Bob Siemer; the 1997 FSA Correctional Officer of the Year

The year 1997 seemed to be a banner year for county jail correctional officers saving someone's life. There were several who did. But, after careful deliberation the FSA screening committee chose Martin County Correctional Deputy Robert Siemer as the "1997 FSA Correctional Officer of the Year" for his "over and above the call of duty" response to a particular incident he encountered last year.

At about ten o'clock on the morning of Saturday, August 23, 1997, Bob Siemer was off-duty. He and a friend were enjoying a day of fishing on the Indian River. That same morning, 46-year old Ronald Griggs was fishing as well, accompanied by his wife, Char, and Griggs' 9-year old daughter, Lindsay. All three were in a boat which was anchored a short distance from Siemer.

Everybody on the river was enjoying an otherwise normal day when a lightening bolt came out of nowhere and struck with a loud bang. Startled by the flash, Char ducked down and away from the explosion, then looked back just in time to see her husband going overboard and into the river.

Char Griggs initially thought that her husband might have jumped in the river intentionally to avoid the lightening strike. But, peering over the side of the boat, her worst fear was realized. She then reached out, grabbed her husband's limp body, and tried to retrieve him. Fully clothed and soaking wet, Ron was far too heavy and awkward to lift out of the water. So, she held on tight and began screaming for help.

Bob Siemer, hearing Char's cries and seeing her dilemma from off in the distance, immediately sprang into action. He moved his boat close enough to reach over and grab hold of Ron, and together, he and Mrs. Griggs pulled Ron's limp body back into the boat.

"We got him in the boat and I took one look at him and distinctly remember thinking to myself, this guy's a goner," Siemer said. "He had that look — that unmistakable look. We checked his vital signs and there was no heartbeat and no breathing."

"Just then, with tears streaming down her face, his little daughter started crying out, 'Mister, please save my daddy...please save my daddy,' and that's all the incentive I needed to try as hard as I could to bring him back."

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For what must have seemed like a lifetime, Siemer began administering CPR with the assistance of Mrs. Griggs. "We got a heartbeat a couple of times, but then it would quit. At that point, I felt more sure than ever that he was gone," Siemer said.

With Siemer working feverishly, Char Griggs called 911 for help on her cellular phone. A few minutes later, Bruce Newbold, a Martin County Sheriff's Office marine deputy arrived on the scene in a patrol boat. Together, they loaded Griggs into the patrol boat and began heading to shore, with Siemer still administering CPR.

The EMTs waiting at the boat landing then continued CPR on the way to the hospital.

It was touch and go for a while, and several days before Ron Griggs was moved out of intensive care and into a regular hospital room where he recuperated. In addition to causing his heart and neurological system to shut down, Griggs had suffered several serious burns from the lightening strike.

Attending physicians said that by all medical standards, Ron Griggs "died a couple of times that day," and that were it not for Bob Siemer, Ron Griggs would never have survived the ordeal.

For his efforts, he was recently awarded a handsome plaque and a check for $1,000 at the Florida Sheriffs Association Mid-Winter Conference held January 13 in Daytona Beach.

**Runners-up named as well**

**Anthony Frangioni of Manatee County**

On July 23, 1997, Correctional Deputy Frangioni was transporting two juvenile inmates to Hillsborough County for court. When he happened upon an elderly female who appeared to be driving while intoxicated. Since he already had two prisoners in tow and was outside his jurisdiction, Frangioni used his cellular telephone to summon an FHP trooper.

Unfortunately, none were nearby, so he initiated a call to the Hillsborough Sheriff’s Office. Seconds later, prior to the arrival of a Hillsborough deputy, the woman ran a red light and crashed into vehicles crossing U.S. 41 at Big Bend Road.

