the ceremony, fellow deputies took Christian outside to waiting patrol cars and fire engines. After handcuffing his father, Christian got in the passenger's seat of a deputy's vehicle and rode around the parking lot, sirens roaring.



"Christian, who is undergoing the latest in a series of treatments since the illness was diagnosed in May 1992, is now staying with this mom, dad and grandmother at the Ronald McDonald House near Children's Hospital in San Diego. 'I want to help people,' said Christian, who battles his illness with a combination of prayers and humor. "I don't worry about dying. I try not to think about it. I don't plan on going anywhere for a long time--I don't have a reservation. "

## Epilogue

### *End of Watch for "Special Deputy" Christian Unfried*

"In October of 1997, 13-year-old Christian Unfried was sworn in as a special Deputy by Sheriff Larry Smith. The occasion was witnessed by hundreds of family members, friend, Sheriff's Deputies from Riverside and San Bernardino County and Firemen from CDF.

"On January 19, 1998 Christian was once again surrounded by friends, loved ones, Sheriff's Deputies and Correctional Officers. But this time it was to bid our brother officer farewell. I want to thank the following officers and civilians for helping me say good-bye to Christian in the same manner as we do for all fallen . . . ."

--Sr. Deputy Corky Bell, Executive Director, DCMF

"On behalf of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, I would like to express our condolences to the Unfried Family. . . .

"Although Christian's career was short, it was memorable. The Riverside County Sheriff's Department will never forget those moments that were shared.

"Christian, it was a pleasure to have known you. Partner, may you rest in peace and God bless you."

--Deputy Steve Nelson, Southwest Station