

SHAKE’N’BAKE

A Short Survival Story

Steve Randall was a 20-year veteran of the LAPD where he served as a Reservist, and recently got a new job at the Union Bank in Downtown LA. It was fairly close to his house as far as commutes went in LA. He left his house in Azusa at 6:00 every morning to get to work at 8:00. When he was hired, the interviewer made a special note that he was a 20-year veteran LAPD Reservist and a Vietnam Veteran. He worked as a Database Administrator for Union Bank, thanks to Computer training he had received with his GI Bill benefits. He made good money, but the long commutes were a killer. Due to the nature of his job he had to work for huge companies, since there was little or no call for his job description outside of the largest companies. Sometimes he wished he would have taken Programming instead, since his buddies were working in Silicon Valley with a much shorter commute and 2-3 times his salary.

He worked on the 40th floor of the Union Bank building in Downtown Los Angeles on the corner of 7th and Figueroa. Luckily he had a reserved parking spot in the parking garage in the basement, because the only city harder to find a parking spot in had to be NYC!

His first day at work, he showed up with a suit and a tie according to the Union Bank dress code, but was lugging a huge LAPD duffle bag. The security goons latched onto it, and when Steve flashed his LAPD badge, they still didn’t budge. Finally they called their supervisor, Frankie Finkelbarker, a recent transfer from Union Bank’s San Francisco office. He sashayed on over to the guards, eyeing them appreciatively, then looked at the hulking bulk of Steve, and almost fainted! When he regained his composure, he lisped “Tho what’s the problem here?”

Steve spoke up immediately “I’m a LAPD Reservist and a duly sworn Law Enforcement Official. I’m required by the LAPD to carry my Go Bag with me when I’m at my other job, since I can be called up at any time. Frankie opened the bag and almost wet his panties!

“There’s a GUN in here! YOU CAN’T BRING THAT IN HERE!”

Steve wasn’t about to take any shit from this little fairy, and got right in it’s face.

“Listen up Frankie. Everyone at Union Bank knew I was a LAPD Reservist when they hired me. I’m required either to have this go-bag within reach, or be armed 7/24 when I’m off duty. If you don’t let me and my gear in, I’ll resign right here and now, and file a “Hostile Work Environment” lawsuit, and the way you’ve been eyeing me, I’m tempted to add Sexual Harassment to that!”

That got Frankie’s attention – this hulking brute could get him fired! He got on the phone with Personnel, and the Director of Personnel looked up his application and sure enough there were notes all over the place about him being a LAPD Reservist and his badge number. Just to be pissy, she called the LAPD and verified their policy. The Watch Commander confirmed Steve’s

story, and she called and gave Frankie the bad news- either let him in as is, or he would have grounds for a lawsuit.

Frankie dropped the phone, and smiled at Steve, but it was a smile that made you think he'd just drank a gallon of lemon juice without sugar. "Very well – you may go – but we will keep an eye on you!"

Steve picked up his Go Bag, slung the straps over his shoulders, and left without a word. Meanwhile Frankie stomped off to his office to throw a major snit!

When he got to his office, Steve put his Go bag in a special locker Union Bank had installed for him. He had the only key that he knew about, and it was bolted to the floor and the wall.

Steve had been a Navy Corpsman in Vietnam, attached to a Marine LRRP. He served 2 tours in Vietnam and won the Navy Cross and the Purple Heart for rescuing a Marine while under fire. One of the VC got lucky, and he was shot in the butt, but didn't hit anything major, so he was out of the hospital and back on duty within a month. While with the LRRPs and Recon, he attended Recondo School, one of the few Combat Medics to complete the course, and he even won the coveted Fairbairn/Sykes Combat Dagger awarded to the top graduate. Little did he know how much his Vietnam experience would come in handy later.

Steve worked for Union Bank for several years, got steady raises and promotions, but didn't leave the Data Processing Department. Meanwhile, Frankie kept trying to mess with him, and Steve made sure he had his LADP badge on him every time he walked into the building. Eventually, the Security guards lightened up when Frankie wasn't around, and some of them actually became friendly with Steve. As he became more well known, some of his Data Processing Co-workers started asking him questions about Guns and Preparedness. Some even started carrying stuff in their purses or briefcases, but nothing Frankie could throw a snit over. One of the most common items was a Surefire P3 flashlight, since Steve told them that it was bright enough that it could see through smoke. He explained to a small attentive audience that if this building ever caught fire they'd be in trouble, since it was built in the 60's, the fire codes weren't as restrictive as they now are, and the Elevators would be a deathtrap, so they'd have to use the stairs. As he looked around, he didn't see emergency lights or other modern fire code requirements. He knew if this building caught fire, they'd be lucky to get half of the employees out alive. Steve started to make plans, and carry extra gear in his Go bag to help him evacuate as many people as possible.

Steve spent the weekends with his wife and daughters, who were in High School by now. One weekend a month he worked a shift at the LAPD to stay current, and made sure his Medical Certs were current – that meant taking Continuing Education credits every couple of months when they were offered locally. Since he was a Combat Medic in Vietnam, he easily passed the licensing exam for a LA County Paramedic but he couldn't volunteer his services to the county for Liability reasons – the County told him unless he was a Full-time County Employee, their insurance couldn't cover him. Since he had the skills and the certs, he kept a mini-kit in his Go

Bag with everything he needed minus the drugs. He looked into getting IV equipment, but the shelf-life of the stuff the hospitals had wasn't worth the cost. He was used to Military equipment, but had no access to Military hardware anymore. Even with the gear he had on him, he could do a lot of good until the Paramedics got there with their drugs and Advanced Life Support systems.

He looked into volunteering his services as an Instructor for the Red Cross, but they wouldn't accept his certs – he guessed they had a “my way or the highway” attitude about First Aid. Instead, he volunteered as an Assistant Scoutmaster, and taught all his skills to a bunch of teenagers who were glad to have him. His skills came in handy more than once when a Scout was injured when they were hiking and camping in the California back country. As a LEO, he took his radio with him when he went camping, and used it and his badge number to call a Medevac chopper for a Scout who had a compound fracture of the thigh bone that was jeopardizing the femoral artery. They were very lucky that his handy talkie was within range of a county repeater. The Scout survived, but he wore a cast for several months. He was given a citation by the LAPD and the Boy Scouts of America. Steve didn't let it go to his head – he said he was just doing what he was trained to do. One thing the Boy Scouts did do that he appreciated was to issue more complete first aid kits for each troop in the county. Steve hoped that the gear had been donated, because there were thousands of troops in LA County, and the kits were several hundred dollars each. The Council initiated a First Responder First Aid program, and made Steve the director. He then trained the trainers, who all did a 6-week rotation in their local ER to get some hands-on experience. The Boy Scouts decided that every troop should have at least 1 adult trained to a First Responder. The county helped offset the training costs, and soon each troop in the county had at least 1 First Responder trained adult, then they started offering Merit Badges in Advanced First Aid for any Scout who got his First Responder certificate

Meanwhile, things went on as expected at work, until 1 day, there was a Richter 5 earthquake with an epicenter in Downtown LA. While not the “Big One” it was big enough to damage the older buildings in Downtown LA, and the Union Bank building was no exception. Deep in the basement, a Natural Gas pipeline cracked, and in the adjacent room where the smokers congregated since they couldn't smoke anywhere else in the building, a smoker “flicked his Bic” and blew everyone in the room to Kingdom Come. The resulting fireball raced up the easiest access to air, which happened to be the Elevator Shafts. Steve was at his desk when he felt the shaker, and knew to get down next to his desk. The building didn't collapse, but a few seconds later, Steve felt the BOOM of the Natural Gas explosion, and guessed what had happened from his LEO training. He knew the building had to be evacuated, and told everyone to meet at the fire stairs. While he was counting noses to make sure everyone in his department was out, he grabbed his Go Bag, told everyone who had a handkerchief or extra piece of clothing to tie it over their mouth and nose, and he handed out a couple of dozen paper filter masks, that were better than nothing, and put on his N-95 mask, which was overkill, but would filter out the smoke. Then he took his roll of Paracord, and started tying loops in it every 6 feet, and told people to step into the loops so they wouldn't get separated in the smoke. He asked how many workers had flashlights on them, and 1/3 had some sort of light, and 6 out of the 60

had Surefire lights like he did. He spaced them throughout the line, and then when everyone was connected and covered, explained they would have to go downstairs through the smoke, and not to stop for anything. He set a slow pace since he didn't want anyone to panic, and started down. The stairs were full of smoke, but so far not too many people. Evidently they were waiting for authorization to evacuate like the well-trained sheeple they were! Steve got his entire department out on his own authority, and got them onto the ground floor. When they reached the Lobby, Frankie was yelling incomprehensible and incompatible instructions out of the manual. Steve decided "Enough is enough" and said "Anyone who wants to live, come with us!" and lead them out of the building.

When he reached the street, pandemonium reigned. He sat down, opened his Go bag, took out his map, and showed several people in the crowd the safe route out of the immediate area up Figueroa St. Depending on the road conditions that would be the best route, and hopefully the overpasses hadn't collapsed. Since their building hadn't collapsed, he assumed it was OK. Next, he walked over to the parking ramp, and was glad the barrier was up. A few minutes later, he found his 1988 Ford Bronco 4x4 with some police extras the LAPD garage had installed right as his flashlight gave out. He got into the vehicle, and was glad the car started. The Cell Phones were jammed, as he thought, so he turned on his police radio to listen to traffic. The dispatchers were having a hard time keeping the frequencies clear, so he didn't call in. Suddenly, the orders he expected but dreaded came over the air.

"This is a General Recall Notice for All LAPD officers including Reserves – Please report to your local station and keep off the air."

"Well, that settles that" Steve reached down, grabbed his revolving red light and siren unit, stuck it on his roof, and plugged it into the cigarette lighter. The wail of the siren was deafening inside the Bronco since Ford didn't spend much money insulating it. 10 minutes later, with the help of the siren and some very creative driving, he pulled into the station parking lot. The first thing he did was top off the tanks in the Bronco since he knew that the Department didn't have enough vehicles to go around, then he parked it in the secured lot and grabbed his Go bag and walked into the station.

Chapter 2

Steve went immediately to the locker room, changed into a spare uniform that they kept at the station for him. Before he put on his shirt, he put on his Level IIa vest. While he was getting dressed, there was another shaker, more violent than the last. When Steve picked himself off the floor, he quickly finished getting dressed, belted on his gear belt with his Glock Model 21. One of the nice things about being a Reservist was he had access to LEO only 13 rd mags for his Glock at \$20.00 each. When he had put his gear belt on, the Klaxon sounded followed by a Public Address speaker “Tactical Alert, All Units – This is NOT a Drill... Repeat – Tactical Alert, All Units, This is Not a drill!” That message got every officer in the building running to the Armory, where the Watch Commander had opened the vault containing their Special Weapons.

