

## **PRESIDENTS MESSAGE**

**By Douglas Sherman**

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**ARPOC 2001 Chairman**

### **Two things to include when going 10-8... Your Reserve Partner and a Vest**

Since ARPOC '99 has passed, most of us are settled into our busy work schedules, and continued planning for ARPOC 2000 in Sacramento. In San Diego, we have had several police shootings, are in the middle of a firestorm of shoot / don't shoot and non-lethal force issues. There are weekly community meetings and protests, with a lot of dialogue between citizens and their city leaders. In the middle of this - an incident occurred that I would like to share with you.

It occurred on February 22, 2000 at a large downtown San Diego Hotel. It was like any other call that you would respond to - to check out a suspicious person prowling in the parking structure and hotel area. The clean and neatly dressed 20 year old suspect, first seen in the parking structure, had now moved into the lounge of the hotel, where he had tried to have his tab charged to a hotel guest room. The two officers arrived, had a polite conversation with the suspect, and along with two-hotel security personnel escorted the suspect to the lobby. Once by the elevators in the lobby, the suspect's attitude changed, and he pulled a handgun from under his clothing and starting firing at the officers. It was so quick that the witnesses in the area could not agree on where the gun was hidden- under or in the clothing, in his front, side or rear.

It was just like your training in the "F.A.T.S." simulator - your partner had been shot- and there was a suspect 2-3 feet in front of you firing- in a split second gun battle. Regular officer Mitchell Vitug, a 12-year veteran, took a couple of rounds, one of which severed an artery under his left arm. His Reserve partner, Quinton Kawahara 27, was also hit two times in the chest, once in the vest and once in the vest strap. While applying pressure to his partners bleeding arm, R/O Kawahara continued to return fire. A few seconds and 17 rounds later, it was over. R/O Kawahara, despite being shot himself, knelt at his colleague's side applying pressure to the wound, and talking on the portable.

R/O Kawahara told dispatch that his partner had been hit "and I took one in the vest." He also called out, "Shots fired, 11-99." He then left his partner momentarily to check the suspects condition, and returned with more towels for his partner's wound. During this time no hotel guests or employees were injured.

No one knows why John Wier opened fire, but a co-worker said he believed it was Weir's method of suicide. Wier had told the co-worker, that he was HIV-positive, and had recently broken up with his fiancé. The 9mm weapon that Wier had used was stolen from the roommates' residence. Wier had no criminal record and had received training in the Marines. At the time this fatal shooting was the fourth this year. Police shot 5 people fatally last year, three in 1998 and six in 1997. Both officers in this incident survived and are now in good condition.

This incident portrays the importance of having a highly trained Reserve partner - and wearing your vest. It also illustrates the importance of our ARPOC training and role-playing. In this case the Reserve Officer saved his partners life, and in my mind is a real hero.

Remember, keep your training updated, and don't forget the upcoming ARPOC conference this year in Sacramento and next year's in San Diego.