While administering first-aid to the elderly woman, someone hollered out that there was a child trapped in one of the other vehicles, and that the gas tank had ruptured on the vehicle, spilling gasoline all over the highway. Frangioni broke out the back window of the vehicle and pulled the child to safety. The child did not appear to be breathing, so Frangioni administered CPR until she began to breath on her own. As a result of his valiant efforts, Frangioni saved the life of two-year old Nicole Sexton. The woman survived with minor injury.

**Michael A. Schoch of Polk County**

The other runner-up was not presented with the opportunity to save a life in 1997. Instead, though, Sgt. Michael Schoch saved Polk County residents loads of tax dollars with his innovative techniques and leadership.

Among the many things for which he was nominated, Schoch created lesson plans that allow correctional officers to be trained while in an "on-duty" status. This results in substantial cost-savings because it eliminates the need to require officers to be called in for overtime to cover shifts while fellow correctional officers are away from their post attending in-service or mandatory retraining.

Schoch has also transformed his skills and experience into lesson plans for a total of 46 contact hours of training, 32 of which are in the high liability areas. And, he is constantly involved in public demonstrations of the sheriff’s office Detention Distur-
Keepin’ em locked up...

Last year, Maj. George Aylesworth, chief legal counsel to the Miami-Dade Police, approached us (FSA) and the Florida Police Chiefs Association (FPCA) with an idea. The idea surfaced when George learned that there was a parole hearing scheduled for a person who shot and killed a Dade County officer years ago, yet nobody was going to appear “representing the law enforcement community as a whole,” to speak in opposition to the impending release.

George spoke with Ed Spooner, Chairman of the Florida Parole Commission (FPC), and asked him if he would be willing to put out a standing order that whenever an individual who either killed or feloniously wounded a law enforcement officer came up for parole, that FSA and FPCA would routinely be notified and invited to speak. Spooner, a former police chief himself, was glad to oblige.

Our executive director assigned me to serve as FSA’s representative at the hearings. Hal Robbins, the executive director of FPCA appears in behalf of the over 300 police chiefs across the state.

Parole hearings are held virtually every Wednesday morning in Tallahassee. With the change in the law in the early 70s, many of the “lifters” serving “25-year minimum mandatory” sentences are now moving into their eligibility period for parole consideration. There are usually between 1 and 5 inmates coming up for consideration on any given Wednesday who have either beaten, shot, stabbed, or murdered a law enforcement or correctional officer.

As I write, almost a year has passed since Robbins and I started appearing at parole hearings. We have testified against an array of persons who assaulted or murdered FHP troopers, city police officers, game wardens and deputy sheriffs.

At the risk of sounding like we’re boasting, I am thrilled to report to you that after testifying in no less than 50 cases, Hal and I have never.... yes, that is NEVER had one single instance where the FPC set the perpetrator’s presumptive release date earlier than it was before we testified. In fact, in many cases, the release date is delayed for an additional year, two years or five years, depending on how much light we are able to shed on the inmate’s life of crime and prison record. Some have even been extended for 20 or more years.

In all honesty, researching all of the cases, then sitting in a witness room for between 2-5 hours almost every Wednesday is a very trying and tiresome ordeal.

But, it’s one of the most satisfying tasks I’ve ever been privileged to be a part of......

So satisfying, in fact, that when I retire from now, I may volunteer to do it for free.

FHP gets new director

Fred Dickinson, the executive director of the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles recently named Lt. Col. Charles C. “Curt” Hall as the new statewide director of the Florida Highway Patrol. Hall, was deputy director of FHP’s field operations division and was the unanimous choice of the interview committee.

Col. Hall is a graduate of Florida State University, and has a distinguished career with FHP which spans 33 years. Prior to several administrative posts at FHP headquarters in Tallahassee, Hall served in duty stations in Moore Haven, Dade City and Orlando.