There were enough Bushmaster AR-15s with M -203 grenade launchers for every officer, and then some. They each had a Blackhawk Level III Tactical Vest hanging in the armory with 20 30-rd mags preloaded with SS-109 ammo and the vest pockets were filled with lethal goodies like M -1029 Crowd dispersal rounds, the M -1001 Canister Round, the M -680 White Smoke Round, and if things got really bad a couple of M -406 HE rounds. They also were issued a bandoleer full of M -1029 rounds since they would probably use more of them than the rest. They were also issued a couple M -61 offensive grenades with a 5 meter kill radius. Their Blackhawk vests carried a Camelback 4 liter hydration system bladder between the shoulders, and a buttpack with 2 combat packs of SS-109s on stripper clips. The reason this equipment was in the armory is the only time the LAPD officers were issued it was during a post 9/11 Tactical Alert meaning the chance for armed combat was serious enough that the officers were given paramilitary equipment.

Since Steve had to use his own vehicle, he picked up a Remington 870 and a case of Federal Tactical 00 Buck. He had a shotgun rack behind the seat, but no shotgun was issued since he was a Reservist. One shock was when the Watch Commander came in and swapped their Reservist badges for regular badges. “Gentlemen, I don’t need to tell you how bad it could get out there, do your duty as long as you can do so safely. When the situation becomes untenable, don’t waste your life, live to fight another day and try to make it home to your families. We have a phone line here for personal calls, please limit your calls to 5 minutes so everyone can use it. Good Luck and God Bless – That is all.” As soon as the Watch Commander was finished, Steve got in line, so he was 3rd in line. Exactly 15 minutes later he was handed the phone, and quickly placed a call to his wife. “Melissa, they called us up, I’m at the station. Take care of the Girls, I’ll be home when I can – go into the basement, Read the “In Event of an Emergency” Checklist on top of the BOB, and follow the instructions. I Love you, Take Care!” Melissa talked for a couple of minutes, basically telling Steve to be careful, that she’d take care of the girls, and not to worry. She ended her end of the call by telling Steve she loved him. He said “Me Too - I got to go, they’re only giving us 5 minutes, I Love you, God Bless, Bye.” At 5 minutes exactly, the line disconnected, and he handed the phone to the next police officer in line.

Now that he had taken care of business, he got his game face on, and went to see the Watch Commander. He paired Steve up with a younger officer who was an Ex-Marine named Manuel Gonzalez. He had been on the force 5 years as a Full-time officer, but Steve was senior to him, and the Watch Commander made sure that Manny, as he preferred to be called, knew that. Steve shook Manny's hand, then they headed out to Steve's Bronco, since Manny's vehicle wasn't suitable. Steve told Manny his Bronco had a few improvements done to it by the guys in the PD's automotive shop. Manny found out about one as soon as he tried to roll the windows down – they didn't !

“Bulletproof Windows – nice touch!”

“The windshield is too, and it has a full bull bar, and if you look above you, you'll see the roll cage they installed- these Broncos can get a bit tipsy. That slot in the middle of the door is a gun port in case we need to shoot through the vehicle, and the doors have a Kevlar/carbon fiber laminate that should stop up to 7.62 rounds from penetrating. The gas tanks are Kevlar lined, and the stock engine's been replaced with a 351 Cleveland that has had some serious work done to it. This Bronco will go 0-60 about as fast as any muscle car. The tires have run-flat discs in them”

“Nice to have High Friends in Low Places – how'd you get them to do all that?”

“Remember that incident a few years ago with the Boy Scout who broke his leg? His Father runs the LAPD auto shop that did all this stuff.”

“Nice – I'm going to have to remember to save me a Boy Scout – I wonder what they can do with a Monte Carlo?”

When they finished, Steve opened the back tailgate, took out his keys and opened a hidden compartment under the carpet, and took out 200 rounds of 45acp 230gr. Corbon Flying Ashcan ammo. Steve had noticed that Manny had a Glock 21 as well, and offered several boxes to him. While they sat there reloading their mags, Manny said “You know these rounds could get you in a ton of trouble if the Chief found out!”

“I won't tell if you won't – besides, they just issued us AR-15's and M-203's with lethal rounds – the least of their worries might be we shoot someone with a JHP round instead of the issue RNL ammo.”

Each of them reloaded 7 13-rd mags, stuck 2 in their belt double- mag holder, 4 in their vest, and 1 in the gun. One thing the LAPD learned from the Hollywood Shootout was to make sure you had enough ammo on you for WWII. The other thing they learned coincided with the TAC Alert, and the heavy duty firepower – “Firepower rules!”

While the regular officers were issued AR-15's, SWAT was busy loading out too, except 1 of every 3 weapons was a Barrett Light 50 with a huge Leupold scope and a 80mm Spotting

Scope. The spotter for the 2 man sniper teams was issued an H&K G-3 in .308/7.62 NATO with JHPBT Match grade ammo. During a TAC Alert, SWAT acted as Snipers and Spotters for the “Field Troops”. Not all the SWAT members issued the Barretts were regular Snipers, but they had qualified the highest of the Non-snipers in the team on the long-range course.

When Steve and Manny finished loading their mags, Steve took the box of Federal Tactical 00 Buck and loaded the magazine of the 870, then loaded the chamber, and set the safety. He told Manny “Gun’s fully loaded, including the chamber, and safety is on.” then he walked to the driver’s side door, folded the bench seat forward, and clipped the 870 to the rack with the muzzle facing his door for safety. Then he filled a 25-shot bandoleer full of Federal Tactical 00 buck and hung it from the lower hook of the rack, so if they had to grab the shotgun, they had 25 rounds handy just in case. When they were all finished, Steve turned to Manny and said “Lock and Load” then inserted a magazine into the AR-15, and pulled back on the action to load a round, then set the safety. From that point on, the AR’s would stay muzzle up in the vehicle. Manny sat down first, and set his AR-15 between his knees with the muzzle up and forward, then Steve handed Manny his AR and got in. While Steve drove, Manny would hold both AR’s. Steve pointed straight up above Manny’s head, and told him if he needed to, the roof had a latch that would open so he could stand up and shoot in all directions.

“Steve, is there Anything you didn’t think of?”

“Yeah, I wish this was a Humvee, the armor is much better.”

They buckled their seatbelts, and Steve started the motor, which growled like a big V-8 should. They backed up, and hit the streets. Steve turned on his police radio to monitor it. Before they left, the Watch Commander told them they would be R-71 since they ran out of unit designations. Steve wrote that on a notepad next to the radio so they both could remember. From the sounds coming over the radio, all Hell was breaking loose all over Los Angeles. People were panicking thinking “The Big One” was right around the corner. There was looting, robbery, muggings and shootings going on all over the city. Steve hoped his family was OK. They were headed to Alhambra to act as a second car on patrol in that sector. Steve jumped on the 10 North freeway from the Station, and immediately had to turn on his lights and siren since the freeway was jammed with people fleeing Los Angeles.

“Where are they going to go?” Steve thought, “There’s no where for them to go to within 100 miles.” Finally he made it to the inside Emergency Lane, and even then, his progress was slow. More than once, he had to use his front bumper guard to push a stalled and abandoned vehicle out of the way. When he made it to the Alhambra City limits, he called Dispatch and checked in. No sooner had he checked in then he got an emergency call on the other side of the city. Since he already had his lights and siren on, he advised Dispatch that the going was slow, and he’d get there when he could. As he turned the corner, he noticed something weird – People were throwing rocks and bricks at vehicles, just like after Rodney King.

“Manny, better call this in – it looks like it could get ugly!”

“Dispatch Unit R-71 responding to Riot in progress in Almansor Park on the West Mission Road side.”

“Unit R-71, acknowledged, unable to send backup. Deal with it as best as possible.”

“Manny this could get ugly – glad I picked up a spare box of M-1029’s from the armory. Let’s start this with Non-lethal rounds – doesn’t look like anyone is visibly armed.”

They drove up to the edge of the Riot zone, and they ignored the siren and lights. Manny got on the PA and ordered them to disperse in English and Spanish since it appeared that the crowd was half Hispanic. Steve realized they weren’t listening, and told Manny to chamber a Anti-riot round in his M -203 and put on his riot helmet. The clicks of the actions closing was loud in the vehicle, and when they exited the vehicle the crowd started pelting them with rocks and bottles. Finally Steve leveled his M -203 at the crowd and pulled the trigger. Hundreds of rubber balls were launched into the crowd, and it definitely got their attention. Manny was ready to fire, and Steve decided to give them another dispersal order before he ordered Manny to fire, since these rounds were only less-than-lethal, they could still cause serious injury. He got on the PA again, and told them to go home. Some obeyed, but a small vocal group of what appeared to be the leaders and instigators of the riot told them to “Get Lost” in Spanish. Hearing this Manny got on the PA and replied in kind, exaggerating when he told them they were holding Full Auto M-16’s and the next round would be a White Phosphorous round. The “homeys” took one look at Manny and Steve, and beat feet!

“What did you say to them Manny, I got the first two words, and that was about it!”

I told them they could go home with their Manhood’s intact, or our next burst would turn them into girls!”

“Where did you learn to talk like that?”

“Esse, before I was one of Uncle Sam’s Misguided Children, I was a 7th Street Lobo in East LA!”

“I’ll have to remember that! It might come in handy if we run up against any other Latino gangs. By the way – thanks for the help!”

“Just doing my duty!”

“Working these Hispanic neighborhoods reminds me of an Old Lone Ranger Joke – the Lone Ranger and Tonto were surrounded by hostile Indians. The Lone Ranger says “Tonto, we’re surrounded, what are we going to do?”

“What’s this WE stuff – White Man!”

Good thing they were leaning against the Bronco, or else Manny would have fell down laughing. “I see your point, Kemosabe!”

Chapter 3

No sooner had they gotten into the vehicle, when the radio blared an all-out emergency call.

“OFFICER DOWN, SHOTS FIRED UNIT A-10!”

There was dead silence following the transmission, and Steve was sure he had just listened to a fellow officer make his last call.

Suddenly the Dispatcher called “Unit R-71 respond to West Valley Road and South Fremont in Alhambra, Code 3. Other units responding identify then clear the channel!”

“Unit R-71 responding Code 3 – ETA 3 minutes.”

