

IN PROFILE:

# THE REAL ANCHORMAN

**BROTHER JERRY SANDERS HELPS REVITALIZE SAN DIEGO TO HELP THE CITY STAY CLASSY.**

The line “You stay classy, San Diego” from the movie *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy* ranks right up there with other such memorable catchphrases such as “Here’s looking at you, kid,” “Go ahead, make my day” and “Run, Forrest. Run.”

BY RUTH GOODMAN,  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER



**No one has been more instrumental in helping San Diego stay classy than Jerry Sanders** (San Diego State '72), who has been protecting and serving the city for more than 40 years.

Sanders grew up in Long Beach, about 100 miles up the coast from San Diego. “Since I was from out of town, I didn’t have a real support system at San Diego State,” says Sanders. “Some friends on campus said, ‘If you join a fraternity, you build a whole new circle of friends, and it’s a good way to go.’ So I joined ΣAE and enjoyed it a lot. The friends I made are still friends to this day.”

During his final semester at SDSU, Sanders was hired by the San Diego Police Department and achieved his goal of becoming a police officer like

his father. He ascended the department’s ranks, served seven years on the SWAT unit — two of them as commander — and at age 40 became one of the youngest police chiefs in San Diego history.

“We had a great national reputation because the police officers were working so closely with the community and bringing crime down dramatically,” says Sanders. “I talk to kids quite a bit, and I tell them that policing is the most exciting career you can ever imagine. You’re tested every day physically and mentally because people don’t call the police when everything’s going well. I found it to be an unbelievable experience. And when you look back on a career like that, you feel pretty good. You feel like hey, I gave it my all.”

Sanders retired as chief of police in 1999 and became president and CEO of the United Way of San Diego County. During his three-year

tenure, he increased fundraising by 20 percent and stopped the organization’s eight-year financial hemorrhage.

Sanders helped another nonprofit regain its financial footing when he became chairman of the board for the San Diego/Imperial Counties Chapter of the American Red Cross in 2002. During his three years at the helm, he increased the chapter’s financial transparency and restored its credibility. Under his guidance, San Diego/Imperial Counties became the first debt-free chapter in American Red Cross history.

“I’ve known Jerry for about 45 years,” says Dick Troncone (San Diego State ’65), president emeritus of the San Diego Area Alumni Association of which Sanders is also a member. “I first met him when he was serving as Cal Theta’s Eminent Treasurer, and I was chapter adviser,” Troncone

says. "Jerry has never turned me down when I have asked him to help with ΣAE, even when he was [exceptionally busy as] mayor of San Diego."

With his reputation as a successful turnaround executive, civic leaders urged Sanders to enter a special run-off election after San Diego's mayor resigned just six months into his term.

"I'd never been into politics before," says Sanders, who ran for mayor in 2005. "The city was in a crisis. It was on the brink of bankruptcy and was being investigated by the Securities and Exchange Commission for what were classified as fraudulent bond filings." Newspapers across the country were no longer calling San Diego by its nickname, America's Finest City. Instead, they referred to it as Enron by the Sea.

Sanders won the election and immediately launched a top-to-bottom review of the city's budget and streamlined city operations, which meant eliminating more than 1,800 positions to reduce overhead costs. During his two terms in office, city financial staff completed six years' worth of backlogged audits, which allowed San Diego to return to the public bond markets in January 2009. This helped fund Sanders' commitment to repair the city's long-neglected water, sewer and transportation infrastructure.

Sanders also introduced "managed competition" to city government, a process that allows private companies to compete against city employees for the right to provide municipal services.

In September 2007, Sanders made the heartfelt decision to reverse his public opposition of same-sex marriage. "In the Republican world, that's not the most popular thing," he says. "My daughter, Lisa, is a lesbian, so it gave me an opportunity to do what I thought was right."

In his press conference, Sanders said, "I couldn't look [Lisa and members of my personal staff] in the face and tell them that their relationships, their very lives, are any less meaningful than the marriage I share with my wife, Rana."

Sanders completed his second and final term as mayor in December 2012. Just one day after leaving office, he began his duties as president and CEO of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, the position he holds today. The San Diego Regional Chamber is the largest chamber on the West Coast, representing approximately 2,500 businesses and an estimated 300,000 jobs.

"Jerry is the ultimate public servant; he is most unselfish with his time," says Troncone. "San Diego needs more citizens like Jerry."

As Sanders looks back on his career, he credits his father for modeling what it means to be a strong servant leader. "I've found public service to be very fulfilling because I like working with people. I like being able to help achieve good outcomes. It's a privilege to be able to serve in that way."

Sanders also finds it a privilege to keep in touch and continue to interact with Cal Theta brothers during monthly luncheons hosted by the San Diego Area Alumni Association.

"The experiences I had in the Fraternity and the friendships I've kept have impacted my entire life. The leadership, the camaraderie, the brotherhood — all of it. That's what fraternity has been to me and what it's meant to San Diego State ΣAEs for a long period of time."

Wise words from one classy brother. **END**

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## ON THE FORCE:

**65** 

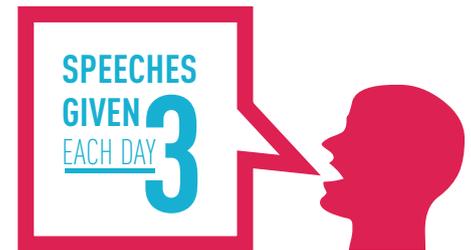
**Number of hours worked per week as San Diego police chief**



**NUMBER OF CHICKEN DINNERS EATEN DURING 40+ YEARS OF BUSINESS LUNCHEONS & DINNERS:**



**TOO MANY TO RECALL** 



**94lbs.**  gained from job-related stress & too much Mexican food

**What it took to reach his 1973 police academy weight of 182 lbs.**



Walk  
70 miles/week



Work out  
with a trainer  
2x/week



Nightly  
sit-ups and  
pushups