“Curt Hall is a gentleman, a professional law enforcement officer, and a longtime friend to Florida’s sheriffs,” noted Pinellas County Sheriff Everett Rice, this year’s president of the Florida Sheriffs Association, “We wholeheartedly congratulate him and look forward to working with him in his new role.”
“ZERO TOLERANCE” FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

In November of 1994, the Hillsborough County S. O. (HCSO), in conjunction with the Tampa P. D., their state attorney's office, “The Spring” Domestic Violence Center and the 13th Judicial Court Circuit, formed a “Zero Tolerance” campaign against domestic violence.

In 1994, in Hillsborough County, with a population of over 850,000, there were 34 domestic related homicides. The sheriff's office and the police department collaborated to develop a three day training school entitled, "Domestic Violence Investigator School". The first school was attended by 100 officers from throughout Hillsborough County. The school consists of segments on the following topics: the Dynamics of Domestic Violence, Current State Statutes, Investigation Procedures, First Response, Domestic Violence and the Affect on Children, a Survivor’s Panel, Local Shelter Information, the role of the State Attorney in DV, Report Writing, Police as Abusers, and Stalking.

The school has now been presented at least 12 times to over 500 law enforcement officers. Officers from surrounding counties and as far away as Miami-Dade Police have attended the course.

The local domestic violence shelter became involved by having its' auxiliary raise over $9,000.00 for the purchase of cameras. The cameras have been utilized to take photographs of crime scenes, victims and defendants, and for any other purpose which aids in DV investigation and prosecutions.

Both HCSO and TPD have designated a domestic violence liaison for their respective agencies. These officers were selected in 1996 by the U.S. Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services Office, to speak at four national conferences. These officers were also awarded with a "Federal Violence Against Women Act" grant to train the trainers throughout the state of Florida later this year.

The “Zero Tolerance” project called for training, but also contained a public awareness component. Speakers from all of the agencies involved in the project provided hundreds of presentations to Hillsborough County residents.

One of the most important aspects of a project of this magnitude is the relationship between law enforcement and its local domestic violence shelter. It is imperative that there be an open line of communication between the two. Law enforcement officers are encouraged to tour the facilities and meet the staff, and both police agencies have active members on the shelter's board of directors. These members serve as liaisons for their department and handle any problems that may arise.

Other special projects were initiated such as a cooperative venture with AT&T Wireless and GTE Mobilnet. These cellular telephone companies have provided 60 cellular phones to lend to victims of DV and/or stalking, to enhance their safety.

Largely due to the training and community awareness programs, Hillsborough County realized a 69% reduction in domestic related homicides after the first two years. Now, after only three years of the “Zero Tolerance" project, the DV related homicides have dropped by a whopping 86%!

It has been demonstrated that domestic homicides can be prevented. This three year project has shown us through aggressive law enforcement and prosecution, law enforcement can make a difference!

For further information, contact Sgt. Rod Reder at HCSO at (813) 247-8000.

CAR AIR CONDITIONER BLOWS COCAINE COVER

PANAMA CITY - Four men in a car were arrested when the driver went through a stop sign after they were showed with powdered cocaine that was spewing from an air conditioning duct.

All in all, four men and three women were arrested, said Bay County sheriff's deputy Lt. Jerry Girvin. Other suspects were being sought.

Deputies had received a tip that south Florida drug traffickers were making a delivery near this Florida panhandle city. Officers had a home in suburban Callaway under surveillance Monday when the four men drove off in one of two rented cars parked there.

"When they stopped them the whole interior of the car had white powder covering it and the occupants were covered with it," Girvin said. "We couldn't figure out why."

A field test quickly confirmed the powder was cocaine and a subsequent examination of the car indicated a fan blade inside the air conditioning duct had broken a plastic bag of cocaine hidden there, Girvin said.

A drug-sniffing dog found more cocaine in the car and on the four men. Charged with cocaine possession and trafficking were Kelsin Rolle, 23, of Nassau, Bahamas; Marc St. George, 27, of Miami; Guy Spillman, 24, of Miami, and Jean Alexander, 29, of Hallandale.