As soon as Manny was belted in, Steve stood on the accelerator, and smoke poured off the rear tires as he accelerated as fast as possible. He knew every other available unit would respond to a Officer Down call – it was the LEO equivalent of a 911 call – anyone that could dropped whatever they were doing and drove as fast as possible to the site of the call.

Steve made it there in 2 minutes and 30 seconds. Manny saw a group of armed looters, and seeing one with an AR-15/M-203, he knew one of the officers was dead, because no officer would surrender a weapon like that, ever. He saw a pickup truck next to them that they were loading their booty into, and he fired 5 quick rounds into the gas tank, then loaded a WP round into the M -203 and blew up the gas tank. The resulting fireball vaporized the looters and cop-killers.

“Kentucky Fried Chicken Anyone – Crispy or Extra Crispy?”

If Steve wouldn't have been so preoccupied with the driver of the cruiser in front of him he would have probably fell on the ground laughing. He grabbed his lapel mike.

”Two officers down, One KIA, one critical – Roll EMS STAT!”

Dispatch came back “EMS unavailable!”

Thinking fast, Steve knew he could do nothing for the dead officer, so he left him, grabbed his trauma kit, and patched the officer up as best as possible. He had a round through both lungs and had one collapsed lung, and a sucking chest wound. He slapped a thoroseal onto the sucking chest wound and bandaged the rest of his wounds. Meanwhile, Manny had stripped the other cruiser of anything the looters could use and placed the guns and ammo on the seat next to him. Steve slid the injured officer in the back of his Bronco as gently as possible, then yelled to Manny “USC Trauma Center is less than 6 minutes away – Step on it!” As soon as Steve had shut the tailgate, Manny drove like a NASCAR stock car racer onto the 10 then the 101, and beat Steve's estimate by two minutes.

Once he had the officer in back, Steve opened another compartment in the Bronco that was built into the wheel well, and uncoiled a Oxygen hose with a mask, and set it to FLOOD. He put the mask on the officer, saying “Sorry buddy, this is all I can do for you – Hang on, you’ll be safe in a minute. Steve switched frequencies on his radio, and keyed his lapel mike.

“Officer Steve Randall, LAPD badge number x-ray 7653 calling USC Trauma 1 central.”

“Trauma 1 – Clear this frequency, EMS only!”

Steve swore under his breath and keyed his mike again!

“I say again, this is Officer Randall of the LAPD with a Code Blue Officer with a GSW through both lungs. We’re transporting in a LAPD Reserve vehicle – EMS is unavailable. Call Trauma Code Blue Alert and have them waiting at the Loading bay, ETA 2 minutes.”

“Trauma 1 acknowledge ETA 2 minutes, do you have vitals?”

“Negative Central – No time. He’ll bleed out in another 5 minutes if that long.”

“Central 10-4, calling Code Blue now!”

“Unit R-71 clear”

Steve switched frequencies again to tell dispatch they were Code 3 to USC Trauma with 1 Code Blue from Unit A-10, and the other officer was code 92 at the scene.

Dispatch acknowledged, and kept the frequency clear.

They reached USC Med Center a minute later, and quickly backed up to the Ambulance Entrance, where a Code Blue Trauma team was waiting. After they slid the officer out of the Bronco, and got him packaged and connected, they rushed him directly into a Trauma Room. Steve was too drained to do anything but sit down on the curb. 10 minutes later, a Trauma Surgeon walked out to Steve. “I don’t know how you did it, but he’ll make it!” When he saw Steve’s face he said “Wait a minute, I know you! You’re the guy who saved that Boy Scout!”

Steve extended his hand to the surgeon, who shook gently – surgeons weren’t into bone-crushing handshakes since their hands were their livelihoods. When Steve stood up, they walked into Trauma waiting. As they passed Central Dispatch, the dispatcher recognized Steve too. “Sorry about giving you the flack on the radio. I didn’t know who you were!”

“Don’t worry about it, you were following procedure.”

The trauma surgeon took Steve aside, and said “I know you aren’t a LA County Paramedic, but do you need to replace any supplies – we’d be glad to restock your kit!”

Steve took him up on the offer, and bagged up several bags of supplies, including IV Kits and solutions this time, because he knew that if the Stinky Stuff hadn't hit the fan, it was fixing to! He also grabbed a spare oxygen bottle, and left his empty to be refilled. Those little bottles last maybe 5-10 minutes on Flood setting. When he walked out to the Bronco, an Orderly was just finishing cleaning up the blood out of the back. Steve thanked him, then repacked the Bronco. He walked back into the waiting room when his radio broadcast "LAPD Central. CODE 666, I REPEAT CODE 666!"

Steve stood stock still, he never expected a Code 666 in his lifetime, the last time he heard one was when the LAPD turned and ran from the rioters in South Central LA during the Rodney King Riots. A code 666 was a general Bug Out order. The Chief had decided that he had lost too many men trying to stop uncontrollable rioting, and had ordered his officers to go to ground and protect themselves by any means necessary. Steve and Manny both dropped their coffee and doughnuts and ran to the Bronco, they couldn't have this conversation in public.

"Steve, did I hear right?"

"Afraid so, the LAPD is turning tail and running twice in two decades!"

"I don't have any family in California – they all moved to Colorado."

"Manny, how would you like to stay with us for the duration? I live on the fringe of Azusa with BLM land behind me. We're well set, and can easily handle another person."

"Thanks Steve, it sure beats the alternative."

They quickly repacked the Bronco, moving all the recovered weapons and ammo to the back of the Bronco, then Steve climbed behind the wheel, and started the motor. Out of habit, he turned his radio on, even though the code 666 told him that there would be no further transmissions.

They drove out of the driveway, and Steve decided to stay on the freeway with his lights and siren, since it was safer than the surface streets. They had to push several vehicles out of the way, and Manny pointed his AR at someone who threw a rock at them, but otherwise they made it to Steve's home in good shape.

As he walked in the door, Melissa jumped up and grabbed Steve, and held on for dear life.

"Steve, you should hear the news – it's like Hell has broken out in Los Angeles County – there are fires everywhere, uncontrolled rioting and looting, and they said that 20 police officers had been killed trying to stop the rioting. I thought you might be dead!"

"Melissa, as you can see, I'm very much alive, and I brought a friend. He's a LAPD regular, and his name is Manny Gonzalez. His family is all in Colorado, so I told him he could stay with

us. Before he was one of LAPD's finest, he was a Member of Uncle Sam's Misguided Children."

With that, Manny walked up to Melissa and introduced himself. Steve's two teenage daughters ran up at that point and practically tackled their Dad trying to hug him. Steve realized he was still wearing his Tactical vest, and told the girls and Melissa to go to their bedrooms for a minute.

"Manny – we're both wearing live grenades. We need to safe these grenades and put them someplace secure. Let's go down to the basement."

"Esse, you might want to check and clear the Bronco first – I left all the weapons and ammo we recovered from the other cruiser in the back – and I know there are some explosives in there."

They walked out to the Bronco. Manny had done a very good job of cleaning out the other cruiser. There were boxes of various 40mm grenades for the M -203, cases of ammo for the 45s, 12 gauge, and thousands of rounds of .223 SS-109, also he got all the spare mags and stuff off the injured officer's vest when Steve cut it off him. He took his Sam Brown Belt too, and that gave them a 9mm Sig, 6 mags and all the other cop stuff. Once they unloaded the Bronco, they unloaded their vests, and taped all the grenade's spoons down with electrical tape. Steve stuck all the grenades into locked boxes, and sealed the cases for the 40mm grenades with duct tape, and stuck the boxes with the rest of his Armory. Manny got a brief glimpse of Steve's armory, and he thought he was back in the USMC!

"Man, I hope we never need any of that stuff!"

"Manny – please don't mention the Armory to my wife and daughters, no need to alarm them – OK?"

"Sure Esse, anything you say!"

When they got done unloading, Manny walked outside to check their physical security. While it was a typical Stick Built tract home, Steve had done a lot to improve his security – for one thing, he was on the end of a cul-de-sac so there was no through traffic. His land backed up against State Forest land. When Manny looked at the house a little more closely, he saw a stucco exterior and a Spanish tile roof – not very burnable, and then he saw some planter boxes that looked heavier than they needed to be. On closer inspection, the walls of the planter box were almost 6 inches thick, and went up to the height of the windows. He thought they might be railroad ties that he had stuccoed over. Why would anyone build a planter box out of railroad ties, then stucco it over? Then Manny remembered something someone had said about Steve when he asked – something about him being in Vietnam and winning the Navy Cross. Then he figured it out – they weren't planter boxes, they were built-in cover. Between the wood and the thickness of the soil area, they were almost 3 feet thick. If Steve were smart and filled it 2/3 full of gravel, it could stop any 30 caliber and maybe a 50 caliber slug. Then he looked at

the shutters. While they appeared to be wood, the mounting hardware was way too overbuilt to hold up wood. When he tapped one, he said “That feels like Steel”.

“Good Guess, Manny – I guess you’ve figured out this house is designed as a stealth fortress. It’s built to withstand a lot of abuse, but doesn’t look like it, so it doesn’t attract attention.

Chapter 4

When they went back inside, Melissa had the TV on the Local News. KTLA was broadcasting from downtown LA that fires had started in several downtown high rises, including the older Union Bank building. Casualties were said to be in the hundreds to thousands between all the burning buildings.

Manny turned to Steve and said “Esse, don’t you work at the Union Bank Building?”

“I guess I used to! I got my entire department out and headed for the fire escapes 5 minutes after I heard the first explosion. The stairs were barely being used, they should have been flooded with employees escaping, but I guess they were acting like the well-trained Sheeple they were and waited for someone to tell them what to do – and as a result, a whole bunch of people died that didn’t have to!”

Melissa said “You did your part Steve, you got your department out. I heard on an earlier broadcast that one of the survivors who was interviewed said that if you hadn’t evacuated your entire department when you did, they wouldn’t have made it, because the building became engulfed in what they were calling a huge fireball minutes after they cleared the building. The Fire dept. spokesman said that the earthquake cracked the natural gas supply line to the building, and when it ignited, it sent a fireball up the elevator shafts, killing everyone in the elevators. For a while, the elevator shafts held the blaze, but some idiot tried to escape using the elevator despite what the fire instructions say, and caused a back draft condition and sucked the fire right into the 50th floor offices. From there, the reporter said it spread from floor to floor, engulfing the building in minutes.”

“I must have been in the underground car park when it ignited, I never heard anything. By the time I hit the street, I heard the recall order and the siren would have drowned out anything.”

Manny consoled his partner “good thing you didn’t go back, you would have doomed yourself, and probably not got anyone else out!”

