

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

By Douglas Sherman

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ARPOC 2003 Conference Chairman

COURAGE!

In a war where civilians are combatants, civilians are learning what it feels like to sit in the cockpit of an F-14 Tomcat and cross into enemy airspace. Or to hunker down in a foxhole and hear the distant cough of a mortar, now bound in our general direction.

The Big Gulp

Your diaphragm tightens and it feels like something deep inside has tied itself in a slippery knot, squeezing off your breath.

Soldiers know it, and you know it too. You feel it as you do your felony hot stop, or chase your suspect down a dark alley. All folks with badges know it. It is the courage that we muster up that gets us through it, and why courage above all things is the first quality of a good officer.

Courage is the feeling of one's own power when summoned to duty. Courage comes not from facing the everyday but from standing fast against uncertainty.

Courage, I think, is not inherited and not a matter of biological chance. Courage is the fatalism to trust that we have it. And to know that it never comes easy. Because, Webster's not withstanding, courage is not fearlessness.

Rather, as General George Patton put it, "Courage is fear holding on a minute longer."

Ralph Waldo Emerson described it this way: "A hero is no braver than ordinary man, but he is brave five minutes longer."

We hear about courage when we attend the ARPOC awards banquet, and share the courageous events that Reserve Officers have performed.

In my half-century of life, Americans have not been called upon as a nation to show courage. We've entrusted this to our military, Police, and people with badges. Now, courage is expected from the country at large.

That's why, of course, our enemies are watching our reactions. As we are watching ourselves. Our enemies doubt us. And, yes, we feel doubt too.

For the last month and with evermore finality, we are accepting that we no longer have control over events engulfing us- except in how we meet them. September 11 was our second training academy. We now have the best people, the best training, and possess the latest equipment. When you go 10-8, have courage, and you will know what to do!