Two men and a woman then left in the second car and it, too, was stopped. The men fled on foot but deputies arrested the woman, Latasha King, 18, of Panama City, and charged her with cocaine possession.

Rochelle House, 32, and a 17-year-old female were arrested at the residence and charged with trafficking in cocaine and possession of drug paraphernalia. Deputies said they found cocaine hidden in a cereal box at the house.

Girvin said deputies likely would have found a reason to stop the first car even if the driver hadn't run the stop sign.

"Everybody in the course of their day's activity is going to violate a traffic law," he said. "You may have to wait a couple of miles, but they eventually will."

Courtesy of the Associated Press
Retired cop collects police figurines

About 36 years ago, Bob Burdewick was sworn in as a police officer in Nassau County, New York. Today, the Pinellas County retiree wiles away some of his free time by locating and collecting police figurines.

"Most collectors of police memorabilia go for shoulder patches," Burdewick notes, "But I decided it would be more rewarding to go after something a little more challenging, so I chose figurines."

Today, Burdewick's collection totals more than 350 figurines, all of which are scattered all over every room his Dunedin home. To find his collectibles, Burdewick rummages through flea markets, antique shops, tobacco stores, china shops and craft fairs. He has also enlisted the aid of friends, relatives and 450,000 fellow law enforcement officers who are members of the International Police Association.

His statues and figurines include officers in uniforms from across the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Scotland, Australia, Bermuda, and Canada. And among the group of keepsakes are police Santa Clauses, Smurfs, Garfields, McDonald's and Sesame Street characters. But, he's got a number of bears, bulldogs, rabbits, frogs, and pigs — all in police costume as well.

When asked what are the most difficult finds, Burdewick quickly notes that female figurines are hardest to locate. He has only been able to put his hands on two female officer figurines in over three decades.

Already thinking of the future of his collection, Burdewick told a local weekly newspaper that, "I'll be collecting until the day I die, and when I pass on, I have already had preliminary talks with, and will probably donate the entire collection to the Police Hall of Fame Museum."

In his retirement years, Bob is now a continued on page 8
Jails are filling up again...

According to Florida Department of Corrections statistics, there are approximately 46,000 inmates being held in Florida's 67 county jails on any given day — some 12,500 more than there were only five years ago!

Fact is, the jail population nationwide is at an all-time high — despite (or causing) downturns in most published crime rates. A recent survey of jails by the U.S. Department of Justice shows that the number of jail inmates increased by 9.4% between mid 1996 and mid 1997, the largest jump this decade. Florida's local jail population grew by some 8.7% during the same time period.

All told, during the first half of the 1990's, states spent nearly $15 billion and added some 400,000 beds nationally to alleviate overcrowding. However, for the first time since 1990, jail capacity — measured by the total number of beds — did not rise faster than the number of inmates. According to Governing magazine, the various reasons behind such statistics have raised the concern of many local officials.

With increasing frequency, a newspaper headline blare: "Crowding at jail a problem again..." or "Jail built for 180 now holds 250 inmates..."

There are other problems facing today's sheriffs and jail administrators which are quite disturbing, notes Ken Kerle, executive director of the American Jail Association. "Today's county jails hold more of the mentally disturbed than psychiatric hospitals do," he notes with a grimace. Across the country, jails process more than 26 million people each year. The numbers are staggering.

National studies note that it is difficult to characterize typical jail inhabitants, with one exception: Experts estimate that more than 70% are drug users.

Far too many residents, says Kerle, still think of local jail facilities as "Andy Griffith and his one-cell jail," in an era when the 12 counties in the U.S. with the largest jail populations hold more than 5,000 inmates apiece.

Critics of increased jail building say that there is an "if you build it, they will come" phenomenon associated with jails, contending that once there is room, judges will send convicts or those awaiting trial to an open bed space.