Steve told him, “You know what was the worst part, that silly Fairy Frankie Finkelbarker was yelling orders out of the manual when we arrived on the ground floor. Not only did they not make sense, they were totally contradictory.”

Manny started laughing, “Steve, did you say Finkelbarker?”

“Yeah, why do you ask?”

“Before I was hired by the LAPD, I applied to the SFPD, because they had a higher Minority Hiring quota. I guess I wasn’t enough of a minority for them, but they sure were interested in a guy by the last name of Finkelbarker. And from the description, it has to be the same little queen. Acted like Barney Fife in drag! I found out later he was fired for soliciting an

undercover male police officer for a very unnatural sex act for money! The funniest part was he wanted to pay the guy to do it to him! I guess that's why he was working for Union Bank. I guess they were the only company in San Francisco that was more leftist than the SFPD!"

"Manny, someday remind me to tell you about my first day at work at Union Bank!"

Their conversation was interrupted by an EBS broadcast urging everyone in certain neighborhoods to evacuate immediately to Disaster Shelters due to out-of-control fires, and advising those whose neighborhoods weren't on fire to stay in their homes.

"I guess the firefighters are having the same problems we are. Remember during the Rodney King riots how the fire department couldn't put out fires because they were in the middle of an Urban Riot."

"Steve, I know better than you think I do – remember I lived in East LA? Well, the whole Barrio was in an uproar, we expected to be attacked at any time by rioters and looters. Some of the OG's got up on their roofs with AK's and M-16s. Luckily, it never made it that far. Shortly thereafter, I joined the USMC and gave my family my enlistment bonus to move to Colorado where my Uncle has a gardening business."

Manny, what's an OG?"

"Sorry Steve – forgot you're not from the hood. The OG's are the Original Gangsters, basically that's a title reserved for a retired gang member. Most of them have seen the error of their ways and gone straight. I guess if I moved back to 7th Street, the Lobos would consider me an OG."

"That's funny, I thought it stood for Old Geezer!"

They both got a good laugh until the next horrific scene on the TV. Finally they got to the top of the hour recap. The reporter said that LAPD had lost 20 officers killed in the line of duty today, and over 100 seriously injured. The LA Fire Department had suffered about 10 fatalities, but 150 injuries, most of them minor including smoke inhalation a 1st and 2nd degree burns. Several buildings downtown had collapsed between fire and earthquake damage. The freeways were clogged shut at this hour between traffic and stalled cars blocking traffic. The city streets weren't much better. It seemed the best way to get home at this hour was to walk, but most Angelinos were woefully under prepared to walk home. Most were wearing dress shoes or heels, and the few that weren't didn't have water or change on them to buy water or a soda. Manny and Steve felt guilty because they couldn't help them anymore – their sense of duty was so heavily ingrained that even when the situation was almost hopeless, they still wanted to run to the sounds of destruction and help. Steve knew how those brave Emergency Workers felt when the World Trade Center collapsed. He looked at Melissa, and realized he had a wife and daughters to protect, and Manny had family in Colorado he wanted to see again. Which was more important, saving a bunch of foolish strangers, or protecting his family? The Code 666 broadcast had made up his mind for him, but he wondered how much longer he would have

stuck it out if he hadn't got the call, and what would have happened to them. Melissa was right; he did his part when he safely evacuated his department, he saved those he could and those he was responsible for. He wasn't responsible for the foolish decisions of others. Then he saved an officer that had been shot, and quelled a disturbance that could have grown into an ugly riot. He had done his duty, now he had a family to protect.

According to the news broadcasts, things were relatively stable outside of Downtown Los Angeles and the further you got, the more stable it was. People remembered the lessons of the Rodney King riots, and refused to listen to instigators. There was spotty looting around LA County with the absence of the LAPD, but no gun stores got looted, since the owners had turned their buildings into fortresses, and armed themselves with high-powered semi-auto rifles on rooftop sandbagged positions.

The next day, as things calmed down, the Chief and the Mayor met, and decided it was safe enough to bring the LAPD and Fire Departments back in. At 0900 the next morning, Steve's radio blared "LAPD Central – General Recall – We're back in business!" Steve could almost hear the cheering in the background. It hurt the pride of the LAPD rank and file to have bugged out twice in two decades. Now that the rioting and panic had died down, Steve thought the Chief and the Mayor had made the right call, and recalled the LAPD and the Fire Department. Steve and Manny finished up breakfast, and got on their gear, and headed back to work. It was long and dangerous, but they finally got the city under control and the fires out without Governor Schwarzenegger having to call the California National Guard in.

When Steve returned home two days later, Melissa met him at the door, and gave him a big hug. "Welcome home Soldier!" After making sure the house was empty, he picked her up and carried her off to the bedroom to make up for lost time.

Chapter 5

Epilog

When they checked into the station on Monday, after taking the weekend off, Steve was called into the Police Chief's Office.

"Steve, I've reviewed the reports of last week, and it is my considered opinion that you and Manuel exhibited conspicuous gallantry and efforts above and beyond the call of duty. Now I know how you hate medals, so I have another idea for you. I'm short 20 officers including 2 Lieutenant Commanders. I know you have been a Reservist for the past 20 years, and recently you were the head of the Data Processing Center at Union Bank. Unfortunately, that building was destroyed in the earthquake and the resulting fire, and Union Bank has decided not to rebuild it. So it looks like you might need a job. I have a special job for you and Manny. I want to promote both of you to Lieutenant Commanders, and put you in charge of Emergency Medical Training and Equipment, and Manny already said he would head up the Special Weapons and Vehicles department. I have some ideas for a new Urban Police Vehicle and Weapons System if we ever get into a spot like we were. With the right gear, training and equipment, there should be no reason to ever need to bug out and leave Los Angeles at the mercy of lawbreakers. Your actions, and a conversation I had with the Director of Trauma Care at USC Medical Center, convinced me our officers need additional Advanced First Aid training. I need you to run the program, interface with the Trauma System, and train the officers. Eventually, you will train and certify instructors who will teach the students in the Academy. This will mean you will have to become a Full-Time LAPD Officer, but as a Lieutenant Commander, your job will be mostly behind a desk, and you won't be expected to serve as a patrol officer. By the way, it pays 30% more than what you were making at Union Bank and you will be eligible for full retirement in 10 years with credit for reserve duty."

"Chief, with all due respect, I have to talk with my wife about this. Also, I have a few questions."

"Fair enough, go ahead."

"One, Am I correct to assume that we are NOT replacing the Fire Department's Paramedic Service?"

"Correct – Our Officers will be trained and certified as EMT II only. Their duty is to render aid to officers and victims of violent crimes when possible. They will not be called for routine medical emergencies, but if they are on the scene of a shooting or stabbing, they will be able to render more effective aid until the EMS arrives to transport and provide Advanced Life Support care. The Director of Trauma care waxed philosophically about this for hours. He was amazed that a Police Officer had the skills to correctly diagnose and treat a Gunshot wound to the chest, apply a thoroseal and properly bandage the patient, and have the smarts to transport the officer immediately. I read your file, and you were a Navy Corpsman in Vietnam, and served 2 tours with the Recon Marines, including one incident where you saved a Marine under fire, getting

wounded yourself, and still got the Marine aboard a Medevac chopper, then were ordered aboard yourself. Seems to me that your wartime skills would be highly useful to the LAPD, and I hope you accept the offer.”

“One last question, when do you need me to start?”

“I’d like you in the position today, but take as long as you need to make a decision.”

“Can I make a phone call?”

“Sure, the office down the hall already has your name on it – go on in and use the phone.”

Steve walked down the long hall, and within 50 feet, came across an office with his nameplate on it already. It said “LTCDR Randall, Office of Emergency Medical Training and Equipment.”

“That sly old fox set me up! That nameplate wasn’t here Friday!”

He sat down in the very comfortable leather chair, and admired the view of Los Angeles from his window. He could put this off no longer, so he picked up the phone and called his wife “Melissa, it’s Steve; I’m at the Police Department. I just had an interesting conversation with the Chief of Police. He wants me to become a Lieutenant Commander, and head up the Office of Emergency Medical Training. It means I have to become a full-time LAPD officer, but I’m basically a desk jockey, and it pays 30% better than Union Bank and I can retire with a full pension in 10 years!”

“So why you calling me – I know you hated working for Union Bank. I think you should walk back in there and take the job!”

“Thanks Melissa, I kind of figured that was what you would say, but I wanted your advice and approval. It can be tough being the wife of a Police Officer.”

“You just said yourself you’d be a desk jockey – what are you worried about, paper cuts?”

“OK, you made your point – Thanks! I Love You – see you tonight! Bye!”

As soon as he hung up, he walked back into the Chief’s office and told him he’d take the job. The chief shook his hand, and sent him to Personnel where a mountain of paperwork awaited him. When he finished, he walked into Manny, who was walking on air.

“Esse! I heard the great news – we’re both Lieutenant Commanders! You know what this means? I can finally marry my girlfriend. We were waiting for me to get promoted so we could buy a nice house, but I never expected this!”

“Congratulations Manny! Let me know when and where the wedding is – I wouldn’t miss it for the world!”

Over the next several months they were both busier than a one-armed paperhanger, but they both had exciting jobs. Manny was reviewing new Police Armored transport systems that mounted Less than lethal weapons systems. Some Wag had suggested the Striker, but the Chief nixed the idea since the vehicle was built around the Bushmaster 20mm Autocannon. What they needed was an easy-loading semi-auto 40mm grenade launcher. It needed to be magazine fed so they could switch ammo from one type to another. They were also working with DARPA to perfect several 40mm rounds that would stop a riot cold without injuring anyone, except they might have wished they got sprayed by a skunk instead. It was a 40mm round designed for air burst over a crowd with a substance so foul smelling that you immediately became violently ill. It was considered an Area Denial Weapon, and it required the Police Vehicle to be equipped with Positive Cabin Pressure to keep the fumes out, which also doubled for NBC protection.

Steve had contacted the head of Trauma Care for LA County, and talked to the heads of the County EMS system so they knew he had no intention of stepping on toes, or invading territory. After several meetings he had won them over to the idea, and they supported the extra funding needed. The EMS people were happy that they didn’t need to go to every shooting situation, or at least be able to wait until the situation had stabilized without jeopardizing the patient. The County unanimously approved the budget and soon Steve was training the trainers, and establishing protocol for the officers. He designed a customized buttpack that rode on their Sam Brown belt that contained some extra First Aid equipment. A year later, they took their first family vacation to Hawaii, and they received an E-mail from Manny that he was the proud Papa of a son, Manuel Jr.