Alternatives to incarceration are being tried in various places. Things like release on recognizance (ROR), electronic monitoring and other types of pre-trial supervision; work release, community service and substance abuse program initiatives have widespread use in Florida and throughout the nation.

Some counties in Florida are now using tents as a money-saving alternative to blocks, mortar and steel. How long Florida counties can enjoy that privilege remains to be seen. In Oklahoma, for example, the Justice Department labeled their tent jail conditions as "unconstitutional," and placed the tent facilities under court supervision. Eventually, Tulsa County Sheriff Stanley Glanz hammered out some sort of agreement with the federal government.

The problem of the high cost of building, maintaining and operating county jails will pose one of the biggest challenges to sheriffs in the future.
A prison system finds the key to keeping itself out of court

Missouri's Department of Corrections (MDOC) has cut the number of lawsuits filed by inmates by two-thirds — even as the state's prison population has increased.

The state, which only 4 years ago ranked second highest in the percentage of lawsuits filed by inmates, achieved the reduction by creating an office for all MDOC related complaints and grievances. Inmates, their families and their advocates now voice their concerns to the Constituent Services Office (CSO), which investigates and responds quickly to all interested parties. When appropriate, the office also recommends improvements to facility operations.

By having a central place that provides a customer based service, the state has been able to move its inmates away from what CSO Director Dora B. Schriro calls a "buckshot approach" to problems. That is, rather than addressing a concern to one representative, inmates generally asked their families, ministers, several state agencies and state legislators to inquire into the same problem. These duplicated efforts involved many agencies and created the kind of frustration that led to lawsuits.

One regular target of grievances was health care. Prisoners often complained that medical services were inadequate. In addition, whenever there was a death within the facility, they often charged that it could have been prevented. The CSO responded to these complaints by advocating — and achieving — improvements in prison clinics and by creating a Peer Mortality Review Board to deal with inmate deaths.

The CSO approach has been very cost effective. In the past two and a half years, it has generated estimated savings of more than $2.1 million in litigation costs.

Preferred rate “Pre-paid Legal” program is a benefit of FSA Membership!

In 1996, at the urging of several sheriffs, the Florida Sheriffs Association (FSA) was asked to do a study of pre-paid legal programs, since this is one of the newest and fastest growing employee benefits in the market today.

Well, the results of our study showed that Pre-Paid Legal Services, Inc., a 26-year publicly held company based in Oklahoma to have the most comprehensive service for the price.

In July of 1996, FSA entered into an agreement with Pre-Paid Legal Services, Inc., after finding that they have a program that works for the average American which is also geared for law enforcement personnel.

Since the inception of the program, our Pre-Paid Legal team has completed enrollments in 26 of the 67 sheriff's offices, with over 3,000 sworn and non-sworn employees participating.

"What exactly is “pre-paid” legal service, and what can it do for me" you may ask.

Well, fully understand the benefit, there are some factors you probably ought to know about.

It is no secret that the average middle-income family has never really been able to afford access to quality legal help. The top 10% of the population (by income) can afford to have an attorney on retainer, while the lowest income 10% are eligible for legal aid. The other 80% can hardly ever afford any type of legal assistance.

The American Bar Association notes that 50% of the law suits that end up in court would have never gotten to that stage if families would practice “preventive law.” But, because of the high legal fees associated with hiring a lawyer, we tend not to seek the help we need and deserve.

If you are a “Law Enforcement Member” of the Florida Sheriffs Association, you can obtain the Pre-Paid Legal benefit at the preferred rate of $3.45 a week or $14.95 a month. If you're not a member (and it's only $20 a year to join FSA as a Law Enforcement Member), the benefit runs about $65 a year higher than the $14.95 a month plan.

With Pre-Paid Legal, a family can have access to some of the largest law firms in America. With the plan, you can pick up the phone and have your attorney advise you what you should and should not do, what your legal rights are in a given situation, whether it's personal or business related. What's more, your attorney will write letters, look over contracts, prepare basic wills, or even defend you or your spouse for criminal and civil defense on the job; civil off the job; and much more — all at no extra charge!