Six months later, Steve learned that Frankie died like the Queen he was – running screaming like a girl with his clothes on fire out he front of the building as it collapsed around him. Someone said he was wearing heels and lipstick!

Chapter 6

New Challenges

Several years later, Steve had gotten his Advanced First Aid program approved, and had trained the trainers. Several Academy Graduates were already qualified as EMT Level II, and several regular police officers had signed up to take the required coursework on their days off to get the EMT II certificate. Now that he had a training cadre, he could work on other things, like the Medical Equipment they would carry.

Meanwhile, Manny was working with several Military Contractors for the Next Generation Law Enforcement Tactical Vehicle. After researching everything available, they settled on an upgraded and de-milled version of the M -1117 ASV. The Military Version came with a full-auto M2 .50 Caliber Machine gun, and a 40mm Mk 19 Machine Grenade Launcher.

In order to make it Law Enforcement legal, they needed to remove or modify the Full-Auto weapons to Semi-auto only. Saco Defense Industries was planning ahead, and already had a semi-auto version of the MK 19 on the drawing boards that shot non-lethal grenades only. They used the same grenades as the M -203, but using several components of the MK-19 to create a magazine-fed semi-auto grenade launcher they called the MK 20. It took a 6 round magazine of 40mm Anti-Riot grenades including the M1029 40mm Crowd Dispersal Round (Area), and the new M1030 40mm Area Denial Round that launched dozens of fragile gel balls like paint balls filled with a noxious substance DARPA was working on for the military. In case they needed the lethal option, they still had a semi-auto magazine-fed version of the .50 caliber M2 mounted next to it. They deleted the SAW as redundant in a Law Enforcement Vehicle. They added 6 feet to the length of the original M -1117 ASV to carry 6 police officers and a rear exit hatch. They retained the original diesel engine and 4-wheel all-wheel drive suspension for on and off-road capabilities. Even with the modifications, it could still hit 60mph fully loaded, and had a 200 mile range per tank of diesel. The smoke canister units were replaced with Smoke/OC canister units that surrounded the vehicle with a choking cloud of OC vapor and blinding white smoke. The cabin of the M1117a was protected by a positive pressure ventilation system that kept the air pressure inside the vehicle higher than the outside pressure. This also increased the NBC capabilities of the vehicle. The crew of 3 had been reduced to 2 with a driver and a loader/gunner with the extra space taken up by supplies and ammunition. It also doubled as an Ambulance in the event an officer was shot and they couldn't risk a regular ambulance, they could send the M-1117a in and rescue the downed officer, and treat him on the way to the hospital by folding down 2 seats. It could carry 3 stretchers in place of the 6 additional officers if necessary. Manny had the prototype trailered to the LAPD testing grounds and they spent a month or two putting the unit through its paces. Finally, Manny realized that Steve needed to see the vehicle since it could be used as an ambulance, and he was in charge of Emergency Medical Training and Equipment, and this was definitely equipment, besides, he really wanted to see his friend. Manny called Steve and suggested they meet at the testing area – he had something to show him.

When Steve got there, Manny drove up in the M-1117a and scared the heck out of Steve. He shut it down, and crawled out the hatch. “Beats the heck out of that Bronco doesn’t it!”

Steve was still standing there in shock. Here was a Military Wheeled Vehicle with a .50 caliber Machine Gun and a Grenade launcher sticking out of its turret, and it was painted black and white with POLICE and LAPD written on it!

“What the heck is that?”

“Steve, I’d like to show you the M-1117a, the latest Law Enforcement Vehicle.” With that Manny gave Steve the grand tour, showing him everything. When he finally got to the Weapons, Steve took some convincing that those weapons were Semi-auto, since they looked just like the full-auto weapons he used in Vietnam. Finally Manny told Steve to get in, they were going for a ride. Steve buckled himself into the loader/gunner seat, and put on a helmet with headphones and microphone. They needed the helmet for noise protection as much as anything else. Manny drove to the firing range, and told Steve he was in for a little demonstration. He had set up a group of crash-test dummies wielding clubs and knives like a rioting mob. Manny stopped the vehicle about 100 yards short of them, and took over the loader/gunner spot while Steve looked out the front window. Manny turned on the weapons systems power, rotated the turret, and aimed the MK 20 at the dummies, loaded a magazine of M 1029 grenades, charged the MK 20, then pressed the trigger, and a single grenade shot 48 .40 caliber rubber balls at the dummies, and knocked them over. Manny safed the weapon, turned off the power to the weapon system as a further precaution, and exited the vehicle with Steve in tow. They walked up to the crash-test dummies, and while they were all on the ground, none looked like they had any rounds penetrate them.

“Steve, I’m not going to launch the other type of grenade, because you would have preferred being nailed by a skunk to smelling the aftereffects of the other grenade.”

He described the other grenade, and Steve agreed he didn’t need a demonstration. Manny explained the M2 was modified for semi-auto only, but fired all military ammo including AP and HE rounds, in case they needed to get rid of something quick. Manny showed Steve how the vehicle converted into an ambulance, and the storage for all the First Aid gear. Steve was ecstatic, and told Manny that they had got it right, and to order as many of these M-1117a’s as the chief would let them, because they would save officer’s lives, and the lives of the citizens in the long run, since there would be no reason to bug out ever again! The M-1117a was also unique in the day/night visual systems had been upgraded with low-cost day/night cameras and monitors with a camera slaved to the MK 20 and the M -2 for aiming. The monitors were visible from the gunner/loader’s station since the driver had regular bulletproof Plexiglas

windows to see out of so he could drive. Manny told Steve the FLIR capabilities of this vehicle equaled the FLIR aboard their surveillance choppers. It was also equipped with a sonic detector that could locate the position of a sniper. He told Steve that the vehicle was armored against anything up to 7.62mm/308 ammo, and the critical areas and weapons storage were armored against .50 cal, while the vehicle could survive a small landmine, even one strong enough to wreck the suspension wouldn't penetrate the crew compartment to hurt the crew or passengers.

Manny gave Steve the really good news, the Homeland Security Dept. had purchased enough units for each metropolitan department to have 20 units, and each county Sheriff unit to get 10 at no cost to the department except the ammo and supplies.

Steve thought this vehicle would not only come in handy against another Riot, but what if a large Terrorist group attacked LA? By the time the NG units responded, all they could do is provide the body bags. With this unit, they had a fighting chance. Randy mentioned that, and Manny confirmed his suspicions that HE rounds would feed just fine in the MK 20, it was just glossed over for Political reasons. All the Metro agencies had a supply of M -203 grenades, including several cases of M -406 HE rounds and M -1001 canister (flechette) rounds for anti-personnel use. Steve had seen the results of the M -1001 round, and he hoped he never needed it again.

6 months later, the LAPD had taken delivery of 20 of the M117a's and was busy getting them ready for duty, testing them, and verifying the zero of the optical sighting system. Once they were boresighted, the system automatically corrected for range by adjusting the cross hairs on the screen up and down relative to range and trajectory of the weapon selected. The new targeting system was so accurate you could shoot a MK20 round through a window almost a quarter-mile away almost 100% of the time, day or night. They put in a request for an M -20 launchable Flash/bang grenade when they found out how accurate the gun was. Being able to shoot a flash/bang through a window at a quarter mile every time was a nice thing to have for many reasons.

While waiting for the new grenade, Manny was busy training the troops, in the process of training, he found out he was the best gunner, and Steve was the best driver. The chief approved them assembling a team around his 2 lieutenant commanders of former Marines, and Army Rangers. They located 6 officers with former Recon and Delta experience who weren't assigned to SWAT. Manny and Steve interviewed each and found the reason SWAT didn't take them is the Politically Correct Commander of SWAT felt they were too aggressive. Being a Former Recon Marine, Manny felt right at home, and Steve knew that these officers could work together, and would appreciate the paramilitary nature of their assignment. Their military training came in handy, and were soon one of the best squads in training. When they completed

training, they were reluctant to resume their regular beat cop duties, but they understood that this was a training cycle for something the Chief hoped he would never need. The chief agreed to keep them training together for 1 Saturday per quarter, which was just enough to keep them from getting rusty.

Meanwhile, some LEO in Northern California designed and built a ROV to accompany the M-1117s and give them overhead daylight and IR imagery. It was built around a common RC plane design, with miniature pan/tilt/zoom cameras, GPS and transmitters added. It had a max forward speed to match the M-1117s and could loiter 2500 ft overhead for up to 6 hours relaying images via a secure 900 MHz short-range radio link to a 13 inch flat screen monitor in the M-1117. The position next to the driver was modified to allow the gunner to operate the ROV. They lost some storage, but gained organic surveillance capability. With the Eye in the Sky, as they called it, they could check out the rooftops ahead of them, eliminating one source of ambush the M-1117 was vulnerable to – Anti-tank rockets from above. A RPG or LAW rocket could easily wreck the M-1117, and they were most vulnerable from above! Since the M-1117 had towing capacity, they took advantage of it, and built an armored trailer to transport the ROV's, fuel and battery chargers for the transmitter/receiver batteries. It could carry 24 ROV's and enough fuel to keep them aloft for a week 7/24 if necessary. Since 1 ROV could cover a wide area, and they had 6 operators in the 6 vehicles assigned to them, Manny's Assault Group could cover a wide area if necessary. The chief liked it because it was cheaper and safer than a chopper.

Several years later, Manny got to put their training to the test. It seemed that Bin Laden had avoided the US military and escaped Afghanistan. He put together a group of Islamic Terrorists who vowed to destroy the Great Satan. Little did they know, but the US Department of Home Security had been busy behind the scenes, and America was much tougher to attack than the last time. They flew aboard a JAL flight from Indonesia to LAX, and were going to meet several American Islamic sleepers just outside the security zone. Their plan was to destroy all the planes on the ground and leave via the jet that just dropped them off.

When the shooting started at LAX, Manny's beeper went off, and they dashed down to the underground garage where the M-1117s and all their gear were stowed out of the prying eyes of the public. As soon as all their team was assembled, Steve got in the driver's seat, and Manny took the gunner's spot. The ROV operator grabbed a microphone, and told the launch operator to launch 4 ROV's to scan their route. Meanwhile, the FAA was fast on the job, and declared the LAX ATCA an Exclusion Zone, meaning anything flying in the area under 10,000 feet was automatically hostile, and subject to being shot down. The Air Traffic Controllers were busy diverting all incoming traffic to airports outside the LAX TCA. After 9/11, the FAA was in no mood to mess around, as one JAL flight found out when their aircraft was suddenly bounced by a pair of F-15's loaded for bear, and ordered over GUARD to divert NOW or be shot down. The pilot executed an immediate right bank to divert to Lindbergh airfield in San Diego! The F-

15's escorted the shaken pilot out of the TCA, then RTB in case another pilot didn't get the word.

Meanwhile on the ground, the Indonesian Moslem Terrorists were running into trouble. As soon as they pulled the AK-47s and grenades out of the cases, several shots were fired by undercover Federal Security operatives, one of which had the presence of mind to hit his crash alarm, which brought the internal security force running. Unfortunately, their Level IIA vests were no match for AK-47 rounds, and they were decimated after having killed just 2 terrorists. With their plan blown, they did what all terrorists were best at, taking hostages and making impossible demands.

The chief got the bad news shortly after breakfast, and decided to roll SWAT and the M-1117 teams. He remembered the glass at LAX would stop a 30-caliber round, but not the big BMG 50 rounds, and Manny was as good a gunner as they could get since some smart guy figured out a way to boresight a color zoom camera to the big gun, so they could reliably hit man-sized targets at a mile in daylight. The "scope" as they called it was another 13 inch flat panel monitor with a zoom control for 0-20 times magnification. The crosshairs on the screen indicated exactly where the gun was pointed, and the software took care of range and elevation calculations. Manny had surprised the Chief when he blew the head off a manikin at over a mile away during a dog and pony demonstration for the brass. For added drama, whoever set up the range filled the head of the manikin with red Jell-O, resulting in a shower of red mist when the bullet hit.

Once they got the ROV's launched and the remote operators said they were in control, Manny ordered a rapid transit to the LAX parking lot away from the planes. They were about to spring a pre-planned trap on the Raghead Terrorists. They let the squads of heavily armed and armored police out next to a little-known tunnel that went under LAX and allow the assault team to surround the terrorists without them being seen. Another thing that 9/11 had done was to get the local LEOs up to speed on assaulting various high value targets in their area, this time the owners and managers of the facilities were much happier to accommodate them. They gave them detailed plans that were scanned into their database and analyzed for weaknesses the police could exploit to surround and eliminate a threat without endangering civilians unnecessarily. That was how they found out about the access tunnel, and had gotten access cards to allow them to use this little known route into LAX. Manny was hoping the terrorists didn't know about it, but hoped that they did their usual lousy job of target analysis and they could surprise them.

When the squads were in place, Manny executed the second part of his plan. Thinking the glass was bulletproof, the Terrorists made no effort to hide, so when Manny's M-1117s stopped a

half-mile away from the building, the terrorists didn't worry. Their leader had strapped a dozen sticks of dynamite to his waist, and had the remote control in his pocket. They had managed to take 50 hostages, but they were separated from the terrorists by about 50 feet, and all herded into a small group. Manny activated the Weapons Systems controls, slewed the turret around until it was facing the building, and studied the scene through his scope. He liked what he saw, and noticing the apparent leader had a bomb strapped to his waist, made a slight change of plans. He loaded a magazine full of AP rounds into the M -2, charged the weapon, zoomed into the head of the terrorist leader, then called the leader of the assault platoon and gave him a sitrep based on his observations. When he told the platoon leader of his change in plans, he concurred.

Manny focused the sight on the Raghead's head, pushed a button that lazed the target to compute range and trajectory, got a green light that the system had made all the corrections necessary, and tapped the FIRE button once. A loud boom echoed over the tarmac, and through his sights, he could see the head of the Terrorist leader dissolve into mist. That was the cue for the Assault Platoon to act. Half of them fired their M-203s loaded with M 1029 grenades, and the resulting hail of rubber balls knocked most of the terrorists off their feet, and out of the fight, the few that remained standing received a quick shot to the head from the other half of the platoon.

"Enemy down, cease fire, Zero friendly casualties" was the next thing Manny heard. He breathed a sigh of relief, and shut down the weapons system on his M -1117. They spent the rest of the day policing up the area, checking for hidden bombs and hiding terrorists. Later that afternoon, LAX opened up with a sheet of plywood over 1 window and a cleaning crew steam cleaning the carpets and upholstery in the area the terrorists were.

Amazingly, the Press was actually favorable. Even the LA Times (Pravda West) had a hard time siding with terrorists who attacked other Angelinos and subscribers. It later turned out there was a VIP among the hostages, and he didn't waste any time praising the LAPD and the Chief for a job well done.

A week later, City Hall had a presentation, and the Mayor awarded the Chief, Manny and Steve some sort of medal. They all new it was a publicity stunt to get the Mayor re-elected, but figured they could use the good PR at the LAPD. The Chief clamped a lid of security down on any mention of the M -1117 in its current incarnation, or its capabilities, reminding the Press that it might be needed again, and they didn't want to give anything to the opposition. The press grumbled, but went along.

Later, in the Chief's office, Manny and Steve were issued LAPD citations, and a promotion of one step in rank. They still had the same jobs, but now earned more money as Commanders. Steve really appreciated this, since he was due to retire soon, and his pension was based on rank and time of service. As a Full Commander, he got another \$500 per month in pension benefits. All the Special weapons were put back away from the public. SWAT argued that they wanted M-1117s too, but the Chief vetoed it, saying that their assignment precluded using the equipment, and they already had an armored van to transport them. Back in his office, the SWAT leader threw a snit fit! It seemed the Chief thought not very highly of the SWAT commander, since the Mayor had pressured him to hire the SWAT commander for political reasons, and didn't give in to his demands beyond what other SWAT teams had.

Chapter 7

Retirement

Steve's retirement came sooner than he expected, 10 years flew by like 1. Steve actually was looking forward to traveling and fishing. He had accomplished everything he had set out to do, and he'd even saved the World for Democracy (or at least Los Angeles) twice. The LAPD had fully implemented his program, and academy graduates were coming out with a minimum of a First Responder certificate. Those so inclined (at least 30% of the graduating class – just so happened that it was the upper 30%) achieved an EMT II cert. The LA County head of Trauma Centers was overjoyed that so many trained personnel were going to be on the streets. He saw no reason that anyone should die from lack of care. Some people died almost instantly, there was nothing he could do about that, but he wanted to save the ones he could, and now he'd be able to save even more! Since Police Officers were the first on the scene of a violent incident anyway, it made sense to train them to save lives as well as take them when necessary. There had already been an incident where an officer saved the life of the scumbag he was forced to shoot when he pulled a gun on the cop. The scumbag was now doing life in the Federal Pen.

Steve felt satisfied that he had done everything he could, and his replacement was more than qualified to maintain the program. To tell the truth, Steve really wasn't an Administrator; he worked better building stuff rather than maintaining work done by others. The day he retired, the Chief accepted his badge and gun with regret, then later handed him a Reservist badge and his gun and LEO-only mags back. Steve looked at him funny and the Chief explained they were keeping him on the books as a Reservist. It meant extra money in his pocket, and he could keep his Glock 21 and his seven LEO only mags. The Chief assured Steve that he was on inactive reserve, which meant that Steve was still technically a Law Enforcement Officer, but had no official duties. Steve had to smile – he knew the Chief would find some way around California's stupid anti-gun laws – like that retired police officers had to surrender their guns and apply for a CCW like every one else. In some counties, like LA County, you had to be politically connected to get a CCW. Keeping Steve on the books was the chief's way of getting around the law. Steve walked into his office, and finished packing up his belongings. He found an old Bladetek IWB holster for his Glock, and 2 double magazine carriers. Since he was a Civilian, he reloaded with a box of Corbon Flying Ashcan rounds, and left the politically correct ammo with the first officer he saw. He carried his stuff out to the Bronco, and was about to get in when Manny showed up.

“Esse, where do you think you're off to mi Amigo?”

“I KNEW I couldn't get out of here without running in to you!”

Manny gave his friend a big bear hug, and told him, “Guess what? We’re going to be neighbors!”

Steve’s blank stare encouraged Manny to fill in the details.

“The house next to you just came on the market, and they were selling it way below market. It’s in great shape. Only thing it needed was a new roof. Even with a new roof, it was still 20K below market. We are moving in the first of the month!”

“Great Manny – that means you can watch our house while we’re traveling.”

“Not so fast compadre, Melissa told Sharon that you have a long list of stuff to finish around the house first!”

“Manny, are you sure you wouldn’t rather buy our house?”

“You’re not getting out of it that easy. We’re going to do some major renovations, and Melissa said you’d be glad to help!”

“I got to get home quick before she volunteers me for anything else! That’s great news man, sure I’ll help you with the house, stop by tonight for a beer and tell me what you’ve got planned.”

Later that evening, Manny drove up in his Monte Carlo lowrider.

Steve saw him driving up from the porch and was laughing his head off.

“What the heck’s so funny?”

“You can take the kid out of the Barrio, but you can’t take the Barrio out of the kid! Didn’t you sell that thing?”

“No way Jose! I’ve been working on it nights and weekends. It’s got a balanced and blueprinted engine, the suspension is custom including hydraulic lifters at all 4 corners. The body and interior are show quality – matter of fact, it’s won several competitions.”

“Just as long as you don’t add the dingle balls and the doggy in the window!”

“I skipped the chain steering wheel too – speaking of which, you know why lowriders have such small steering wheels?”

“So they can drive with handcuffs on – I saw the “Cheech and Chong” movies too Manny!”

Steve handed Manny a beer, and they sat down on the porch.

“Manny, what are all these big plans you have for the house?”

“To give you the Reader’s Digest version, I want to make all the security upgrades you did. If you notice, our houses are almost identical, except the interiors are a mirror image like so many tract houses. I did a little checking, and I noticed you have some funny looking roofing shingles – turns out that they are thin-film PV panels laminated to composition shingle material. Since we bought the place for so far below market and it needs a new roof anyway, we talked the bank into over-funding the loan by \$50K for home improvements. It still left us below the 80% loan to value limit, so we avoided mortgage insurance. Anyway, I wanted to install the entire southern exposure full of thin-film shingles when they re-do the roof, and I need your design for inverters, battery banks, and any other tips or tricks you have.”

“Luckily for you the guy who did our house is still in business, and I’m sure he saved the paperwork. If you can use our design, it will save you \$2K to \$5K in design fees. There were a couple of ideas I wish we would have done, like a solar water pre-heater, and a bigger bank. We only bought a 12-hour bank, but there were times where a 24 hour bank would have been nice. Also, you will want to spend the extra money and get a grid-intertie Inverter, since the State will give you huge rebates and stuff for that. Let me get his card, I’ll be right back.” 5 minutes later, Steve had the guy’s card in hand. “Here you go Manny! Give him a call, tell him

you're our new next-door neighbor and you already have financing, and that you want him to use the same design he used for us."