In the last 18 months, we at FSA have experienced first-hand, how these programs can help families through a legal crisis. One bad case can bankrupt you!

If you would like further information on FSA membership to secure the preferred rate, call FSA's membership office for an application at 1-800-877-2168.

However, if you are interested only in Pre-Paid Legal at the full, non-preferred rate, call Ms. Rebecca Smith of Pre-Paid Legal at 1-800-729-7998.
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Realtor, but his heart is and will always be in the field of law enforcement. In fact, Bob was recognized by the city council for the City of Dunedin for being responsible for raising over $5,000 to purchase bullet-proof vests for officers who couldn’t afford them.

If one of our readers of APB have a figure you might be willing to add to Bob’s collection, he’d be thrilled to hear from you. While the chances are he may have the item you have, occasionally he stumbles across a new treasure, and you may have it.

You can reach Bob Burdewick at home by calling (813) 733-6757.

No deposit . . . no return

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution recently wrote of a bungled bank robbery that we thought you’d enjoy. . . and if you work in robbery investigations, you’ll be salivating for the opportunity to work this case.

Recently, a man stopped by a branch of the Wachovia Bank in Atlanta to cash a check — then later to rob the bank, officials noted.

When the teller saw that the man’s stick-up note was written on the back of a completed application form for a duplicate Social Security card, she didn’t hand it back to the robber as he fled. The application included the robber’s name, address and social security number.

In what can only be described as the understatement of the millennium by a law enforcement spokesperson, the FBI’s public information officer in Atlanta noted, “I don’t believe that the FBI will have any trouble finding him.”

LINCOLN CONTINENTAL
GRAND PRIZE IN NATIONWIDE
BENEFIT RAFFLE

Cops one of two charities to receive proceeds

Camdenton, MO, January 30, 1998 - A nationwide raffle to benefit Concerns of Police Survivors, Inc. (COPS) and the Children’s Cancer Caring Center (CCCC) was kicked off on January 24 at the Florida Fraternal Order of Police District 5 Regional Conference. Both COPS and CCCC are 501(c)(3) non-profit corporations.

Raffle tickets will be available until November 7 when the winning tickets will be drawn at the winter meeting of the National Board of COPS in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. The grand prize is a new Lincoln Continental or the equivalent cash value. Second prize is $5,000 and third prize is $2,500. While no donation is required, a voluntary contribution of $5.00 for each ticket is appreciated. Winners need not be present to win and taxes are the sole responsibility of the winners.

“We are delighted to team with the Children’s Cancer Caring Center in this fundraising endeavor,” said COPS National President Sharon Felton Story. “Bob Amchir, Vice-President of the Cancer Caring Center, has been a tremendous source of encouragement and guidance in this project. Support for COPS is very strong in south Florida and we are confident that this raffle will successfully benefit both COPS and the Children’s Cancer Caring Center.”

The Children’s Cancer Caring Center is at the Cleveland Clinic in Florida. Children with cancer receive treatment with no regard for ability to pay or insurance coverage. No child is ever turned away and the employees at the Cancer Caring Center volunteer their services.

COPS provides the resources to assist in the rebuilding of the lives of survivors of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. Some of COPS’ programs include: the annual National Police Survivors’ Seminars; “C.O.P.S. Kids” activities during National Police Week, counseling reimbursement , and summer grief camp; the annual Parents’ Retreat; an Outward Bound experience for surviving young adult children; and scholarships for surviving children and spouses.

For more information about the raffle, the Children’s Cancer Caring Center, or to obtain tickets, phone (954) 316-9545. For more information about Concerns of Police Survivors, Inc., or to help support COPS’ programs, contact COPS at (573) 346-4911, or e-mail: <cops@nationalcops.org>

You can also visit the COPS website at: www.nationalcops.org