"Thanks Steve, thanks for the beer – I really need to get home to Sharon and the Kids." Manny gave Steve another big hug, then walked out to the Monte Carlo, and just for laughs, stuck in his Carlos Santana CD, and bounced the front hydraulics in rhythm to the song. Steve cracked up so hard that he almost fell down, then Manny settled down and drove off.

Chapter 8

Neighbors

6 weeks later, Manny and Sharon had moved into the house next door to Steve and Melissa's. Steve's two daughters were grown up and living on their own. Steve kept himself busy between Melissa's long list of "honey-do's" and helping Manny with their house on weekends. Manny had got a great deal from the AE Systems dealer when he mentioned he was Steve's next door neighbor, and their houses were virtually identical from the outside, and the interior layouts were mirror images of each other. The dealer offered to knock \$5 grand off the price he quoted Steve when he realized that there was no design cost involved in the system price, luckily he kept every design he built in his computer. Two weeks later, the roofers arrived to re-roof the house and install the PV roofing shingles. Since no one had bought the water rights to his property, when Manny saw that Steve had a small pump house out back, he asked him why a well since they had municipal water.

"Manny, how long would the water last if the electricity were cut? If you have your AE system working, and you had water, you could live in your house a lot longer in the event of an emergency than without. Besides, I only had to go down 150 feet to hit good water, and I've got a jack pump in the garage all set up including a DC motor to drive it. My municipal water feeds a 500 gallon water tank with a float valve to keep it filled. I've got 2 RV 12vdc Shurflo 40psi pumps hooked in parallel for water pressure. If the water pressure drops – I still have 40psi water pressure – it would come in handy if there were a wildfire in the scrub brush put behind our houses, and if I need to install the jack pump, it only needs to operate long enough to fill the tank when the float valve turns it on. Come on in and check out the rest of my basement – you might want to do something similar."

When they walked into Steve's basement, Manny was impressed! Steve had finished the entire basement, when his was still unfinished. One half was emergency food and gear storage, and the other half was a huge battery bank, and a 500 gallon water tank. The battery room was vented directly to the outside to vent off any gases generated by the charging batteries. The dividing wall turned out to be made of CMU instead of wallboard and 2x6s as Manny thought.

"Esse – how come the overkill wall between the battery room and the rest of the basement?"

"Manny – you know that charging batteries produce hydrogen gas, right? Well, remember the Hindenburg disaster where that big blimp blew up and caught fire? It was full of Hydrogen, and

its real explosive! I built a dedicated battery room so any blast would vent out the vents instead of blowing up the rest of the house!”

Manny’s reply was a string of gutter Spanish curses. Good thing Steve didn’t understand, because it would have shocked him that his friend could swear like that!

“Steve – you’ve put a BOMB in your basement?”

“Not exactly, the entire bank only leaks a small fraction of an ounce of hydrogen gas per day. The overkill design was just in case the entire bank blew up for some stupid reason. You’ve got a better chance of a 747 landing on your roof than your battery bank exploding. Most people put their battery houses outside, but all someone would have to do to ruin your plans would be to break into your battery bank room and set an explosive charge. Since we’re cops, and some people don’t like us, I figured it was worth the extra expense and risk. The pump house is small enough that someone might think it was just a garden shed, and not mess with it.”

“Anyway, the guy who designed my system found out I had a full basement, and decided it would be cheaper to install everything in the basement, than building a new building to house everything. The only thing in the pump house besides the well pump is a 5KW diesel generator and a 100-gallon drum of #2 Diesel with Pri-d in it.”

“Ok Steve – if you say it’s safe, I might as well do it the same way. Can I take a closer look at your armory?”

They walked over to the other side of the basement, and Manny noticed this wall too was made of CMU brick.

“Steve – how come the CMU construction here – there’s nothing in here that can blow up?”

“Nothing YOU know about Manny!”

“Holy Chit man ...What have you got in there!”

“Just some stuff I scavenged from my military days.”

Manny knew well enough not to ask – he was still a Police Officer after all.

Steve told Manny building a CMU divider wall in an existing basement was relatively easy, but stopped short of volunteering to help, remembering it was almost 30 years ago when he built his. Even Manny might be too old for the backbreaking labor of hauling 40 and 50 pound CMU blocks into the basement and building a wall.

“Manny, you might want to call Azusa Pacific College, and find out if you could hire some College Students to help you build it – it’s not technically difficult work, just backbreaking labor to haul all those CMU blocks down into the basement and erect a wall.”

“I’ll give the AE Systems dealer a call as well, see what he says.

Chapter 9

Jailbreak

9 months later, Manny's and Steve's houses looked so identical from the front that someone asked if there was a mirror in between the houses. Even the numbers were similar. Manny's Address was 579 and Steve's was 597. This had caused more than one visitor to go to the wrong house. One day the Chief called Manny into his office.

"Manny – I've got some bad news for you, Hector Hernandez escaped from prison the other day – and you remember he vowed revenge if he ever got out! Anyway, better let Steve know as well, since his house looks just like yours."

Later that evening, they sat on Steve's porch drinking a beer when Manny told Steve about Hector. "Steve – this guy is bad news! He used to be the kingpin of another East LA street Gang, and he built up a serious crew before the LAPD busted him and put him away for life. My testimony was instrumental in putting him away. It was my first big case as an LAPD officer, and it got me rapidly promoted. This guy is a real psycho; he even knifed his own mom! He's escaped, and probably headed this way. Since our houses are almost identical, you need to be on the lookout as well."

"Thanks for the warning Manny. I'll keep an eye on Sharon and the kids while you're at work until they catch this mutt!"

"Thanks, Steve, I knew I could count on you!"

When they finished their beers, Steve asked Manny to accompany him downstairs. Opening his armory he took out 2 Scattergun Technologies Remington 870 shotguns and handed one to Manny. "Keep this next to the door, its cruiser ready and full of Federal Tactical 00 Buck. I'm sure you've used this model before?"

"I've fired one a time or two – how did you get hold of 2 of them?"

"Connections – helps to have high friends in low places!"

“Keep it near the door during the daytime, and if anyone drives up you don’t like – Ventilate them! I’d keep it by your side of the bed at night, that Surefire foregrip sure comes in handy when you’re shooting in the dark! It blinds whoever you are shooting at, and positively identifies your target. The center of the beam matches the spread of 00 Buck out of that shotgun, I also keep the sidesaddle loaded with 4 00 Buck and 2 slugs.”

Manny was looking over the gun, and noticed the TRAK-LOCK ghost ring sight, and the oversize safety button. With the 3” Magnum chamber, it would chamber anything stamped 12 ga., and it carried 7 2 ¾” rounds in the magazine. He shouldered the gun, and noticed that the ghost ring was well named, the big hole in the back formed a ring around the tritium sight in the front, giving excellent accuracy with slugs out to 100 yards. Steve handed him a box of Federal Tactical 00 Buck, saying that these rounds were devastating out to 25 yards, and the recoil was mild enough that Sharon could shoot it comfortably. Manny took the shotgun and the ammo over to his house, and sat down to talk with Sharon. Manny wasn’t worried about Jose and Maria, since Manny had taught them never to touch a gun unless they asked him, and he actually handed the gun to them, and even then to treat all guns as loaded. While they were still young, Manny got them started shooting, and both were excellent shots with their Chipmunk .22 Rifles. Jose was almost old enough for Manny to get him a Ruger 10/22, but he wanted to wait a year so Maria wouldn’t feel left out. Sharon went shooting with Manny at least every other month, and liked shooting Sporting Clays, so he knew that she could handle the Shotgun. He told her that Steve would be right next door and would try to keep an eye out for him. Manny told Sharon that they weren’t expecting anyone or any deliveries for the next couple of weeks, so anyone driving in the driveway was either lost or hostile, and until further notice, she should assume they were hostile. Manny described Hector to her and Sharon called him “El Diablo”. Manny agreed.

Several nights later, Manny was awakened by the sound of breaking glass. He got his shorts on and slipped into his slippers, grabbed the shotgun and woke Sharon, told her to call 911, and tell the dispatch his badge number, that there was a break-in at that address, and say “Officer Needs Assistance” that would get the cavalry rolling. Manny got the kids into the master bedroom without turning on the lights, and sat in a position to cover the hallway and their bedroom window. Meanwhile, Steve was awakened by the same noises, had Melissa call 911 with the same instructions except to give them Manny’s address. As soon as Melissa got off the phone, she picked up her Glock 21 and her Surefire flashlight, and got down next to the bed, so she wasn’t in the line of fire from the window, but the bed should stop some rounds. Steve got a little more dressed than Manny, since he might need to go outside. Melissa told the dispatch that Steve was going outside to investigate, and what he was carrying and how he was dressed. Steve left all the lights off, and crept down the hallway, checked the peephole, and no one was near the doorway. He slowly opened the door, and there was a strange car in Manny’s driveway, the motor was running, but no one was in it. He wrote the plate number on a pad

next to the door, and proceeded to duck walk to a good position where he had line of sight on the front and back between their houses, and he was behind cover. There was just enough room for a person to crouch between their planter box and the wall of the house. Steve stayed put and waited for the cavalry. Suddenly, he heard the roar of a 12-gauge shotgun, and shortly thereafter, saw 2 armed men run around from the back to the front of Manny's House.

Steve yelled "Freeze, LAPD" and the 2 dirtbags skidded to a stop, but one of the idiots raised his gun, and Steve fired, hitting him center mass with a load of 00 Buck. He fell immediately, and Steve swung his 12-ga over to cover the other dirtbag.

"Do you want to join him? Drop the weapon, lay on the ground spread eagled, and DON'T MOVE!" The second dirtbag must have been the smarter of the two, and tossed his weapon, laid on the ground, and spread eagle without moving. Steve stayed there until he heard sirens. One vehicle pulled into his driveway, and one pulled into Manny's. As soon as they got out, Steve ID'd himself "LAPD, I have a suspect down and I'm covering another. Check on Manny, I've got this situation under control."

Both officers knocked on Manny's door "Manny LAPD, we're coming in!" Since the door was already broken in, they opened it carefully and swept the living room with their lights and guns. Finally they heard. "It's Manny, I'm down the hall. I've shot one suspect and I'm covering him. Watch yourselves, he might still be armed." When the officers got close enough, they told Manny it was OK, they've got him, and Manny pointed his shotgun in a safe direction – at the ceiling. The dirtbag was down and bleeding, but still alive. The officers removed his weapons, frisked him, and cuffed him. Then they moved him into the living room and attempted to treat him, but he bled out from a fatal shotgun blast to the chest. They called a supervisor, then walked over to where Steve was, and cuffed the other suspect. Knowing department shooting policy, Manny handed the shotgun to the supervisor when he showed up, and made sure the safety was on. The supervisor unloaded the weapon, bagged the rounds in an evidence bag and then did the same to Steve's shotgun. He told Manny and Steve they would get their weapons back later that week after forensics was done with them. Manny had Sharon stay in the bedroom with the kids, while he put on a shirt and went out to talk to the supervisor. He took Manny's and Steve's statements, told them not to worry that this looked 100% like a righteous shooting and since they were off duty in their own homes, would not have to face a review board. Manny got a good look at the dirtbag he had shot, and sure enough, it was Hector. After the police left, Steve offered to let Manny's family spend the night at their house. Manny took him up on the offer. Manny and Sharon took one room and the kids doubled up for one night in the other, but no one got much sleep.

Chapter 10

LAPD

3 days later, the head of Forensics called Steve to tell him they were finished with his shotguns, and he could pick them up at the property room. Steve called Manny who agreed to meet him there. Steve drove into the LAPD, and he felt funny entering the building for the first time in years. Things had changed, and not for the better! He met Manny in his office, and they both walked down to the Property Room. They rang the buzzer, and this 20-something year-old weirdo walked up to the gate. “Can I help you?” he asked with an imperious tone.

Steve spoke up “I’m here to recover my shotguns – forensics called and said they were done with them.”

“Mr. We can’t release weapons that were involved in a Murder case until the trial – so come back after the trial.”

Steve knew this was BS, and by the time the trial rolled around, he was sure the shotguns would get “lost” in the system, probably right into this little creep’s trunk! Taking a couple steps around the corner, he opened his cell phone and dialed the chief’s private number from the phone’s memory. “Chief, I need a little help at the Property Room. Forensics said they were finished with my guns, and this little creep who you’d have to see to believe is telling me I need to wait for the trial. You and I know there never will be a trial in this case, and I’m sure the little creep will end up losing my \$1500 Scattergun Technologies 870’s right into his trunk!”

“Steve, I’ll be down in a minute, don’t say anything until I get there, I know exactly who you are talking about, and Personnel made me hire him, and a couple like him, I wish they would have gotten jobs at SFPD because they give me the creeps!”

Steve was laughing so loud that Manny asked him “Que Paso?”

“You’ll see – this ought to be interesting ... The Chief’s on his way down. Just let the Chief do all the talking!”

5 minutes later, a very agitated Chief walked up to Steve and Manny, then they turned the corner to the property room.

The Chief yelled, “Officer Swishy...Front and Center!”

Officer Sam Swishy sprang to attention like a cadet and saluted the Chief.

“Chief Wilson – How may I help you!”

“You can release this officer’s weapons from property RIGHT NOW on my authority!”

“But Sir, they have to wait for the trial!”

“You Idiot! There isn’t going to be a trial, the one survivor has already spilled his guts and copped a plea since he was facing 2 murder charges. Now release those weapons immediately, or give me your badge and gun!”

A very red faced Officer Swishy turned around without a word, and went back into the property room and retrieved the guns. All the accessories had been removed, Steve told the Chief that they weren’t in the condition he gave them to the supervisor in.

The Chief went ballistic “Officer Swishy, Consider yourself on Suspension without pay effective immediately, You have 5 minutes to locate all the accessories these guns came in with, or I’ll have your badge right now!”

Officer Swishy ran back into the stockroom, and located the bags with the accessories and the ammo with 30 seconds to spare. He handed the bags to the Chief. Steve checked the bags thoroughly against the written inventory, and everything was present, except 1 round that forensics had fired for evidence purposes. Steve nodded his head, and they went back to the Chief’s office, who was still steaming! When he got to his office, the Chief called one of his senior Sergeants, and asked him a blunt question.

“If you had an officer that you wanted to assign to the worst shit detail, where would you assign him?”

“I guess someone really ticked you off Chief?”

“You can say that again, I can’t fire the SOB, but I want his remaining days as an LAPD officer so bad that he quits voluntarily!”

“Sir, we still have a mounted patrol!”

“I don’t want him to be a mounted PD officer!”

“That’s not what I had in mind – I was thinking we could assign him to a maintenance detail and have him shoveling out stalls!”

“Sergeant, I like the way you think! Please transfer Officer Sam Swishy from Property to the Maintenance Detail at the horse corrals!”

“Yes Sir!”

Steve and Manny waited until they were safely out of the Chief’s office to bust out laughing!

Manny said “Remind me never to piss the Chief off!”

Steve still couldn’t stop laughing, envisioning Officer Swishy shoveling horse manure 40 hours a week! Steve and Manny said their goodbyes, and Steve drove home to reassemble his shotguns.

Chapter 11

Once More into the Breech

Manny enjoyed the years he had left as an LAPD Officer then when he reached Retirement Age, had one of the biggest blowouts in LAPD history. Officer Swishy lasted 2 months in the Maintenance detail, shoveling horse manure 40 hours a week. He tried every trick in the book to get out of it, but he was thoroughly screwed when the Chief put the word out to personnel that anyone that even contemplated helping Officer Swishy out would join him. The Personnel office enjoyed their perks, and didn't want to end up shoveling manure. Even his buddies in Personnel had to back off when their supervisor reminded them of the Chief's edict. Finally, Officer Swishy couldn't take it any longer, and quit. He got a low-paying job at a San Francisco strip bar working 4 nights a week. His act was so bad that the Manager would have fired him, except Officer Swishy was providing him certain "fringe benefits".

A couple of years later, Los Angeles finally had "The Big One". Since Manny and Steve were still on the books as reservists, they volunteered for duty. Steve was almost 65, and Manny was 57, but they kept in good shape. They suited up at Steve's place, since his gear was in better shape than the LAPD's, and drove down to the PD in Steve's new Hummer. When they got there, they were assigned an M -1117 and they ran down to the garage to start it up. They were to be the driver and gunner again, and they had a team of what they felt were rookie cops assigned to them, but were actually experienced officers, just 30 years younger than the "Old Geezers". As soon as Steve got the motor started, he got on the radio, and received his first call- a Riot was breaking out south of Azusa. As soon as everyone was secured, Steve floored the accelerator, and headed out. When they got there, Chaos had broken out, with looters, vandals and crooks operating unrestrained by Law! Steve and Manny decided they could put a stop to that, and targeted the largest group of looters. Manny loaded the magazine full of M -1029 grenades, cycled the action, and pressed the firing button. 3 rounds later, the rioters had scattered. Elated by their success, Steve and Manny decided to keep patrolling the area. They dispersed several more crowds of looters with a well-placed M -1029 round. One crowd of looters took refuge in a huge mall, and the M -1117 couldn't follow them. Steve ordered the officers to dismount and engage. It was the wrong thing to do, but Steve didn't realize how violent LA had gotten since his retirement. The officers knew, but figured Steve, who was a hero to them, knew what he was talking about. They grabbed their AR-15/M -203 weapons, and exited the rear hatch. A gun battle soon erupted, and the dreaded "Officer Down" call was heard over Steve's radio. They still couldn't get the M -1117 into the building, and training took over, so they abandoned their vehicle and went in after the officers. It was a madhouse, with rounds flying everywhere. Steve recognized the sound of a Full-auto AK-47 ahead, and was worried that their vests wouldn't stop it, especially if they were running steel jacketed rounds. As they turned the corner, they ran straight into a huge firefight, with the officers trying their best to repel the dirtbags who were out to get them. Evidently, they had interrupted a gang in the process of robbing one of the banks inside the mall using the riot as cover. They were

well armed, and armored as well as the officers. It was the Hollywood Shootout all over again, except they were in a Mall, and up against 10-15 robbers armed with full-auto AK's. Steve had a sinking feeling as he patted his vest. NO red grenade rounds! Some Stupid PC SOB had taken the HE rounds away from the Officer's vests for the M -203. All they had were non-lethal rounds that were ineffective against armored targets. They had gas masks too, so the "stink bomb" round wouldn't work. Just as he was going to order the Retreat, one of the officers either got brave or stupid, and left cover in an attempt to flank the attackers. He was shot in the legs, and would soon bleed out unless Steve did something. He reacted without thinking, and dove toward the injured officer, and dragged him behind cover. In the process, he was tagged by an AK-47 round that unfortunately his vest didn't stop. Ignoring his wounds, Steve applied a battle dressing to the wounded officer, and stopped his leg from bleeding. Manny saw his partner down and got mad. He forgot he didn't have any HE rounds, or he never checked. He charged around the corner, firing from the hip to get Steve away from the scene. His LTL rounds had no effect, and he too was hit by a volley of bullets that stitched him across the middle. He grabbed his lapel mike and broadcast the code word "Broken Arrow" which meant that officers were down and under fire, and if they didn't receive urgent help, they would die. It also indicated that their vehicle was in jeopardy of getting taken over by the bad guys. The next M -1117 to arrive on the scene wasn't so worried about property damage, and blew the front doors of the Mall away with a volley of HE rounds. They charged down the center of the mall, firing their M -2 at any likely targets. Their superior firepower, and the fact that they were armored, drove the robbers away from the downed cops. They got to Manny and Steve just as they were bleeding out. Manny turned to Steve and said, "Vaya Con Dios Amigo!" Steve replied "Vaya Con Dios Manny, you did good – these officers will live. Too bad about us. Not a bad day to die!" and with that, Steve expired. Manny lasted long enough to call his wife on the cell phone. "Sharon, I don't have much time, I just called to tell you I love you, and to take care of Jose and Maria for me – give them my love! I love you forever Mi Esposa!" Manny died hearing his wife tell him for one last time how much she loved him.

Eventually the rioting was brought under control, and the city rebuilt. The officers told the chief what happened, that Manny and Steve died because some PC SOB took the HE rounds out of their grenade pockets of their vests and replaced them with LTL rounds. The chief went ballistic, and launched an immediate investigation. Steve and Manny were buried with full honors, with a Bagpiper playing Amazing Grace, and a 21-round salute. The news media got wind of the investigation, and found out that it resulted in the deaths of 2 officers who were twice awarded the City's highest award for heroism. The resulting outcry caused a recall election of the entire city council when the citizens discovered that City Hall had pressured the police armorer to remove the rounds without notifying the Chief. The chief wished he could have prosecuted the entire City Council for Negligent Homicide, but got something better, a Council that was 100% Conservative and Pro-police. Jose and Maria received full scholarships to USC, where Jose became an ER doctor, and Maria went on to become a famous lawyer who fought for various conservative causes. Sharon never remarried, and visited Manuel's grave every Sunday after church. She died 30 years later, after becoming a Grandmother 4 times. Her last thoughts were of Manny, she died surrounded by her family.

THE END